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U.S. Central Command Assessment Team



Annex C Strategic Communication Functional Team Report

February 2009

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Reason: ~~1.4a.e.d.c~~

~~Declassify on: 15 February 2034~~

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**ANNEX C: STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION
TABLE OF CONTENTS**

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY.....2

2. PURPOSE, SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY.....5

3. SUMMARY OF THE SITUATION ASSESSMENT.....5

4. PLANNING ASSUMPTIONS.....13

5. STRATEGIC GOALS.....14

6. OVERALL CONCEPT OF INTEGRATION.....15

7. LINES OF EFFORT.....21

8. RESOURCES FOR IMPLEMENTATION.....21

9. RISK AND MITIGATION.....24

10. CONCLUSIONS.....26

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: SITUATION ASSESSMENT.....27

APPENDIX 2: REGULATIONS AND AUTHORITIES.....44

APPENDIX 3: MEASUREMENT AND EVALUATION.....47

APPENDIX 4: REFERENCES.....50

APPENDIX 5: CONTACT LIST.....56

APPENDIX 6: TEAM MEMBERS.....63

ANNEX C: STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION

...for [the counterinsurgent] facts speak louder than words.

--David Galula¹

1. (U) EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

“Our national security strategy depends upon securing the cooperation of other nations, which will depend heavily on the extent to which our efforts abroad are viewed as legitimate by their publics. The solution is not to be found in some slick PR campaign or by trying to out-propagandize al-Qaeda, but rather through the steady accumulation of actions and results that build trust and credibility over time.”

-Secretary of Defense Robert Gates
July 15, 2008 remarks to U.S. Global
Leadership Campaign Tribute Dinner

(U) Strategic Communication (SC) is an instrument of statecraft that influences perceptions, attitudes, and behavior in support of U.S. policy goals and objectives. However, it needs to be seen in the wider sense as an integral part of every policy and every action taken to advance policy. Our long-term goals in the U.S. Central Command (USCENTCOM) Area of Operations (AOR) require changes in regional attitudes and behavior and, although explanations of policy are important, actions send messages more clearly than words and have greater impact. Effective Strategic Communication is the combination of words with actions and requires integration at the point of policy formulation. As Edward R. Murrow said we “need to be in at the take off and not just the crash landing.”

(U) Dozens of reports have been written on SC and Public Diplomacy (PD) since 2001 without significant change or effect in our SC efforts. This plan represents an opportunity for USCENTCOM, as a key player in the AOR with the leading responsibility for counterinsurgency, to integrate the decisive SC line of effort with other operations. USCENTCOM is well placed to act as an agent of change and, through its leadership, set the example for an improved whole of government approach to strategic communication.

While past reports were global, with some focus on the centrality of the Middle East, this report focuses exclusively on the unique challenges in the USCENTCOM AOR, provides an operational view of current activities and recommends a way ahead. This report does not cover specific countries or sub-regions as we have integrated their SC strategies as annexes to each CENTCOM Assessment Team (CAT) sub-regional plan.

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¹ David Galula, Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice (New York: Praeger, 1964) pg 9.

(U) America's negative image overseas, and particularly in the USCENCOM area, undermines our ability to realize U.S. national security interests in the region. A January 2009 Gallup poll shows the region's median approval of the United States at 15%. The special U.S./Israel relationship coupled with a moribund Middle East Peace Process (MEPP), as well as the presence of our combat forces in Iraq and Afghanistan, fuels anti-American sentiment. Since the conflict between Israelis and Palestinians continues to be a central theme shaping public opinion towards the United States and creates a base of support for violent extremism, much of our SC effort will not succeed without substantive engagement on the MEPP.

(U) Interagency coordination is weak and complicated by the fact that, while the Department of State (DoS) has the responsibility for leading government-wide SC, it lacks full authority and resources to direct SC activities. The Department of Defense (DoD) has become increasingly active in the SC arena and, with its mission to fight two wars in the AOR, has taken the lead in this part of the world. DoD's annual funding for SC activities in Iraq is greater than the State Department's global Public Affairs (PA)/Public Diplomacy (PD) budget, resulting in reversal of the traditional SC roles. As a result, the U.S. face in the region is dominated by our military presence with diminished diplomatic engagement and PD. Coordination of Strategic Communication with key allies also remains weak. Country level interagency cooperation and implementation is working well in the AOR, but it needs strengthening at the sub-regional level.

Current government SC activities focus too heavily on one way communications, rather than relationship and capacity building, often because the latter requires long-term commitments, are human-resource intensive and do not produce immediate results. This is a key failure in our strategy because without the long term relationships and consistent engagement with broad sectors of the local populations we will not succeed in overcoming the credibility and trust deficit we suffer from throughout the AOR.

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(U) SC Advisor to POTUS: To clearly articulate a strategic vision and improve overall integration of SC activities, we recommend the appointment of a SC advisor to POTUS. A senior figure of stature with name recognition, reporting to the National Security Advisor, would be effective in recommending strategy as policy is being made and able to provide the necessary oversight and coordination over the government's SC activities with cabinet members. Equally important will be to define DoS and DoD SC responsibilities and advocate for funding them accordingly.

(U) Long-Term Engagement: To increase long-term engagement with the populations at large in the region (and especially with the "youth bulge") the United States should support/fund/establish a NGO PD institution to complement USG efforts. The NGO should implement long-term engagement and relationship building programs, such as cultural and academic exchanges, English language instruction, access to the internet, and establish overseas Centers in key locations. The 'British Council' centers

are a good model and would provide a venue outside of the Embassy compounds. This proposal is not meant to re-create USIA or replace DoS' PD programs. To the contrary, the State Department's PD effort should be increased in both programming and staffing so that the civilian/diplomatic arm can take the government lead in engaging with civilian foreign audiences in the AOR and worldwide.

(U) NESA Center: CENTCOM should expand the Near East and South Asia Center to Tampa and to the region to build relationships and increase the cultural and regional expertise of U.S. military and civilian officials. Partnering with academic institutions in the Tampa area would provide academic exchange opportunities and the synergy between academia and practitioners. Satellite campuses in the AOR would provide CENTCOM with a regional soft power presence to engage with upcoming military personnel and other officials from key countries.

(U) Unity of Effort: USCENTCOM should assign flag level Military Advisors to the Assistant Secretaries of the Near East and South Asia bureaus at the Department of State. DoS should establish sub-regional SC coordination teams in partnership with CENTCOM throughout the AOR with some funding capability. These coordination teams would address SC/PD issues and coordinate SC actions in their sub-region. CENTCOM should assign Strategic Communications Officers to PA/PD sections of selected Embassies (e.g. Yemen, Pakistan) to increase influence capabilities and provide needed military expertise.

(U) Increase U.S. Voices: We need to actively encourage additional American voices in the region well beyond the government voice as they are often more effective. DoS, USAID and Department of Commerce should facilitate and reach out to the American NGO community, the private sector, academic and cultural organizations as well as commercial/business interests as they have a far more influential role in advancing American values that are truly universal. While many American non-governmental organizations are represented throughout the region, the lack of regional stability has, over the years, significantly reduced the presence of non-official Americans and institutions.

(U) Support Regional Voices: Lastly, the USG should work with American NGOs (through USAID and DoS) and European allies to improve efforts to support indigenous strategic communication capacity and civil society programs and institutions, both governmental and non-governmental, throughout the region. Such efforts will not dramatically change perceptions or behavior in the short-term, but over the long-run these initiatives will bolster good governance, minimize extremism, strengthen the mainstream majority and foster economic development and civil society. In the end, each society must take the lead in charting its own course and our role should be that of facilitator and supporter but not the direct agent of change.

2. (U) PURPOSE, SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

(U) This report was completed by the U.S. Central Command's Assessment Team over a 100 day period from November 2008 to February 2009. Its purpose is to provide a comprehensive assessment of the situation in the CENTCOM area of interest, a review of existing strategies and plans across relevant departments and organizations, and suggested actions for U.S. Central Command in the context of an illustrative plan for the integration of all instruments of national power and efforts of coalition partners in time, space, and purpose to achieve policy goals.

The Team consisted of members from across civilian and military agencies/departments of the U.S. Government (State, CENTCOM, USMA Center for Counterterrorism), as well as Coalition Partners (UK, Australia, Canada, and New Zealand). It drew on intelligence analysis, existing U.S. and Coalition plans and policy guidance, relevant reports and studies (see Appendix 4 for a full list of reference and source materials), the expertise of its members, the broader U.S. Government community, think tanks, non-governmental organizations, and academic institutions, and consultations throughout the region, including with country teams, bilateral partners, local actors, and international and nongovernmental organizations (see Appendix 5 for a full list of consultations).

(U) This report was developed in the format of a draft illustrative plan in order to impose sufficient rigor in analysis and recommendations. By providing a comprehensive, civilian-military context for U.S. Central Command, this report is intended to mitigate the risk of over-militarization of efforts and the development of short term solutions to long term problems.

Disclaimer: This document does not represent the official position of U.S. Central Command, the Department of Defense or any other agency of the U.S. Government.

3. (U) SUMMARY OF THE SITUATION ASSESSMENT

3.1 (U) U.S. and Allied Interests:

- (U) Support effective governance, rule of law, and broad-based economies.
- (U) Create hostile environment for violent extremism and defeat violent extremist organizations.
- (U) Counter proliferation, acquisition and use of WMD.
- (U) Assist in setting conditions that will enable political pluralism, protection of human rights and a civil society.

3.2 (U) Nature of the Problem:

~~(S//REL TO USA, FVEY)~~ Lack of Coherent Policy:

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~~(S//REL TO USA, FVEY)~~ Lack of Integration of SC into Planning:

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~~(S//REL TO USA, FVEY)~~ SC Flows From Policy:

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(U) Key Perceptions: There are a number of key changes in attitude and/or behavior that are essential to the success of our policy goals across the CENTCOM AOR:

- (U) The Arab and Muslim world sees the United States as making a consistent honest effort to resolve the Palestinian-Israeli conflict;
- (U) Violent extremism is devalued as the means for political change;
- (U) Pakistanis recognize that their primary threat comes from domestic violent extremists;
- (U) Iraq is perceived by its citizens and the region as having succeeded in developing a credible, responsible government;
- (U) Iranians perceive that it is more important to be accepted in the region and international community than to have a nuclear weapon;
- (U) Afghanis perceive their government as effective in providing country-wide security and basic services;
- (U) Central Asian states see the United States as a credible, reliable and beneficial long-term partner;

(U) These desired changes in perceptions/attitudes and behavior flow directly out of our policy goals in the region and therefore cannot be achieved independently but must be linked at every step with policy implementation. They require all of USG effort but USCENTCOM is clearly a key player.

(U) Attitudes/Behavior: In counterinsurgency, Information Operations is often the decisive Line of Operations and supports all other lines. In the same manner, Strategic Communication should be a central line of operation in policy formulation and implementation as it supports all other efforts to achieve our policy goals. Despite this importance, there is a general lack of understanding across the government of the SC process and how attitudes and behavior are changed. Every action by the government (including inaction) sends messages to audiences. Strategic Communication can help inform and influence attitudes and behavior, but SC cannot make policies palatable to foreign audiences if they are not in their national interest or in line with their values and traditions. When there is a conflict of national interests, SC can mitigate the differences by focusing on areas of common interest, the congruence of shared values and some overarching objectives. Change in attitudes and perceptions, particularly in traditional societies, is a slow process driven primarily by indigenous factors, voices and institutions. Direct U.S. (or any foreign) intervention in social change is often rejected and, when tolerated, is rarely effective in the long term.

As a result, successful SC directed at foreign audiences must have a long term pillar designed to support and facilitate the development and empowerment of indigenous capabilities through active engagement and capacity building while proactively conducting a short term strategy to shape the environment for our immediate goals and objectives particularly in situations where we have combat forces.

(U) Common operating picture: Part of the problem is that no one in the government “owns” the whole Strategic Communications portfolio² and that is unlikely to change. Effective Strategic Communication requires centralized vision and coordination but must maintain decentralized execution. Events over the past decade have contributed to the somewhat haphazard nature and growth of the USG’s SC programs and activities. In the absence of a strategic vision within the USG, and often within one agency, we do not have a common operating picture at the departmental levels. At the end of the Cold War, USIA was consolidated into the DoS and budget cuts were made in both PD programs and human resources. DoD, due to its larger funding base and its mission in the Post 9/11 period has a fairly robust SC capability within its many services and COCOMS. There has been a dramatic increase in the SC level of activity beginning in 2006. Specifically, programs countering violent extremism are underway in DoS, SOCOM and CENTCOM. This government-wide heightened level of activity, focused for the most part on the CENTCOM AOR, suggests the need for greater oversight, coordination, and coherence of programs. Nonetheless, experts and practitioners almost universally agree that while broad oversight, guidance and coordination is very important, SC efforts should remain decentralized in their design/execution to allow for adaptation to the specific issue and region. All strategic communication implementation must remain “local” to be effective while working within a common operating picture.

(U) Impatience: The U.S. leadership is understandably impatient for a more favorable public affairs environment but often that is simplistically defined as making regional audiences support American policies or express “pro-American” sentiment. That elusive goal is not achievable in the short term. Our primary strategic communication goals should be focused on proactively setting the agenda by harnessing general revulsion against violent extremist behavior, by facilitating open discussion of the values we have in common, by encouraging multiple voices, by empowering indigenous civil institutions and by building relationships of trust that can underpin and support our national interests.

(U) MEPP: The stalled Middle East Peace Process (MEPP) and our special relationship with Israel are central themes in the region’s public opinion of the United States and have a negative effect on our SC effort throughout much of the AOR. Although regional leaders may say in private that Israel-Palestine is not a primary concern, whenever they feel their regimes are threatened by public dissatisfaction with internal problems, they raise the issue to the forefront. Widespread perception of unquestioning U.S. support for Israel, set in the context of a moribund peace process, makes it easier for our adversaries to build a narrative of the United States as anti-Islamic and our policies as biased with a double standard. The recent Israeli attacks on Gaza have had a serious impact in the region because the United States was widely perceived as supporting Israel’s 22-day bombardment which caused large numbers of civilian casualties. This was a good example of a failure of SC because USG statements did not adequately address the heavy toll of Palestinian civilian deaths, including high numbers of children, which resulted in rising anger against the United States. It would have been possible to articulate our basic policy position of supporting Israel’s right to defend itself while at the same time sincerely articulating our concern and regrets for the high numbers of Palestinian casualties.

(U) Actions vs. Words: U.S. actions often undermine our own messages resulting in a credibility deficit. It is the perception and interpretation of U.S. actions that sets the SC environment. According

² Ellen K. Haddock, “Winning With Words: Strategic Communications and the War on Terrorism,” National Defense University, National War College Paper, 2006, pg 3.

to a 2007 poll,³ the majorities in the Muslim world (88% in Pakistan, 77% in Indonesia and 91% in Egypt) do not believe the primary goal of the United States in the region is to protect itself from terrorist attacks. They believe our goals are to dominate the Middle East and divide the Islamic Umma (nation). Some examples of recent setbacks that have long term lingering impact on our SC: seeming indifference to civilian casualties in Gaza; the widely held perception that military leadership was not held accountable for abuses at Abu Ghraib; and civilian deaths in our pursuit of high value targets. While many of our policies and our actions will not or cannot change for the sake of improving the SC environment we need to understand that they are part of our problem in terms of fueling extremism and anti-American attitudes. Their long-term impact on target audiences must be fully appreciated and understood so we can design future strategies keeping in mind the reservoir of ill-will we need to reverse or overcome before we can effectively communicate and engage.

(U) Lack of Coherent Narrative: The United States continues to suffer from a deficit of credibility and trust among the people of the region. Our kinetic operations in the post-9/11 period are widely seen as de-stabilizing to the region. The lack of coherence and an overall narrative consistently explaining the purpose of our presence has allowed our actions to be largely interpreted by our detractors. In the absence of pro-active engagement, our adversaries have defined the narrative that U.S. actions are anti-Islamic and bent on military domination of the region, as discussed earlier.⁴

(U) Military Dominates: As the DoS presence declined, particularly in the Public Diplomacy arena, and our Embassies became less accessible due to security concerns, the U.S. military became the predominant face of U.S. engagement in the area. In the post 9/11 period with OEF and OIF, CENTCOM became the United States' primary form of engagement with the governments and peoples of the region where the "War on Terror" was often perceived as a War on Islam. Our actions on the battlefields of Iraqi/Afghan cities and villages are carried in vivid images on TV and print media given the capacity of today's media technology. Those images correlate with similar images coming out of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and help create the narrative of the United States, in league with Israel, waging wars to destabilize/control the region. With our multi-year visible presence in Iraq and Afghanistan, CENTCOM is mostly perceived as the occupying force of a colonial super power. The Military establishments of most countries in the region do not enjoy good reputations within their societies. Many are perceived as corrupt, ineffective institutions and the primary tool of repression by undemocratic regimes. This widely held view impacts perceptions of the US military which is further compounded by the suspicions often attached to any foreign presence.

(U) Defining the enemy: There is a lack of coordination and consensus on how to define and address our adversaries. This limits our ability to change regional perceptions of the enemy. For example, we have failed to facilitate indigenous discussions that focus attention on the brutality of extremist organizations that have well established brands in the region. The adversary has the advantage of operating on a lower threshold of information accuracy and integrity in the media maneuver space.⁵ Al-Qaeda's (AQ) narrative relies on simple, fundamental themes that are consistently reinforced through a variety of media: that the nations of Islam have fallen from grace because of Western action and corrupt leaders; alliances with the West have weakened the Muslim nation; and U.S. presence in

³ Kull, Steven. "Muslim Public Opinion on U.S. Policy, Attacks on Civilians and al Qaeda," Program on International Policy Attitudes, University of Maryland, April 2007. <www.worldpublicopinion.org/pipa>

⁴ Ibid, Program on International Policy Attitudes.

⁵ U.S. Army Field Manual 3-24, Counterinsurgency, 2006.

Iraq/Afghanistan is an attack on Islam to weaken Muslim nations, control resources and protect Israel. These themes are used to justify the killing of non-believers, secular Muslims as well as pious Muslims who condemn violent extremists. While the narrative may not appeal to Westerners, to target audiences -- when coupled with the many grievances against their own regimes plus their anger at current U.S. actions in the region -- it is both rational and compelling. Although AQ and Usama bin-Laden, in particular, have lost considerable "brand approval"⁶ largely as a result of their own actions against their co-religionists, the narrative remains a dangerous motivator.

(U) Regional Partners: Reluctance of regional partners to openly support U.S. policy undermines U.S. credibility in the region. A consistent diplomatic effort with SC fully integrated at every level is required to gain an understanding of U.S. policies in the region. Many regional educated elites and religious leaders (key opinion makers) resist cooperating with the United States primarily due to disagreement over U.S. policies but sometimes also due to a lack of understanding of our overall objectives and our decision making process. In some cases, active messaging by the U.S. government actually precludes more effective communication by regional partners because it forces them to take the politically difficult step of publicly agreeing with an unpopular America.

(U) Engaging with Leaders: Most leaders in the region feel that they are not treated as partners and do not receive attention commensurate with their bilateral relationship with the United States. They believe they are not given the opportunity for personal consultation and engagement with US leadership to discuss our involvement in their part of the world. To touch on just a few of the countries: Egypt feels that it has played a key role in stabilizing the region by making peace with Israel and with its ongoing efforts to broker negotiations between Israelis and Palestinians, but receives insufficient respect from the United States. The conditionality placed on the USAID funding for Egypt was perceived as a slap in the face to a country that took great risks for peace and its alliance with the United States. Kuwait feels taken for granted for its contributions to supporting the operations in Iraq and is rarely visited by the many VIP and CODELs that travel through the region. Kyrgyzstan's leadership and citizens are extremely frustrated by the friction surrounding the Manas Air base which to date has failed to provide its neighboring community with a stake in its operation by engaging with the local economy. Many Gulf leaders feel that regional policies are decided in Washington then presented as *fait accompli* with little input or consultation. Much of the problem is related to the United States' impatience and unilateral approach to addressing national security problems. Reversing these impressions will require a concerted, long-term effort to personally engage key leaders and a multi-lateral approach to working with regional partners.

(U) Engaging with the Public: The United States fails to fully engage not only with leaders, but also the populations. As stated earlier, most of our SC efforts are focused on one-way communications. Our understaffed Embassies have less than a handful of PD Officers who often spend most of their time behind compound walls handling bureaucratic tasks instead of being out engaging with opinion leaders in the media, academia and NGO communities. U.S. officials rarely engage with al-Jazeera, one of the most influential media players in the region. Seldom are U.S. representatives, official and non-official, heard on substantive discussion programs on any of the popular satellite channels explaining U.S. policy or simply engaging on social/cultural topics of interest. In times of severe crisis

⁶ Since 2002, the number of people across the Muslim world that either approve of suicide bombing or have confidence in Osama bin-Laden has steadily declined. Pew Research Center, The Pew Global Attitudes Project, Global Public Opinion in the Bush Years (2001-2008), December 18, 2008, <http://pewglobal.org/reports/pdf/263>

(e.g. Gaza in Jan 2009) the USG voice is often totally absent from regional satellite TV and print media.

(U) Regional Expertise: There have been recent efforts throughout the government to increase regional understanding and expertise in the languages and social structures of the region. However, the government alone does not have the in-house expertise necessary to develop effective communication strategies that influence perceptions, attitudes and behavior. We need to bring in additional talent available outside of government and in the AOR to complement our effort. We also need to do more to weave the regional expertise (cultural/linguistic and on the ground field experience) into the local adaptation and implementation of strategies and activities.

(U) Russia: Other major players also affect the AOR. Russia perceives Central Asia (CA) to be within its sphere of influence and aggressively counters U.S. influence in this sub-region through diplomatic, informational, economic and military means. Its SC campaign permeates the CA information environment while limiting U.S. efforts to get information into the sub-region.⁷ Squeezed off the FM radio band, the United States currently has less than 50 hours of broadcasting across Central Asia each week. Russian economic aid and positioning of troops within the borders of the five CA states give it increased influence on their economies and limits their autonomy.⁸ Russia's proximity to the sub-region and lack of U.S. efforts to counteract this influence make Russia's task easier and more effective.

(U) Iran: With U.S. combat forces present in two of its neighboring countries, Iran is projecting its influence throughout the region to consolidate a wider base of power to counter the U.S. Its ambitions to develop a nuclear weapon and sponsorship of Hamas and Hezbollah have positioned Iran as a key player in the region. It champions the Palestinian cause to gain the support of Sunni public opinion at the expense of Arab Leaders who are seen as weak and unable to deliver peace. Iran uses lethal and non-lethal means to keep Iraq weak to prevent Iraqi influence and reduce U.S. credibility in the region. Iran also uses its developmental aid to gain influence across the AOR and expand its SC strategy as seen by completing the Anzob Tunnel in Tajikistan. Iran used the opening to begin Persian-language broadcasting from inside Tajikistan.⁹ Prior to that, Tajikistan had resisted all outside broadcasters, preferring to maintain the government monopoly.

(U) Complex Media Environment: The CENTCOM AOR is extremely diverse with a complex media environment. There is no common language or medium across the AOR. The narrative, target audiences and key communicators vary significantly from country to country and no single strategy is appropriate throughout the AOR. While many of the tools available to the SC practitioner are appropriate AOR-wide, all tools and themes must be adapted to each sub-region and country strategy (one size does not fit all). Besides the language diversity, the AOR has all forms of media (Satellite and terrestrial TV, mobile phones, radio, internet, etc.) but these are not uniformly distributed across the AOR requiring multiple media and many languages to reach target audiences. Despite the spread

⁷ Although BBG programming is carried on satellites that reach Central Asia, the available satellite packages from Russian satellite providers do not include U.S. programming. As a result, CA audiences cannot directly receive U.S.-produced satellite television content.

⁸ Russia maintains the 201st Rifle Division in Tajikistan. Although the division is small by Russian standards (7-8000 men) it consists of ethnic Tajiks and contract soldiers and is considered sufficient to maintain Presidential rule if he is threatened in an uprising.

⁹ Nicholas Schmidle, "In Central Asia, New Players, Same Game," Washington Post, January 29, 2006, B02.

of technology across the AOR, many areas remain isolated and difficult to reach. The isolated areas cannot be ignored because they are precisely the places most likely to succumb to violent extremism.

- **(U) Internet:** The increased availability of the Internet allows the United States to target two key audiences – the elite and, increasingly, the youth. Although the two groups may use the Internet very differently (elites more interested in more traditional-style news, whereas the youth are more interested in peer-to-peer engagement across and outside the region) it provides a venue to reach each cohort in a very personal way. Violent messages tend to reverberate in an echo chamber without any dampening by pointing out contrary facts on the ground. A legitimate function of the government is designing and spurring growth and economic viability of national communication infrastructures.
- **(U) Mobile Telephones:** Populations underserved by indigenous telecommunications systems are largely turning to wireless devices in place of copper wire systems. The increased capability of modern wireless devices allows the opportunity to send news and messages to discrete segments of the population and invite their participation in forums where they will be exposed to news, information and messages beneficial to U.S. interests. Across the AOR, the penetration of cell/mobile phones has generally increased by factors of 2 to 5 since 2004 (or, in the case of Iraq, from 80,000 cell phones pre-war to over 13 million today, whereas landlines have increased by only 50%).¹⁰ Although the propagation of 3G phones provides wider regional Internet access, most phones are basic voice/text models that provide their own opportunities for SMS communications to provide crop, weather, and sports information, as well as real-time alerts of critical threats.¹¹ Strategies to take advantage of the proliferation of wireless phones must account for the wide divergence in capabilities and user needs.
- **(U) Creative Commons:** There is an increasing amount of user-generated “Creative Commons” content available on the Internet.¹² These efforts are often done locally on a shoestring budget, and can be greatly amplified with very modest investments. Selection and support of the programming that supports Coalition objectives (although not necessarily Coalition messages) can result in vastly increased results. Besides user-generated content, there is a large amount that is copy-righted but could be easily obtained and repackaged into useful content for the AOR. Scientific or historical programming that has completed its commercial run on Western stations can many times be obtained cheaply and dubbed for rebroadcast in the AOR. The requirement is simply for an agency to have the assets and responsibility to do that.¹³ On the distribution side, indigenous broadcasters have difficulty finding and sorting content that would appeal to their audiences. Assisting in identifying positive programming and

¹⁰ John West, *The Promise Of Ubiquity: Mobile As Media Platform In The Global South*, Internews Europe, 2008, <http://www.internews.fr/spip.php?article459>; Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction, *HardLessons, The Iraq Reconstruction Experience*, February, 2009, www.SIGIR.mil/hardlessons/pdfs/Hard_Lessons_Report.pdf.

¹¹ SMS messages are limited to 160 characters but news services are growing to service the demand for focused information. Ibid.

¹² Creative Commons is an alternative to traditional copyrighting methods that allows content generators to electronically “tag” content with the appropriate restriction level in order to enable wider dissemination and use of content without requiring contact and individual permission of the originator. PC Magazine Encyclopedia, www.pcmag.com/encyclopedia_term/0,2542,t=Creative+Commons&i=40468,00.asp#.

¹³ Although BBG would be an obvious candidate for this mission, they do not currently have it in their charter and are somewhat reluctant to repackage content produced by others.

providing it to broadcasters in a simple-to-use (probably non-attributed) venue could greatly expand the distribution of the user-generated and commercial content discussed above.

3.2 (U) Current USG SC Activities:

Strategic Communication is the combination of information, ideas and action used to influence the perceptions, attitudes and behavior of target audiences in support of our policy objectives and national security interests. Our implementation tools of strategic communication fall into three categories or a “SC Triad”:

1. (U) One-way communication (Messaging)
2. (U) Two-way Engaging/relationship building
3. (U) Capacity building of indigenous institutions

(U) One-way Communication: The United States focuses far too heavily on one-way communicating and not enough on engagement, relationship and capacity building, which are instrumental in influencing long-term attitudes and perceptions. One-way communication tools such as broadcasting are important components complementing our need to inform, but effective long-term communications should not be one dimensional. Professional, commercial messaging programs (such as advertisements) that have relied primarily on indigenous creative talent have been evaluated and deemed successful resulting in attitudinal changes and positive viral and media spill. There are many locally written and produced efforts – for example: poetry, music, radio and television soaps – that support the U.S.’ primary objectives without necessarily being pro-U.S. and in some cases being quite critical of U.S.’ other policies. There is often reluctance to engage with them for fear of being seen as promoting anti-U.S. messages when establishing relationships or simply engaging with these indigenous forces would increase U.S. credibility with key target audiences.

- **(U) U.S. Funded Media:** Media outlets directly supported by the United States (e.g. Al Hurra & DoD websites) have not been fully evaluated but anecdotal evidence would argue they have limited regional impact and are not trusted by large sections of the population in the AOR. Inside Iraq, slightly beating al-Jazeera, 48% of Iraqis rated al-Hurra as somewhat or very trustworthy in 2007. By comparison, 81% found al-Iraqiya (established by USG but now run by Iraqi government) somewhat or very trustworthy in the same poll.¹⁴
- **(U) Internet:** The USG has had, until recently, little presence in the “blogosphere” but recent programs at DoS by the Digital Outreach Team and USCENTCOM’s Digital Engagement Teams are becoming operational and initially appear successful at reaching these audiences. This is not a phenomenon that should simply be left to grow organically on its own, but one that should be shaped with U.S. and allied government input and monitored.
- **(U) Mobile Telephones:** DoS is experimenting with cell phone-based games that teach foreign audiences about the United States. A game called “x-life” leads players on a treasure-hunt around the United States. In the process, players learn facts that illuminate aspects of American life. Experimentation is being done on the use of the cell phone as a vehicle to teach English. Because even the simplest phones sold in the third world have text capability, there is great potential to build local networks that share information over a rudimentary form of English.

¹⁴ Dunia Andary, “International Broadcasting in Iraq: Media Market Report,” [Intermedia](#), September 2007, P14.

(U) Relationship and Capacity Building: Some initiatives for capacity and relationship building have been successful. For example, The Middle East Peace Initiative (MEPI), administered by DoS, (\$100 Million in 2006) is designed to promote political, economic, and educational reform and women's empowerment. The program was established in 2002 and has provided grants to non-governmental civil society institutions throughout the AOR. This (or a similar) program should be expanded throughout the region to include Iran, Afghanistan and Pakistan and coupled with a SC plan to increase its impact on not only the people it helps directly but the region. All the Department of State's traditional PD programs (International Visitors, Academic Exchanges, Cultural Programs) are the mainstays of relationship and capacity building but are woefully underfunded. USAID programs in countries like Egypt and Jordan have supported the development of indigenous institutions and individuals through a large number of projects that have included K-12 education reform, Journalism training and NGO capacity building.

4. (S//REL TO USA, FVEY) PLANNING ASSUMPTIONS

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5. (U) STRATEGIC GOALS

- **(U) 18-24 months: A regional environment hostile to violent extremism and proliferation of WMD.**
 - (U) Pakistanis recognize a primary threat to their society and government is from indigenous violent extremists; non-government voices begin to support efforts against VEOs.
 - (U) Indians and Pakistanis support confidence building measures and dialogue. Both begin to recognize the United States as a trustworthy ally in solving their disputes.
 - (U) The Afghanis perceive their government as being effective and capable of providing security and basic services in several provinces.
 - (U) Iranian people recognize cost (international isolation) of acquiring nuclear weapons and question the security benefits.

- (U) Syrians desire alternatives to their current isolation in the region by distancing themselves from Iran, while improving ties with the United States and seeking a peace treaty with Israel.
- (U) External actors (primarily Russia, China, and NATO) see positive benefits to mutual engagement in Central/South Asia to stem VE and narcotics.
- (U) Iraqis perceive their government as effective in providing security and services thereby allowing U.S. drawdown in accordance with SA and SFA.
- (U) Terrorism and violence devalued in the region through engagement and capacity building of indigenous voices and institutions.
- (U) Indigenous governmental and non-governmental institutions in the AOR are strengthened through USAID, DoS/PD and other programs (e.g. MEPI) to become agents for peaceful political and economic reform.
- (U) Common operating picture for Strategic Communication with improved interagency coordination.
- (U) USCENTCOM's SC programs are consistently monitored and evaluated to identify the successful activities and increase/reduce funding. (See Appendix 3 (Monitoring and Evaluation))

- **(U) Five year: Perception of stability in the AOR, where citizens reject violent extremism and proliferation of WMD.**
 - (U) Iranian people and government willing to give up their nuclear weapons ambitions with improved relations with United States, their neighbors and global community of nations.
 - (U) Syria pursues a multilateral foreign policy to maximize its own prestige and prosperity after securing peace deal with Israel.
 - (U) Majority of Pakistanis and Indians support efforts to resolve Kashmir issue.
 - (U) The Afghani people perceive that the government is providing security and basic services throughout the country.
 - (U) Central Asia sees the United States as a credible and reliable long-term partner.
 - (U) Iraq is perceived by its citizens and the world as having succeeded in establishing a representative, effective government.
 - (U) United States perceived as a force for stability rather than one of occupation and dominance as we achieve significant progress on MEPP and stability in Iraq, Pakistan & Afghanistan.
 - (U) Indigenous NGOs and other civil society institutions become advocates for pluralistic societies, good governance and global economic ties.
 - (U) Polling and focus group work will show that a majority of citizens begin to reject violent extremism as a tool for political change.
 - (U) Pool of potential recruits to violent extremist organizations is reduced with a growing sense of defeat within extremist groups.

- **(U) 10-25 years: Effective governance, rule of law, broad-based economies and flourishing civil society.**
 - (U) Regional Governments and majorities of citizens reject violent extremist organizations.

- (U) Governments and citizens have increasingly positive perceptions of U.S.' intentions with MEPP in final phase of resolution; Iraq stable and independent; Pakistan/Afghanistan enjoying stable central governments with the Taliban and AQ marginalized.
- (U) The Governments and citizens of India and Pakistan consider reconciliation between the two States as advantageous.
- (U) Governments continue to support strong bilateral relationships with the United States and with neighbors.
- (U) Governments and citizens of the region reject proliferation of WMD.
- (U) Iranians support regional stability and a cooperative relationship with United States.

6. (U) OVERALL CONCEPT OF INTEGRATION

(U) On a regional level, the single most important step to more effective SC in support of our policy goals and objectives is to ensure that SC strategies and considerations are discussed at the senior strategic planning and policy decision-making levels and then communicated down to the implementation level with the freedom to adapt to target audiences as necessary. At the same time, the flow needs to be two-way as the field's input is invaluable in formulating strategies as well as evaluating the impact and success of our SC activities and where they need to be modified. Secondly, we need to increase our efforts in two-way engagement, relationship and capacity building with indigenous institutions and individuals in order to achieve our long term goals of influencing attitudes and behavior in support of our policy objectives. For example creating a hostile environment for violent extremism should continue to be one of our main objectives throughout the CENTCOM AOR. This effort will be led primarily by Strategic Communications and not by kinetic actions. Countering violent extremism will require a solid infrastructure of indigenous capacity that can empower the right moderate voices to counter extremist voices; the civil society institutions that can lead political/social and economic reform; and the academic community that can focus on reforming education and providing positive alternatives to the youth that make up the majority of many of the key countries in the region.

(U) The United States can play the role of catalyst, facilitator/supporter and provide the engagement opportunities with counterpart American institutions. Our goal is to help build the indigenous capacity so that they can take the lead and the responsibility to move their societies in the right direction.

(U) Many of our recommendations for the way forward are not CENTCOM's lead responsibility; however, government-wide advocacy by CENTCOM along with endorsement by the DoS, can play a significant role in bringing about these changes.

6.1 (U) Recommendations: The Way Forward

(U) We cannot emphasize enough the importance of 1) having conceptual clarity of our strategic goals for the AOR, 2) defining the role of SC in achieving those goals, 3) and arriving at an in-depth understanding of the SC environment before designing our SC strategy. SC operates on four lines of effort: Coordination, Messaging (one-way communication), Engagement, and Building Partner Capacity. Our Coordination line of effort contains objectives and actions to better coordinate the SC

effort within the U.S. government as well as the sub-regional level. Messaging includes all broadcast efforts to the AOR including electronic means as well as speeches and press releases. While we believe messaging currently dominates our SC to the AOR, it needs to be expanded in specific areas like Central Asia where air waves are dominated by Russia followed by Iran. The Engagement line of effort consists of all individual and institutional contacts with members of the government and people of the AOR to build relationships and create a new narrative of cooperation. Building partner capacity increases the indigenous ability to counter violent extremism and increases the ability of local leaders and civil society institutions to plan and execute program activities that achieve our mutual goals while establishing linkages with U.S. counterpart institutions.

A. (U) Coordination:

- (U) POTUS articulate policy and SC vision for the region. The new administration and global popularity of POTUS provides us with a unique SC opportunity to articulate regional policy and a SC vision that demonstrates U.S.'s resolve to work with partners to improve stability and security. A reinvigorated MEPP, new regional Envoys and a more active Department of State will provide assurance that the United States is serious about playing an active role to mitigate current challenges in the AOR: MEPP, Pakistan/Afghanistan and Iran.
- (U) POTUS appoint a senior-level SC Advisor with oversight and coordination authority over the government's SC activities that impact national security and advocate in Congress for SC funding across government Departments.¹⁵
 - (U) The Advisor should be experienced in both policy formulation and international affairs with sufficient name recognition and stature to gain the respect and cooperation of government wide cabinet members.
 - (U) Leadership and coordination of SC strategy within the USG cannot be effectively carried out by a U/S at Department of State. A senior advisor to with authority to play an oversight and coordinating role would be more successful in bringing some coherence at the macro level.
 - (U) The senior advisor will analyze proposed policies for their SC impact and recommend changes or strategies to mitigate negative SC impacts.
- (U) DoD/CENTCOM adapts the DoS interpretation of the Smith-Mundt Act to its purposes. State and BBG have a far more operational interpretation of the Smith-Mundt Act allowing it to be more nimble in changing its broadcasting. DoD should consider a similar interpretation to allow it to conduct SC activities without fear of violating the intent of the law. (See SC Appendix 2 Regulations and Authorities)
- (U) DoS/DoD/CENTCOM institute SC exchange assignments with allies and within the U.S. government to increase contacts and coordination. Exchanges would allow identification of the SC capabilities of key Allies to complement and avoid unhelpful overlap.

¹⁵ At least 10 of the reports we reviewed recommended increasing the emphasis placed on SC and coordinating it either through the White House or from a separate agency. Specifically, Public Diplomacy Council, "Call for Action on Public Diplomacy," January 2005; Defense Science Board. "Report of the Defense Science Board Task Force on Strategic Communication". September 2004; and Advisory Group on Public Diplomacy for the Arab and Muslim World, "Changing Minds, Winning Peace: A New Strategic Direction for U.S. Public diplomacy in the Arab and Muslim World", October 1, 2003, recommended making SC a cabinet-level officer and principal on the National Security Council empowered to coordinate actions of other government agencies that impact SC.

- (U) CENTCOM assign flag level Military Advisors to the State Department's Assistant Secretaries of the Near East and South Asia bureaus. This will provide the bureaus and USCENTCOM with a structure to link the regional combatant command with the State Department's regional bureaus.
- (U) DoS & CENTCOM establish sub-regional State-led SC teams (based in the field) to coordinate SC strategy development and program implementation with some budget capability to fund local programs. Sub-regional teams made up of Embassy Public Affairs Officers and CENTCOM strategic communication officers to focus on issues of their region would provide us with a working level mechanism focused on issues specific to the countries in their sub-region. Sub-regional teams would develop a sense of shared responsibility and act as a body of regional information within the Embassy community and CENTCOM. A small budget capability would allow the teams to quickly fund sub-regional activities as the need arises.
- (U) CENTCOM assign SC officers to PA Sections of key Embassies (e.g. Yemen, Lebanon, Pakistan). The experience of MIST teams working within Embassy PA sections in the AOR has demonstrated the outstanding work we can accomplish when marrying military and diplomatic expertise. Several key Embassies in the AOR would benefit from a long-term assignment of one or more CENTCOM SC officers to the Public Affairs section.
- (U) CENTCOM establish a unified SC structure to oversee IO and PA programs and activities to enhance coordination and avoid duplication. While some firewalls between PA and IO need to stay in place, a unified structure to oversee the two units would help to minimize lack of coordination while providing the CG with a more coherent operation.
- (U) DoS establish its web-based 'Info Central' as the tool of choice for sharing SC knowledge across the inter-agency environment. 'Info-Central' is currently the only electronic tool available to all USG which provides a near-comprehensive list of all programs and activities available to SC practitioners. However, to maximize its effectiveness it needs to be better advertised within the USG.
- (U) DoD and DoS should work with OMB to remove actual and perceived blocks to transferring funds between agencies and departments to increase the ability of civilian agencies (primarily DoS) to expand SC efforts. Another option is to work with the Congress to allow new funding vehicles that allow commanders to use operational and Title X funds to support diplomatic functions.
- (U) CENTCOM/DoS/DoD put into place a rigorous monitoring and evaluation of SC programs to identify the successful activities and recommend increase/reduction of funding. (See Appendix 3 on Monitoring and Evaluation)
- (U) Add a Strategic Communication representative on every PRT in Iraq and Afghanistan to assist the long-term coordination of actions and words to ensure that the population understands the PRT intent, methods and outcomes. SC officer will act as the trainer and mentor for local officials to increase their ability to communicate with the populace putting the local face on operations.

B. (U) Messaging:

- (U) DoS develop a coherent and coordinated narrative based on POTUS vision that explains U.S. policy goals and objectives in the AOR to ensure full integration into all messaging tools and activities.¹⁶
- (U) DoS, with input from CENTCOM and other agencies, develop SC strategy to support new Administration and POTUS initiatives targeting AOR to begin to reverse negative perceptions of the United States. Develop a narrative that weaves themes designed to counter common anti-American disinformation in the region.
- (U) Support a re-invigorated MEPP with a pro-active SC strategy throughout the CENTCOM AOR that integrates POTUS vision for the region.
- (U) As part of U.S. messaging efforts, AQ and UBL labels should be de-emphasized except where they bear specific responsibility for attacks. The continued use of their names as a shorthand for violent extremism merely increases their stature in the AOR and shifts blame from other violent extremist organizations. Where they do bear responsibility, however, the United States should be relentless in exposing their brutal impact on innocent Muslims.
- (U) DoS/CENTCOM SC strategies re-enforce the perception of failure of violent extremism by integrating examples of the physical, social and economic effects of extremism in all regional and global messaging activities.
- (U) Train all commanders entering the AOR on the operational integration of actions and messages so that they understand that the two are interrelated. With proper sensitivity to the issue, commanders will be able to integrate words and actions. This is currently neglected in most military training courses.
- (U) DoS, in conjunction with BBG, look for technical ways to allow Central Asians to access USG programming already carried on their satellites but not included in their satellite provider packages.
- (U) CENTCOM vastly increase Russian language broadcasting (transitioning to native language in the future) in Central Asia and Urdu/Pashtun broadcasting in Pakistan to counter Russian and Taliban disinformation.
- (U) Fund the BBG to increase western-produced, Russian and indigenous language content focused on Central Asia.
- (U) DoS/DoD explore ways to make use of mobile device technology as a means of messaging the large youth population and to isolated areas not currently served by USG broadcasting.¹⁷
- (U) CENTCOM/DoS - working through indigenous or international NGOs - expand professional commercially developed programs which rely on local creative talent to develop credible/relevant messages to target audiences. Provide forums where “creative common” content can be easily accessed and broadcast by small, indigenous outlets.¹⁸

¹⁶ The 9/11 Commission Report states clearly that the US should “...define what the message is, what it stands for...” and to “...defend our ideals abroad vigorously...” United States Government, The 9/11 Commission Report: Final report of the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States, pg 376-67.

¹⁷ Much of the AOR, particularly Central and South Asia, suffers from a decrepit telecommunications infrastructure which is pushing the populations to go directly to wireless technology providing a huge opportunity for the UNITED STATES if we concentrate on the content flowing over the wireless networks.

¹⁸ Creative commons is the term of art for non-copyrighted content that is created and provided free over the internet. Small, but effective outlets such as local, unlicensed radio stations have great need for content, but often little access to it due to lack of telecommunications infrastructure.

- (U) CENTCOM routinely facilitate the rapid release of combat camera video, Electronic News Gathering (ENG) team evidence and operational reporting to CENTCOM and State Embassy PA officers to pro-actively defeat VEO disinformation.

C. (U) Engagement:

- (U) Establish an NGO PD institution(s) to complement USG soft power activities with British Council-like centers outside the highly restrictive access of Embassy compounds. This organization will work to increase mutual understanding and trust through conferences, as well as cultural events and English-language instruction. As an NGO it could partner with indigenous institutions to gain local acceptance and minimize security concerns. The NGO, particularly with local partnerships, could accept and make grants to further mutual understanding without being seen as an arm of the U.S. Government. One feature that would draw people to the Centers, besides English instruction, would be providing high-speed internet access in the many countries that lack such services. These Centers should operate in multiple cities in each country to get as much exposure to the populations as possible. Making this an NGO allows it to exploit commercial opportunities unencumbered with much of the government bureaucracy but also serves to separate a “favorable message from an unfavorable messenger.”¹⁹
- (U) CENTCOM expand the NESACenter’s capabilities and presence in Tampa and in the AOR to the level of the Marshall or Asia-Pacific Center to build relationships with local counterparts and provide training, education, exchange and research opportunities for indigenous and U.S. military and civilian officials. The NESACenter should operate on three legs:
 - (U) In regional satellite campuses (perhaps collocated and affiliated with local Universities or institutes like the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe’s (OSCE) Border Management Academy) tailored to local requirements and operating in local languages. In the short term, NESACenter would continue to partner with the Marshall Center to train Central Asian students but the objective organization would include in-house development of U.S. experts and instruction of regional representatives.
 - (U) In Tampa to provide close-in regional expertise to CENTCOM Headquarters and to run longer educational programs combining defense officials from the AOR and U.S. counterparts to build relationships and the future “Charles Stones,”²⁰ as well as to research and recommend best practices, methods and technologies.
 - (U) From Washington, DC where the Center will conduct Congressional outreach focused on the region and run mentorship programs bringing regional parliamentarians, for instance, to work with and learn from U.S. Congressmen.
 - (U) The NESACenter, across its expanded footprint, should conduct research on methods and technologies associated with Strategic Communication as well as psychological, sociological and anthropological research on methods to influence regional populations. This research would benefit CENTCOM activities in the region as well as inform Washington decision-makers.

¹⁹ Charles Wolf, Jr. and Brian Rosen. Public Diplomacy - How To Think About and Improve It. RAND Corporation. 2004.

²⁰ LTG Charles Stone was a U.S. officer in the 1870’s who was seconded to the Egyptian Army. While there he reorganized the Egyptian General Staff and organized schools for Egyptian Soldiers and their children.

- (U) Increase Department of State funding for all PD programs in Education/Culture (ECA) and information/press (IIP); increase Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI) funding to include Iran and establish similar program for Afghanistan/Pakistan which focuses on strengthening civil society institutions to promote pluralism, good governance and political reform. The expansion of “American Corners” and “Lincoln Centers” throughout the AOR would show the ‘civilian’ face of the U.S. government that has been sorely missing since the closure of USIA.²¹
- (U) DoS and CENTCOM engage and consult with local Government officials and opinion leaders on a consistent basis to build long-term relationships. The in-person engagement is essential in this part of the world to begin to reverse negative perceptions of the United States. Increase travel by DoS Officials to meet with counterparts and encourage CODELS to meet with regional leaders when traveling to/from the combat areas.
- (U) DoS/DoD increase funding for all language and cultural training focused on the regional languages in the AOR. Specifically increase capability of DoS PD officers to allow them to proactively engage with local opinion makers.²² Increase numbers and language capability of CENTCOM PA and IO officers to enable them to develop strategies that are effective in the region.²³
- (U) Support/fund new regional communication networks (new media blogging; social networks; cell phone) that provide alternatives to established satellite TV and print media.

D. (U) Building Capacity:

- (U) DoS and USAID assist in development of NGO and other civil society institutions through funding of U.S. NGO counterparts thereby creating partnerships with U.S. organizations.
- (U) DoS and USAID fund -- through American NGOs -- indigenous creative talent in television and movie industry to produce films and TV serials that develop themes and narratives supporting U.S. objectives in the region.
- (U) DoS/USAID/DoD fund programs to train and build capacity of local media and networking institutions to improve quality and professionalism of journalism. (e.g. Kabul Media Center)
- (U) DoS and USAID expand educational programs throughout the region such as Fulbright and other Scholarship programs that develop the capacity of local academic institutions and build professional linkages with U.S. counterparts.
- (U) DoS - through NGOs - support funding of English language teaching programs to assist building long-term ability for dialogue with the people of the AOR and use content to influence younger population. Request and fund increase in Peace Corps participation in English instruction programs.
- (U) USAID/DoS fund NGOs that have successfully established credible working relationships with Madrasas in Pakistan to train teachers and assist in curriculum development. (e.g. International Center for Religion & Democracy www.icrd.org)

²¹ Fully 16 of the reports we consulted recommended vastly increasing our engagement through educational exchanges and the “American Corners-like” programs.

²² U.S. General Accounting Office. “U.S. Public Diplomacy: State Department Expands Efforts but Faces Significant Challenges,” GAO-03-951. September 2003 and Council on Foreign Relations. “Finding America’s Voice: A Strategy for Reinvigorating Public Diplomacy,” September 2003.

²³ Many reports, including specifically the 2006 Quadrennial Defense Review, recommend vastly increasing the language capabilities and cultural education in DoD.

7. (U) LINES OF EFFORT (THIS SECTION NOT USED)

8. (U) RESOURCES FOR IMPLEMENTATION

(U) Additional authorities and resources required to implement recommendations:

(U) NOTE: All figures are *estimates only*. Exact resources in dollars and personnel will require study by agencies assigned the lead for execution. Where “funding” appears, the assumption is the assigned agency will need additional money for the new responsibility but has the required personnel. Where “personnel” appears, the team estimates that the lead organization requires more people, but current funding is probably sufficient. Where both “funding and personnel” appear, the assumption is the assigned agency will require augmentation in both areas.

1. (U) Senior SC Advisor to POTUS

Resource: Personnel to fill a “small” NSC staff
Lead for action: POTUS
CENTCOM role: Advocacy

2. (U) MEPP Envoy

Resource: Personnel
Lead for action: POTUS
CENTCOM role: Advocacy

3. (U) Public Diplomacy NGO

Resource: \$40-50M
Lead for action: DoS
CENTCOM role: Advocacy

4. (U) NESAs expansion

Resource: \$30-50M
Lead for action: CENTCOM/NESA
CENTCOM role: Execution

5. (U) Lincoln Centers/American Corners

Resource: \$20-40M
Lead for action: DoS
CENTCOM role: Advocacy

6. (U) Content generation

Resource: Funding
Lead for action: DoS/DoD
CENTCOM role: Advocacy

7. (U) Public/Private partnership – legal authority to establish, funding to support

Resource: Funding, change or establish authorities
Lead for action: DoS
CENTCOM role: Advocacy

8. (U) SC program monitoring and evaluation

Resource: Funding and personnel
Lead for action: DoS/DoD
CENTCOM role: Advocacy

9. (U) Sub-Regional SC Teams

- Resource: Funding and personnel
Lead for action: DoS & USCENTCOM
10. (U) **Central Asian States “Radio” and “TV”**
Resource: Funding
Lead for action: DoS/BBG
CENTCOM role: Advocacy
11. (U) **BBG Russian and Central Asian State language broadcasts**
Resource: Funding and personnel
Lead for action: DoS/BBG
CENTCOM role: Advocacy
12. (U) **New regional communications networks**
Resource: Funding
Lead for action: DoS with DoD support
CENTCOM role: Advocacy
13. (U) **Train and build capacity of local media**
Resource: Funding and personnel
Lead for action: DoS/USAID
CENTCOM role: Advocacy
14. (U) **Fulbright and scholarship program expansion**
Resource: Funding
Lead for action: DoS
CENTCOM role: Advocacy
15. (U) **English language training**
Resource: Funding and personnel
Lead for action: DoS/USAID
CENTCOM role: Advocacy
16. (U) **US supported media**
Resource: Funding
Lead for action: DoS/BBG
CENTCOM role: Advocacy
17. (U) **Empowering local voices**
Resource: Funding and personnel
Lead for action: DoS/USAID
CENTCOM role: Advocacy
18. (U) **Mobile phone interaction/content**
Resource: Funding and personnel
Lead for action: DoS with DoD support
CENTCOM role: Advocacy
19. (U) **MEPI expansion**
Resource: Funding
Lead for action: DoS
CENTCOM role: Advocacy
20. (U) **Language and cultural training**
Resource: Funding and personnel
Lead for action: DoS/DoD
CENTCOM role: Advocacy and execution

21. (U) **DoS/DoD/CENTCOM SC exchange assignments**
Resource: Personnel
Lead for action: DoS/DoD/CENTCOM
CENTCOM role: Advocacy and execution
22. (U) **SC Augmentation to Embassies**
Resource: Funding and personnel
Lead for action: USCENTCOM
23. (U) **Links between NGOs**
Resource: Funding and personnel
Lead for action: DoS/USAID
CENTCOM role: Advocacy
24. (U) **Commander's SC training**
Resource: Funding and personnel
Lead for action: USCENTCOM
27. (U) **Combat Camera and Electronic News Gathering distribution**
Resource: Funding and personnel
Lead for action: DoD/CENTCOM
CENTCOM role: Advocacy and execution
28. (U) **Leader engagement**
Resource: Personnel
Lead for action: DoS/DoD, others in support
CENTCOM role: Advocacy and execution
29. (U) **InfoCentral expansion**
Resource: Funding
Lead for action: DoS
CENTCOM role: Advocacy
31. (U) **CENTCOM SC unified structure**
Lead for action: CENTCOM
CENTCOM role: Execution
32. (U) **Smith-Mundt Act interpretation**
Resource: None
Lead for action: DoD with DoS support
CENTCOM role: Advocacy

9. (U) RISKS AND MITIGATION

(U) The most serious risks we face in the strategic communication field are policy failures. When policy goals and objectives are not realized and/or when our actions undermine our overall objectives there is little that Strategic Communication can do alone to reverse the damage to our national interest. Once we identify the problems and change our course, an aggressive well-designed and clearly articulated communication strategy can do a great deal to re-gain the ground and provide an environment that is more hospitable to the achievement of our objectives. In addition to policy risks, there are operational risks in the way we implement our Strategic Communication strategies when the methodology itself is problematic or questions arise regarding a commercial/contractor or NGO funded by the U.S. government.

9.1. (U) Operational Risks:

- (U) Exposure of U.S. government support:
 - (U) As the USG expands its role in support of indigenous voices, the information and nature of that support entering the public domain on future SC activities and the indigenous voices themselves should be carefully assessed. Funding support of any activity likely to embarrass the U.S. government if publicized, due to the nature of the activity itself, should not be supported. In other words if public release of any government funded activity would not pass the Washington Post test it should not be funded/supported by the U.S. government.
 - (U) Particularly in countries where we have active combat forces there is a very real possibility that those who we support could be placed in danger by revelation of our support. Before any funding decisions are made, this threat needs to be evaluated and mitigation measures put into place, as required.
- (U) Commercial Contracts:
 - (U) With increased use of commercial entities to develop and carry out SC activities, we run the risk of embarrassment by actions taken by the commercial firms or individuals. An assessment to include mitigation measures should be put in place particularly in countries like Afghanistan and Iraq where such problems would pose strategic threats to our operations.

9.2. (U) Policy Risks:

- (U) Our success in Iraq reversed.

(U) Failure to consolidate our success in Iraq will be considered a strategic failure by the United States and provide extremists and other adversarial States increased opportunity to undermine the United States.

- (U) Mitigation: Continue to invest in SC within Iraq & the region but recognize that domestic and regional PA environment will be extremely negative.
- (U) Israel attacks Iranian nuclear facilities:

(U) Regionally, an attack on Iran by Israel will be widely perceived as authorized by the United States.

- (U) Mitigation: The administration must have a SC plan in place prior to the possibility of an attack. The plan should take into account the likelihood of civilian casualties and a heightened threat to U.S. interests and allies in the region.
- (U) Iran tests a nuclear weapon:

(U) Iran's power in the region (and that of its proxies) is strengthened.

- (U) Mitigation. Even before Iran tests a nuclear weapon, the dangers of nuclear proliferation throughout the region needs to be explained to global and particularly regional audiences to maintain pressure on Iran. The cost to the Iranian people caused by pursuit of a nuclear capability must be laid out clearly both inside and outside Iran. If Iran tests a nuclear weapon, the Administration directly and through SC assets needs to send a clear

message that the United States will respond with overwhelming force against Iran at the first sign of any pending attack on any of our regional allies.

- (U) Afghanistan falls to Taliban:

(U) The U.S. has committed itself to support Afghanistan to prevent further threats to the region and the U.S. homeland. Failure in Afghanistan is a defeat for the United States and victory for violent extremist organizations which will open the homeland to potential attack.

- (U) Mitigation. SC message should clearly state the United States' objective to close safe havens in Afghanistan and deter an extremist regime from supporting groups that would plot an attack on the homeland. Strong messaging and global information campaigns will take the lead in our SC efforts as engagement in Afghanistan will be more difficult.
- (U) MEPP remains stalled:

(U) The regional perception will be that the United States has failed as an honest broker and has empowered Israeli policies/actions at the cost of Palestinians and the Arab states.

- (U) Mitigation: POTUS, DoS, DoD increase messaging and engagement across the Middle East emphasizing U.S. efforts to reduce the suffering of civilians on both sides. Although this strategy will not remove the suspicion of U.S. motives in support of Israeli interests and actions, not engaging will allow the United States standing to further erode unchecked.
- (U) The security situation in Pakistan declines to the point where there is a military coup:

(U) The United States will be seen as supporting another regional strong-man and not living up to our democratic values.

- (U) Mitigation: The United States must clearly state our overarching policy objectives in Pakistan of closing safe havens to VEOs and preventing nuclear proliferation. Our SC activities should also highlight that the internal threat from indigenous violent extremists is the primary threat to Pakistan's stability. At the same time we will continue to call for a return to civilian government as we did during the time of Musharref.

10. (U) CONCLUSIONS (THIS SECTION NOT USED)

(U) APPENDICES:

1. (U) SITUATION ASSESSMENT
2. (U) REGULATIONS AND AUTHORITIES
3. (U) MEASUREMENT AND EVALUATION
4. (U) REFERENCES
5. (U) CONTACT LIST
6. (U) TEAM MEMBERS

APPENDIX 1 (SITUATION ASSESSMENT) TO ANNEX C (STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION)

(U) US Policy Objectives for CENTCOM AOR

- (U) Promote common interests in order to enhance stability.
- (U) Defeat Violent Extremist Organizations.
- (U) Counter the proliferation, acquisition and use of WMD.
- (U) Assist in setting the conditions that will enable economic development and prosperity.
- (U) Prepare US and partner forces to respond to emerging challenges.

(U) SC Assumptions

- (U) The U.S. lacks credibility in the region that will not be overcome in the short-term.
- (U) The U.S. change in administration provides a finite window of opportunity to begin to address the US deficit in credibility and trust and change perceptions in the region.
- (U) The funding disparity for SC between DoD and the DoS, at least for the foreseeable future, will exist.
- (U) The media environment will continue to evolve rapidly with advances in information technology.
- (U) US policies on Arab-Israeli conflict and fallout from kinetic operations will inevitably continue to challenge management of the strategic communications (SC) environment throughout the region.
- (U) US leadership is impatient for immediate change to a more favorable PA environment.

(U) Key Observations

- (U) Since 1990, the face of the US in the region has been a military one.
- (U) Cultural, ethnic and linguistic diversity (+ significant isolated areas) creates an exceptionally challenging environment for SC.
- (U) US credibility and trust deficit, but new US Administration offers SC opportunities to begin to address this.
- (U) Both Russia and Iran have significant SC operations in sub regions of the AOR.
- (U) Iran and Iraq inevitably have a special relationship.
- (U) MEPP narrative central to SC effort in most of AOR and special US/Israel relationship creates SC challenges.
- (U) Pakistan instability and relations with India now and in future most important problem in the AOR.
- (U) DoS U/S PD leads US SC but lacks authority and resources. Results in weak US SC Interagency coordination; country level Interagency cooperation and implementation is working but needs strengthening at sub-regional level.
- (U) USG lacks adequate regional expertise to understand and affect the environment and may become overly reliant on commercial sources.
- (U) It is easier to authorize a kill than to communicate due to arcane authorities and regulations (e.g. combat camera video availability).

- (U) Messaging dominates our SC operations; we need more focus on engagements and partner capacity building.
- (U) Actions will always outweigh words.
- (U) Our entry into modern media techniques is essential but will be evolutionary.
- (U) SC planning is not consistently integrated at policy-making level and leads to failure in shaping the environment. As Edward R. Murrow noted, need to be in at the takeoff, not just the crash-landing.

(U) Big Ideas

- (U) USG/NGO partnership to establish a USIA-like PD institution focusing on long term soft power programs on the model of the ‘British Council’ throughout AOR. As a primarily NGO entity it should be housed outside the Embassy compound.
- (U) CENTCOM’s SC Spokesman should be a Civilian (i.e. follow Pentagon model)
- (U) Assign CENTCOM SC capability to Embassies to increase their capacity.
- (U) CENTCOM should expand NESACenter into Tampa and in the AOR.
- (U) Create DoS-led sub regional SC Interagency coordination teams throughout CENTCOM AOR with some funding capability.

(U) SC Context

(U) Interagency SC

(U) US PD and SC strategy is led by the DoS under the aegis of the U/S for Public Affairs & Public Diplomacy. However, the DoS does not have the oversight authority over all USG SC funding levels and programs in what can be described as a highly decentralized SC system in which country Missions and COCOMs have significant power. In recognition of the need for greater coherency and ‘unity of understanding’, U/S for PA & PD chairs a Policy Coordinating Committee (PCC) to which all elements of USG are invited. This PCC produced the US National Strategy for Public Diplomacy and SC²⁴ in 2007 that sets out global core messages, which now informs SC in all USG Departments. CENTCOM draws on this strategy when designing its own theatre and sub regional SC plans. A coherency ‘check’ is built into CENTCOM’s planning process when their plans are aligned with the Mission Strategic Plans (MSPs) produced for each country by the Chief of Mission which are independently informed by the PCC Strategic Communications Strategy.

(U) The U/S for PA & PD also established the Counter Terrorism Communications Center (CTCC) to coordinate overt USG efforts and draw on resources of the entire interagency to produce coherent messaging in the war on terrorism. It responds to breaking events with talking points and works closely with the Rapid Response Unit at the DoS’s public affairs office to put out a daily anti-terrorism message. These go out to more than 2000 key USG representatives including combatant commands and embassies.

(U) The DoS-led Interagency Strategic Communications Fusion Team brings together professionals from DoD, BBG and the intelligence community amongst others on a weekly basis to exchange

²⁴ “Strategic Communication and Public Diplomacy.” Policy Coordinating Committee. Released June 2007.

experiences, ideas and best practices. Speakers from inside and outside the government are chosen for their ability to contribute ideas and form a network to produce “hive knowledge.” Since 2005, DoS’s International Information Programs has maintained an information portal and wiki available to anybody with a dot.gov or dot.mil email, as well as others by special arrangement. All USG employees can read InfoCentral and contribute to it. InfoCentral contains the latest talking points by the USG, research by various organizations and provides a best-practices public diplomacy tool kit.

(U) Global Media Environment

(U) Modern media technology allows a wide spectrum of diverse parties to provide content that can be rapidly retransmitted across television, radio and the internet in a 24/7 news cycle. This constant renewal and reorganizing of the news can favor speed over accuracy among less discerning media outlets.

(U) Media technology also provides opportunities for nations and empowers groups and individuals to develop content that distorts messages or promulgates outright lies, with unclear or no attribution, which permits little redress. All content, if tagged, linked, or broadcast, can reach the mass media if left unchecked.

(U) Regional Context

(U) The Medium: Arabic is the common native language in the south-west part of the AO, from Iraq to Egypt. This region is served by a well-developed Arabic media (government-owned and private), now including several satellite networks that encompass the Arabic-speaking regions of the AO. Persian languages (Farsi, Dari, Tajik etc) are used in Iran and Afghanistan along with Pashtu, Urdu and other south Asian languages in the latter and in Pakistan. In the nations that were part of the Soviet Union, Russian remains the only common language in Central Asia, although that is expected to diminish with time.

(U) Political Context: Polling indicates widespread mistrust of USG motives within both the leadership and peoples of the CENTCOM AOR. Regional partners are often reluctant to associate publicly with U.S. positions and policies, although they often provide unacknowledged private support. Publicly, many of the governments in the region maintain a tolerant public view of our adversaries in order to avoid confrontation and to conform with their public opinion. Highly centralized governments with limited degrees of freedom of speech and political participation, have resulted in a high level of dissatisfaction and frustration within many of the countries in the region. This breeds radical elements who blame Western support for the survival and longevity of authoritarian governments and the continued occupation of Palestine, who have failed across the economic, health and educational institutions of the region.

(U) Perception of CENTCOM’s Role

(U) While the US military presence in the region is not new, it has been the predominant face of the USG in the area since 1990. As the DoS presence declined, particularly in the Public Diplomacy arena, and our Embassies became less accessible due to security concerns, the Military engagement became more prominent and visible. In the post 9/11 period with OEF and shortly followed by OIF,

CENTCOM became the USG's primary form of engagement in the War on Terror with the governments and peoples of the region where the conflict was oftentimes perceived as a War on Islam. Our warrior culture on the battlefields of Iraqi/Afghan cities and villages is carried in vivid images on TV and print media given the capacity of today's media technology. Those images correlate with similar images coming out of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and serve to create the narrative of the US, in cooperation with Israel, as the lethal force with overwhelming capability waging a war that is perceived by large majorities as targeting the nation of Islam. With our multi-year presence in Iraq and Afghanistan, CENTCOM is mostly perceived as the occupying force of a colonial super power. Its presence in most nations is unwelcome by majority of people but accepted by the governments as the "cost" of a US security umbrella.

(U) Implementing SC Strategy

(U) US leadership is impatient for immediate change to a more favorable PA environment. Our SC goal is to devalue terrorism not to make people love the US. Cultural change is a long term venture during which programs will fail as well as succeed. Cultural change, particularly in traditional societies, is a slow process driven primarily by indigenous factors. We can affect only a small part of that change and must remain closely engaged for a long period counted in decades. This effort is never a military-only endeavor.

(U) All products, programs and activities that are part of SC fall into three categories or a "Triad of SC": 1) messaging 2) engaging and 3) relationship & capacity building. Actions and responses are the basis of any message, but it is the perception of those actions, more than the actions themselves, that set the tone of the public affairs environment. What matters is not what we think we say but what our audiences hear and the context in which they hear it. Therefore, it is not enough to message; one must also engage and build indigenous capacity. In terms of our capacity, we also need to have the regional expertise (cultural/linguistic and on the ground experience) incorporated in the design of SC strategies and activities.

(U) **Defining the Problem Set**

(U) Interagency Efforts & Coordination

(U) **A USIA-like Entity:** With the end of the Cold War, USIA was consolidated into the DoS and budget cuts were made in both PD programs and human resources. After 9/11 many in and out of government have called for the re-establishment of a USIA-like entity. During assessment interviews some officers felt the consolidation had finally provided PA/PD a place at the table during the policy-making and planning process. However, there was general consensus for the need to expand the long-term PD programs for global audiences to increase our ability to inform, influence and build enduring relationships. Two options have been suggested; USG supporting a NGO to establish a separate PD institution with presence overseas modeled on the British Council or dramatically increasing DoS PD capabilities.

(U) **Responsibility but not Authority:** DoS has the responsibility to lead government-wide SC, but lacks the authority to direct action and controls only DoS funds. Multiple actors in the SC environment each bring a host of distinct, and often unstated, assumptions, culture, habits, and

understandings of SC leading to a lack of coherence in the central vision. This is exacerbated by the ongoing application of the Smith-Mundt act of 1948 which has become impossible to follow given the “seepage” nature of the modern globalized media. DoD, due to its larger funding base for SC and its mission in the Post 9/11 period to fight two wars in the CENTCOM AOR, has assumed a much larger role. Often, current SC rules of engagement make it easier to engage with bullets than with communication. For example we can set quick authorizations to execute strikes on enemy target but it takes longer to get approval to release visual information to the public once the strike is complete.

(U) Centralized and Decentralized: Debate continues as to the appropriate level of control that should be placed over the design and execution of SC. The argument ebbs from a highly centralized model to a completely decentralized system. A centralized understanding of the overall SC vision with emphasis on coordination/information sharing at the Washington interagency level is considered essential with all other aspects of SC design and implementation decentralized to the agency and local delivery level as the most realistic model given the ever-evolving nature of SC.

(U) Credibility and Trust (or not)

(U) Israel/Palestine: The Israel-Palestine-Arab peace process (or lack thereof) is a critical part of the USG/CENTCOM AOR public affairs environment. The occupation and associated severe humanitarian conditions of the Palestinian people are perceived by the overwhelming majority of states and their populations in the region as a grave injustice and a key source of instability. It is an issue that provides a ready theme for incitement and recruiting by our adversaries among the population, as well as an excuse and a distraction from other issues at the national level throughout the region. The US close relationship with Israel, in the context of a defunct peace process, makes adversary claims concerning malign and nefarious US policy objectives plausible, and links US credibility and reputation to perceived injustices perpetrated by Israel. Israeli actions with regard to the occupation of the West Bank and the isolation of Gaza, in the context of moribund peace process and American support, make claims about US double standards and anti-Islamic agenda more plausible.

(U) Pakistan and the Eastward Shift: As the Iraq conflict winds down, the center of concern will move to Pakistan and Afghanistan. Pakistan’s cold war with India is the major source of concern and the U.S. has less leverage over this issue than preferable. Pakistan’s relationship with Afghanistan also has a strategic impact. Although a strategic relationship with Pakistan seems essential, our contacts remain de-facto transactional until the India situation is mitigated (if not solved) and Pakistan firmly rejects the use of non-state extremists as instruments of national power. US influence on Pakistan’s role in countering the insurgency has been variable although it is perceived as strengthening in 2008. Part of that has been US failure to articulate a long term strategy that appears to be than more than simply containing violent extremism. This leaves Pakistan with the perception that the US will eventually leave, which impacts on its own strategic policy toward the Government of Afghanistan. However, it is not clear that Pakistan has the capacity to sustain a closer relationship with the U.S. given public attitudes.

(S//REL TO USA, FVEY) Iran: Iran sits between the two areas of concern in Iraq and Afghanistan/Pakistan and is the only regional power with the capacity and will to challenge the U.S. across a broad spectrum. Our Iran team has assessed that isolating Iran has not been entirely successful. If/how to engage with an adversary that is using active public diplomacy measures against

us is problematic. Given the common religious communities and proximity, a special relationship between Iran and Iraq is considered inevitable.

(U) Visas: US visa restrictions²⁵ further exacerbate the level of mistrust in terms of US intentions. On the one hand, the US says that it is not an enemy of Islam and holds out the hand of friendship. On the other hand it operates a painfully slow visa application process in some countries which is often followed by a very difficult and humiliating ‘arrival’ experience that sends the opposite message.

(U) Credibility of the Voice: US SC has historically sought to deliver its own messages and avoids support to speakers who may not agree fully with all US policy objectives. RAND²⁶ have identified a number of voices in the CENTCOM AOR that support US values on key issues (e.g. VE, tolerance, pluralism etc.) but that might not support all the policies of the US in the region. These indigenous voices are far more credible than ours in the region.

(U) Complexity/Disparity of Media Environment

(U) The CENTCOM AOR is extremely diverse. Some of the countries and people within the countries have long histories of internecine conflict. This means that no action or event will have the same impact across the region and the same event may, in some cases, even have contradictory effects. There are no fully-functioning democracies in the region and many do not enjoy a free media environment. This has a profound impact on SC, since many of its basic tools are far more effective in free-market democracies with reasonably free media. With the exceptions of CNN and BBC, no media outlets reach the entire region and only the BBC and Voice of America (including Radio Sawa) provide extensive coverage in a number of languages. Arabic media provides a rich source of media in the Middle East, whilst Central Asia is dominated by the Russian media. Iran either directly or indirectly supports a wide network of media outlets that focus on consolidating its messages to the region.

(U) Evolving Technology: In terms of technology and its impact on SC, there has been a rapid expansion of satellite TV, mobile phones and the internet along with an associated expansion in the development of programming and advertising. Media quality in the AOR is improving rapidly, presenting CENTCOM with an increasingly professional and sophisticated media environment. Internet is beginning to supplant other media among young people, with cellular phones, social networking and video games arguably being the most important media among young opinion leaders. Some core audiences, however, remain relatively, though not entirely, isolated from these trends, particularly in parts of Central Asia, Pakistan and Afghanistan. Another impact of this revolution in media is that we face an increasingly sophisticated consumer with multiple choices throughout the region, especially in the younger population.

(U) Media Ownership: Media ownership and control is a complex mix of government-owned to commercial/private owned media with varying degrees of self-censorship. Satellite TV has created a competitive and commercial mass media across much of the region, with associated development of

²⁵ We were told that a Saudi Citizen can expect to wait 4 to 6 months for a visa to visit the US. UK have just introduced a 48 hour fast track system, whilst UK Embassy’s throughout the region now operate local citizen visa help desks promising a response within 24 hours and even offering a delivery service.

²⁶ Meeting at RAND, Washington 2 Dec 08.

audience competition dynamics. This drives media management to typical “lowest common denominator” audience orientation, similar to the tactics of William Randolph Hearst at the beginning of American mass media towards the end of the 19th century.

(U) Misinformation, Disinformation: Given wide mistrust of US objectives and compelling nature of adversary narratives that effectively broaden sympathies with their perceived “just” cause, the lack of free media makes it easier for our adversaries to use misinformation and disinformation to distort our positions and motives. At the same time, the authoritarian media controls make the development of critical countervailing voices far more difficult than it might be in a fully developed free media system.

(U) Assessment

(U) Interagency

~~(S//REL TO USA, FVEY)~~

(b)(1)1.4 (d), (b)(5)

(b)(1)1.4 (d), (b)(5)

(U) Recommendation: Clearly articulate the roles of State & DOD in SC and fund accordingly.

²⁷ “Strategic Communication and Public Diplomacy,” Policy Coordinating Committee. Released June 2007.

²⁸ “Principles of Strategic Communications Memorandum,” Robert T Hastings. Released 15 Aug 2008.

(U) Recommendation: CG CENTCOM should seek to identify and remove the bureaucratic (and legal) obstacles that are preventing joint activities or direct transfers to DoS, while at the same time maintaining critical capacities appropriate for Combatant Command roles and responsibilities.

(U) Recommendation: Creating a legal and regulatory basis for partnership between DoS and DoD would permit a far more effective level for the exchange of resources, program coordination, and goal synchronization.

(U) Recommendation: US establish a NGO PD institution focusing on long term soft power programs devoted to engagement and relationship building including the equivalent of ‘British Council’ type centers overseas.

(U) Coordination/Duplication. Across USG, a number of SC initiatives have been developed as part of the overall War of Terror with a dramatic increase in the level of activity beginning in 2006. In particular, countering the voice of extremist violence programs are underway in DoS, SOCOM and COCOMs (and, we suspect, many more). Separately, we identified similar programs being led by key allies, and in particular the UK where both the Defense Information Operations organization and the Research, Information and Communication Unit (RICU at the Home Office) were developing and funding similar products to those being developed by the US. There was also evidence that both U.S. and UK were investing resources to undertake influence mapping in the same countries. Indeed, SecDef has recently noted that ‘the capabilities of the United States’ allies and partners may be as important as its own’.²⁹ This level of activity suggests the need for greater central oversight of programs although stakeholders were clear in the need to maintain decentralized design/execution, particularly in a region as diverse as the CENTCOM AOR. Given that diversity, we believe that reinforcement of coordination as well as the provision of cross national boundary regional expertise would be provided if we created empowered DoS led regional SC teams. Importantly, we should not just add another layer of bureaucracy, but remove DoD from the SC approval process once they have issued intent and authorities to these teams. The team would ensure Embassy MSPs not only reflected the goals of US SC policy, but also provided detailed implementation plans, drawing on resource from across the government.

(U) Recommendation: Establish a POTUS led ‘central vision’ for SC and strive for a unity of understanding at the department level by establishing information sharing and coordination mechanisms.

(U) Recommendation: USG should seek to influence/take advantage of similar SC operations being conducted by key Allies through existing federal agency relationships with counterparts in the “Five Eyes” community.

(U) Recommendation: Create empowered DoS-led sub regional SC Interagency coordination teams throughout CENTCOM AOR with some funding capability to compliment Mission led relationship development.

²⁹ “Preparing for the New Age,” Robert Gates. 11 Dec 2008.

(U) To support effective resource targeting metrics, polling and assessment is essential. Again, we found evidence of duplication, as well as gaps, across USG with DoS, BBG, DoD SO/LIC, SOCOM, CENTCOM and in country commands in Afghanistan and Iraq, all possessed their own polling resources and assessment. It was not clear how this information was shared. One contractor noted that he had been asked to undertake 90 polls for various USG Departments over the last 2 years. We also noted that Strategic Command is tasked to produce media analysis in parallel to the Broadcasting Board of Governors who had also been tasked to deliver a similar product. This incoherence has been recognized and the SC PCC has established a sub PCC covering metrics, polling and research chaired by the BBG. The CAT team was able to attend a meeting of this group, which consisted BBG, NSC, NCTC, JS/J5, SOCOM, JMISC, DoS (IIP). (Strategic Command was not represented.)

(U) Recommendation: CG CENTCOM should support and encourage the sub PCC process led by BBG by sharing our information to assist in development of a coherent approach to metrics, polling and research.

(U) Branding. The overall perception is that priority is given to reactive SC efforts (“being first with the facts” in response to events or claims by adversaries) with significantly less attention being paid to proactive long term shaping efforts. SC efforts do not appear to always be grounded in an understanding of audience narratives and metaphors, but are built around USG themes and messages. During the assessment interviews it was suggested that some US approaches to SC may not only damage our own efforts but also add substantial value to adversary SC efforts. U.S. SC focus and frequent use of the Al Qaeda and UBL attributions, for example, may have increased the organizations global “brand awareness.” (Interviewees and the recent Pew Global Project Poll³⁰ noted that, more recently, our success in Iraq coupled by the revelations of AQ’s brutality and incompetence there has degraded the brand.)

(U) Recommendation: In countering AQ messaging, CENTCOM should seek to diminish AQ’s brand by referring to violent extremists as individual groups not as part of an umbrella organization such as AQ.

(U) Internet. Our adversaries have successfully used new technology to enhance their outreach. Although the extent of actual AQ command and control is arguable, Al Qaeda has clearly metastasized on the Internet, with disparate groups claiming inspiration for their violence and evidently getting distance learning tips and training on the web. The U.S. and its key Allies are developing capacities to address this; however we must recognize that the protean nature of Internet communications and the variety of the audiences inevitably means this will not be a coherent effort.

(U) Recommendation: CENTCOM should continue to invest in computer network operations (CNO).

(U) Recommendation: CENTCOM should seek to leverage the capabilities of key western Allies in developing their CNO capability.

³⁰ Pew Global Attitudes Project dated 17 Sep 2008.

(U) CENTCOM AOR: Overview of Operations

CENTCOM SC resources traditionally focus on shaping the environment for ongoing operations. Interviewees noted that the definition of ongoing operations has been blurred in the “war on terrorism” and the relatively high level of DoD resourcing has blurred authorities and responsibilities. This distortion is leading directly to incoherence and deepening duplication and stove piping. A simple, but immediate tool that might reduce that incoherence would be for CENTCOM to develop a ‘Capabilities Catalogue’ which could be uploaded to the ‘InfoCentral’ tool developed by the DoS. Shaping appears to have morphed into a broader definition which often includes direct investment in what historically may have been public diplomacy programs under the direction of the DoS and before that the United States Information Agency (USIA). Furthermore, with USIA’s demise and CENTCOM’s larger role in the AOR, our military has become the predominant face of the USG dwarfing, to some extent, both traditional and public diplomacy.

(U) Recommendation: CENTCOM (and SOCOM, STRATCOM, etc) should develop ‘Capability Catalogue’, which can be uploaded and maintained on ‘InfoCentral’ to improve coordination and avoid duplication.

(U) Recommendation: CENTCOM’s Strategic Communication Spokesman should be a Civilian, bringing in Military officers as necessary for briefings (i.e. Pentagon model.)

(U) Recommendation: Assign CENTCOM officers to Embassy PA sections (under COM authority) to provide military expertise and the liaison function with CENTCOM.

(U) Messaging

(U) Both DoS and CENTCOM are actively involved in messaging to the AOR. The tempo of activity has literally boomed over the past 2 years; CENTCOM IO is conducting roughly 47 distinct activities, all of which impact AOR messaging. Some of these efforts are highly classified, and are conducted in cooperation with USSOCOM, USSTRATCOM and other government agencies. Most CENTCOM IO programs are focused on Iraq and Afghanistan for two reasons; as active combat zones, authorities exist to conduct programs and combat commanders are responsible for execution. It is intended that all CENTCOM information operations will fall under OPERATION EARNEST VOICE (OEV), which is in the final stages of staffing and should be signed in the near future.

(U) Radio/TV: The USG has few personnel capable of participating in open debate carried out in the languages of the sub-region. USG presence on pan-Arab satellite channels has increased in recent years, but for the most part the USG abstains from participating in the debates over US and Coalition policy carried out on such channels such as al-Jazeera. USG has made ineffective use of legacy speakers (diaspora communities) to convey US and Coalition messages. DoS and BBG have also increased and expanded their programs ranging from traditional media techniques and public affairs activities to satellite broadcasting and new media technology. The Radio Free Europe broadcasts to all the countries of Central Asia in Dari, Pashtu and English, Arabic, Kazakh, Kyrgyz, Tajik, and Uzbek but it is not easily heard in most countries due to lack of access to the technology (internet) and for a limited number of hours/day. Equally, VOA states that it broadcasts in Kurdish, Russian, Persian, Uzbek, Pasto, Dari, Urdu and English -- also not easily accessed because it is on shortwave and for few

hours/day. Although VoA ceased Arabic broadcasting in 2002, Radio SAWA replaced their service. Radio Farda transmits in Persian. In terms of television programs, in late 2002 Al Hurra began television broadcasting. Al Hurra continues to develop although further research is required into its impact within the region.

(U) Recommendation: Establish TV satellite broadcasting to Central Asia and increase Radio access on FM and AM while increasing hours/day.

(U) Recommendation: Explore opportunity to invest in WiFi capability across Central Asia as a means to improve their economies while enhancing access to open sources of information.

(U) Recommendation: Further research is required to determine Al Hurra's impact in Iraq and the region.

(U) Tsunami Opportunities: The Diplomacy of Deeds is a program in which DoS and DoD have been working together to better publicize successful humanitarian efforts and responses to disasters such as the tsunami and the Pakistan earthquake. The impact on public opinion was huge. Significant activities taking place in the AOR often are carried out without any public affairs dimensions such as the CCJ4 construction, Surgeon MEDCAPs and VETCAPs, and other stability operations. The nature of these activities could have significant impact on public opinion.

(U) Recommendation: CENTCOM staff should design and include all PA supporting actions before, during and after-execution for non-mil activities that have significant positive impact on public opinion.

(U) New Media: The United States enjoys a competitive advantage in the application of new media (blogs, social networking, and interactive gaming etc) but the USG, has only recently been taking advantage of the new opportunities. Both DoS and DoD are currently experimenting with online gaming resident on cellular phones. The Annenberg Center at USC is developing a diplomatic presence in online worlds such as Second Life.

(U) Recommendation: Rapid expansion of Cell phone capability (gaming, video and music) should be undertaken by USG. (In the Arab world, 194 Million cell phone lines)

CENTCOM's Digital Engagement Team (DET) operates under PA authorities and is responsible for locating, translating, and posting of official USG information on Arab and Farsi web sites. Expansion into Russian, Urdu, and Pashto is taking place by the end of 2009. As of Sep 2008, over 600 articles had been posted to over 530 distinct websites³¹. The DET does not blog, but makes articles and videos available to interested third parties. All information from the DET is attributable to the USG & CENTCOM. Treasury and the DET have cooperated designating & posting terrorist entities simultaneously on English and Arabic websites for the first time in history in 2008. To date, Treasury has cooperated on two designations, with two more pending.

(U) Recommendation: USG to invest in additional translation capability. (DoS has small Arabic Language Book Program.)

³¹ Source: CENTCOM IO.

(U) Websites and Podcasts. Turning to information websites, DoS recently began to include fully interactive features and streaming video and audio. Web pages are published in Arabic, Persian and Russian; the Persian site attracts nearly 50,000 visitors a week³² whilst the Persian language version of an electronic journal “Countering the Terrorist Mentality” got more than 125,000 visitors³³. DoS has also developed the capacity to produce podcasts, which can bypass local media censors and in many cases develops virally as it is copied and spread by others. CENTCOM is sponsoring the Regional Magazine Initiative (RMI), Middle East Web Initiative (MEWI), and the Central Asia Web Initiative (CASWI). The RMI is a PSYOP product aimed at the professional security forces of the region, similar to ‘Military Review’. The MEWI and CASWI are two influence web sites, aimed at the Arab speaking and Russian speaking portions of the region, respectfully. Content is generated by local news agencies and hired stringers. The sites will cover news, entertainment, social, economics, and sports.

(U) Hostile Environment for VEOs: A number of new activities focusing on creating a hostile environment for VEOs have been launched throughout the USG. DoS has a number of new initiatives covered under the Engagement section. At CENTCOM, OPERATION NATIVE ECHO is designed to disseminate a message to counter violent extremism through a variety of media tools in local languages. There are a number of voices in the CENTCOM AOR that support US values on key issues of tolerance and terrorism but that might not support all the policies of the US in the region. These indigenous voices are far more credible than ours in addressing these sensitive issues. In a non-combat situation, IO programs are approved by the military chain of command and then require approval by the US Ambassador. Given other operational restrictions on target audiences and requirements to keep effects local, obtaining approval and running IO programs in “normal” i.e. non-combat situations is time consuming and bureaucratically difficult.

(U) Recommendation: Simplify authorities for planning and execution of IO programs in non-combat situations. The proposed sub-regional SC coordination teams would have a clear and positive impact on this problem. (additional research required.)

(U) Recommendation: Increase our tolerance threshold for indigenous voices that support our basic values particularly on VEOs but may not agree with all USG policy.

(U) SC Integration and Planning. Lack of command wide synchronization is a systemic gap in CENTCOM SC efforts. Plans are not structured to include SC from the beginning of the process, and therefore an opportunity for sending messages to shape the environment with targeted actions is lost. During kinetic operations, opportunities for structuring operations to include video through available combat camera units in theater are not normally planned. Therefore, the ability to counter distorted enemy claims of civilian casualties by rapidly broadcasting declassified images is lost and the enemy gains an information advantage. Combat camera takes literally thousands of images and videos and posts them to DIVIDS daily. These images are available, free, to accredited media. However, other agencies of the USG have to go through a time-consuming process to get these images.

(U) Recommendation: CENTCOM should develop institutional processes to include SC synchronization early in the planning cycle.

³² Source: www.state.gov.

³³ Source: www.state.gov.

(U) Recommendation: Simplify bureaucratic procedures and regulations to allow for immediate release of all visual information (combat camera etc) to enable pro-active communication ahead of our adversaries.

(U) Engagement

(U) A number of successful engagement program have been ongoing for some years, including the International Visitors and other exchange programs, English language training, US Speaker programs, and the Fulbright program. The new PD 2.0 initiative seeks to compliment these programs by exploiting modern technology by expanding there reach.

(U) Hostile Environment for VEO: Successful traditional DoS PD programs emphasizing engagement continue to be used throughout the region to develop and maintain a hostile environment for VEOs. Whether we engage through an in-person exchange program or interact through electronic media, our overarching goal is to engage with target audiences. The objective is to build relationships that create an environment less susceptible to VEO themes and recruiting. These include the US Speaker Program, Academic Exchanges, English teaching and US University exchange opportunities. Last year, DoS revamped its speaker program to create a strategic speaker alternative, funded to address urgent needs. It was a success in its first year, expanding the numbers of US Speakers by around 25%. Next year it will be expanded and it will be supplemented by an electronic speaker program, which involves enhancing the personal contact with web presence.

(U) Recommendation: CENTCOM should support and invest in future speaker programs for the region.

(U) Exchanges. In the CENTCOM region, exchanges include the International Visitors Program, which brings up-and-coming leaders to the U.S. for short professional programs from a week to a month in length. One of the PD programs is the FLEX program which since 1993 has brought more than 18,000 HS students from the Former Soviet Union to the U.S. for more than a decade and a half. The vast majority are from Russia and only a handful come from Central Asia.

(U) Recommendation: USG should increase exchange program in Central Asia.

(U) Fulbright: Since its establishment in 1946, the U.S. Fulbright program has provided 286,500 exchange opportunities worldwide and thousands of scholarships to students and scholars throughout the CENTCOM AOR to study in the U.S. and sent American students & scholars to the region. Host countries share in the selection process and often also with the funding. In 2003, Fulbright programs were reestablished in Iraq and Afghanistan.

(U) The American nation is bigger than the American Government. Every year thousands of foreign students study in American universities and professionals teach or do research. The numbers of foreign students is at a record number of 623,805 in 2008, up from 547,867 before the 9/11 attacks. US visa restrictions for some Arab nations have resulted in a downturn in students who opt to study in the US.

(U) Recommendation: USG needs to review its visa restrictions and processing capability if it is to maintain a steady flow of Arab students to the US, whilst maintaining homeland security. These exchanges offer opportunities to develop a positive experience of the US.

(U) Key Target Group: English teaching programs remain universally popular. DoS' Access English-teaching program focuses on low income high school-age youth. Since 2004 it has provided English language training to approximately 44,000 students in 55 countries. For every available slot in many countries in the AOR (e.g. Syria) we receive hundreds of eligible applicants that we have to turn away. Through English teaching we can access young people in our target age group to engage directly with them using the content of English teaching to promote values and ideas of an open civil society. With English language capability this critical age group will have better access to US-provided and other Internet products.

(U) Recommendation: Increase funding of the Access Program in the CENTCOM AOR as it is probably one of the easiest and most direct ways to get at a target audience and is woefully under-funded.

(U) Public Diplomacy 2.0. DoS has initiated the PD 2.0 initiative, which encompasses a number of modern media techniques designed to engage and interact. The digital outreach program is aimed at addressing negative perceptions of the US and includes contributing to blogs, chats and social networking. USG bloggers respond to issues in near real time in Arabic, Persian, Urdu and other languages on an ad hoc basis. Research among bloggers indicates that they tend to be well connected and involved with their communities off-line as well as on and are often opinion leaders. It also provides access to members of the community one might not always easily reach, for example Arab women. USG should invest further in this type of engagement although it should be recognized that progress will be evolutionary as we master new techniques.

(U) Recommendation: CENTCOM should support and invest in the evolutionary development of new media engagement techniques.

(U) Separately, IIP has created a low bandwidth internet based video based teleconferencing network, using adobe connect to bring together Embassy's and Consulates to Universities, libraries and other institutions across countries. The online chats are tied together through an interactive social network on Facebook. A direct result of this type of engagement for example was the "Greetings from America" which broadcast first person accounts about life in America from Indonesian and Pakistani high school students studying in the U.S. This program reached several million young Muslims.

(U) Relationship/Capacity Building

(U) Relationships. SC efforts are for the most part conceptualized in terms of USG messages, rather than effects sought. This leads to an under-appreciation of relationships in the SC process. Relationships are not only key to implementing SC; they are also the most fundamental output of successful SC. This includes both the relationship between the US and the region, but also relationships within the region which are long term and enduring. These issues could be addressed by ensuring that regionally, our SC efforts are 'joined up'. Further, investment in increased, long term study of and engagement with the region by expanding the NESAC Centre into the AOR would provide

an additional relationship building opportunity at the same time as giving in region outlets for voices of moderation. Our relationship building will aim to empower indigenous individual and institutions as they will have to take the lead in countering violent extremism.

(U) Recommendation: CENTCOM should expand NESACenter into Tampa + in the AOR.

(U) Capacity. DoS and USAID have for years invested in capacity building of both individuals and organizations that broadly support the establishment of civic society institutions. This has included training of Journalists and other professional as well as grants to set-up local NGOs to promote their capacity. For example US funding (public & private) for international media development in 2006 exceeded \$142 million. Total USG funding (State, BBG & USAID) in 2006 came to \$69 million. In the CENTCOM AOR a recent successful example is the establishment (by ISAF) of the Afghani Government Media Information Center which included training of local staff and their government spokesman.

(U) Recommendation: Identify further opportunities throughout the AOR to expand local capacity building of civil society and governmental institutions particularly in South & Central Asia where the need is greatest.

(U) Exploitation of Information Communications Technology (ICT) in Afghan COIN Environment. ICT can empower and accelerate success in all reconstruction efforts (e.g., security, governance, education, health care, agriculture), yet if done badly can waste money and distract from mission accomplishment. Because of the potential profits to be made, private ICT investment in some areas (e.g., cell phone service) is available, yet investment in other areas (e.g., supporting internet to schools or the development of an agricultural extension service television network) may not be available. ICT is thus a fruitful area for systematic public-private partnership. ICT is also an area of US commercial and intellectual leadership. Although there have been significant successes in Afghan ICT development, ICT is not systematically exploited as a COIN tool in large part due to the lack of focused operational level leadership for the area.

(U) Recommendation: View and treat Afghan ICT as an “essential service” and replicate the successful approach to ICT development coordination established in Iraq (the “Iraq Communications Coordination Element”). An Afghanistan Communications Coordination Element would advise USG civil and military elements, build partnerships with Afghan ICT counterparts, and facilitate development of an integrated USG approach to ICT in Afghanistan. It should have access to a commercial ICT planning and consultation capacity, develop a USG and private sector reach back capacity, and identify opportunities for US ICT businesses to contribute.

(U) Measurement and Evaluation.

(U) At the strategic, interagency level we have a mass of data (polls, media monitoring, focus group results, etc) yet little of this work is really used to inform the overarching SC effort or inform overall evaluation of our current SC operations. Recognizing the challenges inherent in this effort is important; measuring the separate effect of SC is possible in some narrow circumstances, but

evaluating the impact of a complex SC effort in dynamic circumstances is a challenging task grounded in social science research. Our expectations with regard to ‘measuring effect’ must therefore be appropriately limited. However, more can be done.

(U) While some examples of industry-standard best practices exist in our SC efforts, at the same time examples of substantial gaps are not uncommon. These include full exploitation of the world-wide web, and the data gathering and assessment potential of the web. In particular, tracking of both substantive positions and narratives and metaphors as expressed in blogs and chat rooms can be improved. Additionally, use of public opinion assessment methods other than polling should be developed. Such tools would allow the development of a more nuanced and in depth view of public opinion, beyond that associated with polls and simple “like / dislike” or “agree / disagree” conceptions of public opinion. At the level of individual campaigns and programs, specific shortfalls noted include: designing messages without a sound grounding in appropriate social science theory and social and political change strategies; launching products without appropriate pre-testing for both cultural alignment and effect; weak alignment between message effects sought and polling data collected; and less than optimal use of media monitoring as a source of systematic assessment of effect for specific communications campaigns.

(U) Recommendation: As a contribution to the BBG led metrics, analysis and polling work, CENTCOM should invest in capability to develop and undertake web based assessment and alternative tools to polling.

(U) Recommendation: CENTCOM should require all components to plan and evaluate their SC efforts. Evaluation should be forwarded to CENTCOM for analysis and shared with DoS and other agencies as appropriate.

(U) APPENDIX 2 (REGULATIONS AND AUTHORITIES) TO ANNEX C (STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION)

1. (U) INTRODUCTION. It is easier to kill our adversaries than communicate with them, due to the complex web of laws, regulations and policy that surround our current strategic communication capabilities. There remains (seven years into the War of Ideas) a fundamental mismatch between authority, responsibility and legality in the Strategic Communication/Public Diplomacy arena.

2. (U) DoD –DoS. The President has designated the State Department (DoS) as the lead agency for Strategic Communication (SC). The Under Secretary of State for Public Diplomacy (PD) is the official responsible for all USG SC efforts. However, he has neither the authority nor resources to direct action outside the DoS. DoD resources, particularly financial, are orders of magnitude greater than DoS'. Transferring funds between the two agencies to support SC programs that accomplish national objectives is either legally impossible or bureaucratically so difficult as to prevent mission accomplishment. Easing these restrictions, with proper Congressional oversight, would increase USG SC capability.

3. (U) SMITH-MUNDT ACT. The governing legislation for USG PD is the Smith-Mundt Act of 1948 (as amended). The bill sought to facilitate, by means of information dissemination, “the better understanding of the United States among the peoples of the world and to strengthen cooperative international relations.” The intent was not altruistic, but to “further the national interests of the United States.” Due to concerns of Communist infiltration of the DoS, the “domestic dissemination prohibition” language of the Act states that the information disseminated abroad by the SECSTATE “shall not be disseminated within the United States, its territories or possessions...” These restrictions are now counterproductive, and impossible to achieve given the current media environment and information technology. The internet, digital cameras, and streaming video enable an overseas audience to capture USG information products intended strictly for a foreign audience (i.e., flyers on the streets of Baghdad) translate them, digitize them, and have them broadcast world-wide in near real time. Lawyers also have applied the “prohibition” to DoD’s SC activities, contrary to the original intention of the Act which was limited to USIA. By attempting to firewall the American public from SC conducted in its name, current interpretation of the Act leads to misunderstanding, hyperbole and occasional hysteria (i.e., DoD’s attempt to establish an Office of Strategic Influence).

(U) The DoS interpretation of the Act is much less restrictive than the current DoD interpretation, which states that “Notwithstanding the absence of an explicit statutory provision applicable to the DoD, the long-standing view is that it is contrary to law for the Department to undertake operations intended to influence a domestic audience.”³⁴ The State Department’s interpretation of the Act states,

(1) (U) Under the Smith-Mundt Act, the Department is prohibited from domestically disseminating materials that have been prepared about the United States, its people, and its policies for dissemination abroad. This ban applies to public diplomacy programs, including the program materials created prior to the consolidation of the United States Information Agency (USIA) and the Department of State. Accordingly, this ban continues to apply to posting of program materials on the Internet. Program materials

³⁴ Richard Shiffrin, “Restrictions on Influencing a Domestic Audience Applicable to the Department of Defense.” August 2006.

posted on the Internet must be on the Department's international site only. (2) The Department must not distribute, advertise, or otherwise **actively** make available to persons located within the United States, Web pages that contain Smith-Mundt program materials. Embassy and mission Web sites abroad which serve both domestic and foreign audiences can accomplish this goal by ensuring that policy information for foreign audiences is clearly identified and separate from information and services directed primarily toward U.S. citizens.”³⁵

(U) Allowing the DoD to use the DoS interpretation of the Act would grant DoD increase communication capability by permitting the proper, legal posting of material on web sites currently forbidden by DoD's interpretation of the Act. The DoD would ensure that it did not, “distribute, advertise, or otherwise **actively** make available” its communications materials, but would not be banned from communicating due to possible “blowback” of information to a domestic audience, as the Act is currently interpreted. Although CENTCOM and DoD are rightly respectful of laws and policies designed to prevent propagandizing the US public, their interpretation of the Smith-Mundt Act in particular is far more restrictive than DoS' unnecessarily limiting agility. Legislation controlling SC is not geared for 21st century communications environment. CENTCOM should adopt DoS' interpretation and work to revise existing legislation and policies.

4. (U) DoD POLICY AND REGULATION. DoD's policy to clarify the “lanes in the road” between Public Affairs (PA), Information Operations (IO), and SC contributes to lack of flexibility in our SC efforts. Due to a requirement to separate IO (which consists of Psychological Operations, Computer Network Operations, Electronic Warfare, Operations Security and Military Deception) from any coordination with PA, DoD/CENTCOM efforts in support of SC have contributed to some duplication of effort and lack of coordination. We recommend improving coordination in the field by having CENTCOM place all Strategic Communications and influence efforts under a unified structure to maximize internal coordination and planning while maintaining appropriate functional integrity. DoS should establish State-led sub-regional SC coordination teams in partnership with CENTCOM throughout the AOR with some funding capability. These coordination teams would address SC/PD issues and coordinate SC actions in their sub-region. CENTCOM should assign Strategic Communications Officers to PA/PD sections of selected Embassies (e.g. Yemen, Pakistan) to increase influence capabilities and provide needed military expertise. To build relationships and increase the cultural and regional expertise of US military and civilian officials, CENTCOM should expand the Near East and South Asia Center to Tampa and to the region.

5. (U) COMBAT CAMERA. A separate problem is the integration of Combat Camera visual information (VI) into SC activities. Much of this information is either not cleared for public release or classified at the point of origin. Declassification procedures can take weeks or months if not pre-approved by the overall operational commander. VI is an important aspect of operations in Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Iraq. Pictures of civilian casualties, broadcast quickly throughout the region, effect local public opinion and Coalition popular will to continue the fight. The Coalition loses on two fronts; it is forced to react to the enemy narrative instead of defining the situation and in the battle for popular emotions. By not being present, the Coalition has ceded the VI battlespace to the enemy. Combat Camera has the technical means to capture VI in real time, giving the USG the ability to be “first with the truth.” The problem is one of training, education, and execution. Due to the

³⁵ Foreign Affairs Manual, 5 FAM, CT: IM-88, 05-16-2007

proven emotional impact of video on the overall SC effort, plans should include rapid mechanisms to release or declassify VI as quickly as possible to the public domain.

6. (U) INTERNAL REGULATIONS. DoD has large, capable communications networks immediately available. Other USG agencies most often do not. Due to lack of coordination, lateral communication, and policy, USG agencies do not use other existing, available networks to get their messages out to a regional public. This is a self-imposed restriction which reduces the volume and types of USG messaging to regional audiences. Another internal challenge is lack of SC planning across the USG. Not including PA and IO in the planning phase sacrifices messaging synchronization, reaction times and mitigation of adversary messaging. This lack of unity of effort between DoS, DoD, and other agencies' SC activities is a continuing operational challenge. Changes in regulations and organization should be examined to address these issues.

7. (U) RECOMMENDATION. Harmonizing DoD's and DoS' interpretation of the Smith-Mundt Act would increase CENTCOM's communication agility and flexibility. We recommend that DoD should adopt DoS' interpretation and work to revise existing legislation and policies. This would be the first step toward addressing the complex of policies and regulations governing USG SC that should be revised.

(U) APPENDIX 3 (MEASUREMENT AND EVALUATION) TO ANNEX C (STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION)

1. (U) INTRODUCTION. With the expansion in the last decade of the “new media” (“Web 2.0”, with user-generated content in a variety of forms, and Simple Message Service (SMS) on cell phones), greater attention to the problem of measurement and evaluation in strategic communication has developed. These new formats, because of the user’s interaction with the format, are able to generate substantial amounts of data. While these formats are useful, and the data they generate potentially insightful, traditional concerns with measuring the effectiveness of strategic communication do not vanish. Indeed, because of the nature of these media, we need to pay greater attention to detail in the design and execution of all strategic communication measurement and evaluation efforts.

(U) Traditional measurement and evaluation (M&E) activities include surveys and polling, media monitoring and content analysis, collection and analysis of social statistics and indicators, and ethnographic techniques (e.g., focus groups, in-depth structured conversations, and systematic observation). Emerging techniques linked to new media include traffic (network) analysis, blog and discussion group monitoring, search engine monitoring, “click through” (web advertising response) and SMS response analysis. This expanding range of techniques presents us with a central challenge – how do we best employ them to gain understanding? This is not a matter of technical employment (though proper technical employment of each M&E tool is important) but fundamentally a challenge in strategic communication campaign design. The fundamental reality of strategic communication measurement and evaluation is that no tool or technology can make up for the lack of a sound campaign design. M&E only provides insights and enables the development of understanding when it is rooted in a soundly designed, fully articulated strategic communication campaign. Absent such a design, data is as likely to lead to confusion as to insight.

(U) This annex reviews the fundamentals of campaign design, with regard to implications for the development and use of measurement and evaluation data. It addresses four key points: 1) the link between communication and action; 2) the need for M&E efforts to reflect the nature of the communication campaign undertaken; 3) the need for multi-dimensional evaluation efforts, and 4) the need for tight integration of M&E and campaign management.

2. (U) ACTIONS AND WORDS. The first fundamental of strategic communication campaign design is that actions are the primary tool of communications. Actions and words work together; words can shape expectations for action, words can help magnify actions, words can frame actions and help audiences understand the implications of actions, but *words cannot replace actions*. The immediate consequences of this fact is that “communication” efforts (messaging, engagement and relationship building, partner capacity building) cannot be meaningfully evaluated without understanding and assessing the impact of policy and concrete actions undertaken in parallel with the “communication” effort. Strategic communication campaigns must include explicit assumptions with regard to the evolution of fundamental actions and policies. For an operational level campaign (featuring “kinetic” operations) campaigns must be designed and evaluated based on explicit assumptions about the evolution of combat operations (the nature of the kinetic operation, primarily, but also the evolution of government service delivery and similar actions in the COIN environment). The assessment of the impact of these actions and policies must form a key part of any measurement

and evaluation discussion. Assessment of the state and impact of actions and policies is the foundation of a communication measurement and evaluation effort.

3. (U) NATURE OF THE CAMPAIGN. The second fundamental foundation of sound M&E is that the M&E effort must reflect the nature of the campaign. While the US government will continue to be involved in “traditional” strategic communication and public diplomacy efforts in the coming years, in at least the immediate and foreseeable future it will be substantially involved in what might be called political and social change campaigns. For both Iraq, and Afghanistan / Pakistan, attainment of fundamental US government strategic goals requires facilitating in, and shaping, a complex, multi-dimensional political, social, and economic change process. This change effort has at its core the local forces for change, and must be built upon an assessment of the strengths, and weaknesses, of the local forces for change. A frank assessment of what is possible, what local forces for change are capable of, how they align (or don’t align) with our vision, and how to strengthen and facilitate local change efforts, is an essential part, both of the strategic communication campaign as well as the wider US government effort. This statement isn’t a claim that we must “make Afghanistan into Switzerland” in order to succeed, indeed quite the opposite. It is a statement that core USG goals can only be achieved if we focus on attaining what might be called the “minimum essential change.” The key realization, however, is not the magnitude of the change, but that we are engaged in a change process, and not just a single action. Several consequences for good M&E derive from this realization.

3.1. (U) Change Process. The first is that a change process must be articulated. Social change effects are not achieved overnight, or with the simple repetition of a single message. Social change, (undercutting some identities, narratives and emotional bonds, highlighting and reinforcing others, changing perceptions of interests) and associated behaviors occurs only through a process. We can monitor and evaluate the impact of our efforts in this process only if we have a model of what we expect the process to be. This process must include both actions and communications, and it must place the experiences and beliefs of the key target audiences at the center of the plan. We cannot change “hearts and minds” out of synchronization with the experiences of the body, nor can we facilitate political, economic, social or psychological change without people actually being engaged in the process. People must reason, and feel, their way, together, to new understandings, loyalties, and behaviors. This takes time. Disregard of these constraints, or an unwillingness to design campaigns with them in mind, is to doom a communication effort to marginality, at best, or to failure. A measurement and evaluation effort that doesn’t have a clear understanding of the stages or process through which a change will occur will not provide insight with regard to the effectiveness of the communication effort.

3.2. (U) Identifying the Baseline. The second consequence is that a communication campaign must begin where an audience is, not where we wish it to be. Messages must “make sense” to the audience, and move them, incrementally, to our desired effects. The key question in evaluating a message, therefore, is not “does it say what we want to say?” but “does it have the effect we wish it to have?” This effect may be observable collectively (e.g., through polling or surveys) or it may only be observable through ethnographic means (e.g., focus groups, in-depth interviews, or systematic observation). Strong baseline understanding of audience narratives, emotions, loyalties, and beliefs, is a prerequisite for both good M&E and good campaign design.

3.3. (U) Campaign Fundamentals. A third consequence of the “change process” insight is that greater attention needs to be paid to what might be called “campaign fundamentals”: that is, to the issue of sequencing and timing of messages, and to the number of times a message must be said (aired, printed, transmitted) to achieve a given effect. While we all acknowledge that, in most circumstances, saying something once isn’t the same thing as having a message heard, the implications of this insight aren’t always embedded in campaign or M&E plans. Commercial public relations and advertising efforts explicitly attempt to address these issues, both in campaign design and in “cut through” and “reach” calculations. New Media technologies may seem to obviate the need for such calculations (since they can give you statistics on “unique users”) but the requirement for attention to the basic details of campaign design remains: what portion of a target audience needs to hear a message for it to have our designated effect? How often must a message be heard in order for it to be received? Measurement and evaluation efforts can lead to fundamentally incorrect conclusions about campaign effectiveness if these campaign design fundamentals aren’t addressed prior to the M&E effort.

4. (U) MULTI-DIMENSIONAL MEASUREMENT AND EVALUATION. The third fundamental of sound M&E design is that measurement and evaluation efforts must be multi-dimensional. In a complex communications environment, any measurement effort is going to be imperfect, subject to vagaries and implementation challenges. Unfortunately, given the realities of social science research, the magnitude and impact of these imperfections will not always be apparent a priori. Polling and surveys, while useful as measures of individual beliefs and attitudes may be subject to social desirability effects, as well as to a host of other potential limits inherent in the survey process. Content analysis and media monitoring, useful as an indicator of the presence of an argument or a theme in public discourse, may be dependent on a variety of factors that shape the process of the production of culture (e.g., media ownership effects, political influence, etc). Ethnographic techniques (e.g., focus groups or in-depth interviews) allow assessment of target audience feelings and beliefs in depth and subtlety, but are difficult to do in numbers sufficient for a representative sample. Each technique has value, and each technique has limits. A triangulation, or multi-dimensional approach, must therefore be employed. However, such a technique can only add understanding if it is guided by the campaign design, and implemented consistently throughout the campaign.

5. (U) SUMMARY. Monitoring and evaluation research must technically sound, grounded in a well-articulated campaign plan, and conducted in constant conversation with the fundamental assumptions of the campaign. Of these three considerations, technically sound implementation receives the most attention, yet contributes the least to genuine understanding of the impact of a strategic communication campaign. The conclusions that can be drawn from even the best technically designed and executed M&E effort are not automatic, and are not statistical in nature. No campaign can ever be judged solely on the basis of a statistical “p value” (or statistical measure of significance) of a single analysis or a single data gathering technique. Ultimately, effectiveness is a command conclusion, not a measurement problem. Well designed M&E efforts, grounded in an articulated campaign plan, can systematically inform these judgments, but they cannot replace the need for judgment.

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