



Simulator

– A tool for social media training

Simulator is a social media training environment tool providing a realistic simulation of the information environment created by the Norwegian Defence Research Establishment.

With this exercise tool, participants can gain vital experience on how to handle large flows of information while carrying out other crisis-related tasks. The aim is to provide a realistic simulation of the information environment, including propaganda, disinformation, misinformation, and influence operations. A central “Exercise controller” (Excon) module lets a single person or a small group control content creation and distribution using any number of newspapers and social media profiles. This facilitates a realistic simulation of the real-life media environment while connecting the social media content to the scenario of the exercise.

Simulator emulates five social media platforms: Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, and online newspapers. Participants can interact as they would on “real” social me-

dia. Simulator was operationalised in 2023 through military exercises and educational settings ranging from 20 to 4000 participants in Norway and in NATO.



Screenshot of Twitter simulation in Comprehensive Shield

Simulator in use

Simulator was used in the Comprehensive Shield exercise at the Norwegian Defence University College. The 160 students were tasked to run a simulated HQ in a challenging environment, and the Simulator was used to simulate the information environment in this two-week exercise. The feedback from the participants in an exit survey showed that Simulator provided a much needed and realistic approach to training for the contemporary information environment. Furthermore, an evaluation of Simulator in the exercise showed that it added new possibilities to improve the understanding of multidomain operations, training on effective and efficient strategic communication, and the simulation of potential adversarial modus operandi in the information environment.



Excon manages the deployment of pre-loaded or real-time generated posts across a large number of accounts. This facilitates greater realism to help trainers achieve relevant exercise goals."



"For the exercise, the media game with Somulator was a quantum leap compared to earlier ways of simulating the media environment."

–Head of Communication, Norwegian Defense University College

Somulator has been applied in larger exercises: Exercise Capital Shield in Norway and Cyber Coalition in NATO. Exercise Capital Shield involves a broad range of military and civilian actors, and up to 3000 participants were given the possibility to sign into Somulator through their devices. Influence operations, media coverage, rumours, and public sentiment were simulated in accordance with the exercise scenario. Somulator was also used to simulate the information environment in NATO's flagship annual cyber defence exercise, Cyber Coalition, and is intended to be used in Cyber Coalition 2024.

The Somulator source code can be shared with relevant research partners, please contact us directly if you are interested.

For more information, follow the link or scan the QR-code below



www.ffi.no/en/research/projects/somulator