

Testimony

Before the House Subcommittee on Emerging Threats and Capabilities

Witness Statement of

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October 22, 2015

Mr. Chairman, Ranking member, and distinguished members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today to discuss the actions we in the Department of Defense are taking to counter the propaganda campaigns of our adversaries.

In order to effectively achieve our military objectives and end states, Information Operations **MUST** be inherently integrated with all military plans and activities in order to influence and ultimately alter the behavior of our adversaries and their supporters. Simultaneously, we must defend ourselves and friends from the influence operations undertaken by our enemies. Recent events in the CENTCOM and EUCOM regions demonstrate how ISIL and Russia are using IO campaigns to influence, shape, and define the conflict. Both of these actors possess the resources and organizational structure to operate effectively in the information environment. In regards to ISIL, we assess that this organization utilizes the information domain to recruit, fund, spread their ideology and control their operations. With respect to Russia, we have seen the employment of “hybrid warfare” (which includes regular, irregular, and aggressive information operations actions) to illegally seize Crimea, foment separatist fever in several sovereign nations, and conduct operations in Syria.

There are several capabilities available to Combatant Commanders that help to achieve our objectives while minimizing the effects of enemy Information Operations and propaganda. But, the most common is the employment of our Military Information Support Operations forces or MISO forces. MISO personnel have the training and cultural understanding required to assess

hostile propaganda activities and propose unique solutions that directly support our ability to achieve our military objectives.

MISO forces, operating from a U.S. Embassy, an operational task force, or a component headquarters are employed to execute DoD missions that support: named operations, geographic combatant commander (GCC) Theater Security Cooperation efforts, and public diplomacy. How Combatant Commanders employ their military information operations capabilities, to counter adversarial propaganda, is what I understand you want to focus our discussions on today.

MISO forces are currently deployed to locations around the globe, working closely with other U.S. Government departments, agencies and partner nations to address threats specific to their regions. For example, MISO forces are currently deployed to 21 U.S. embassies, working with country teams and interagency partners to challenge adversary IO actions and support broader U.S. government actions and goals. MISO forces, along with other advise and assist efforts, conduct training with some of our closest partners in order to make them more capable of conducting their own operations. Finally, our MISO forces use a variety of mediums (for example: cyber, print, TV, and radio) to disseminate information in a manner that will change perceptions and subsequently the behavior of the target audiences.

Unfortunately, as this is an unclassified hearing, the specific examples I can discuss are limited. But, I do want to provide some brief examples of the efforts our MISO forces are currently undertaking around the world.

In Central Command, MISO efforts are focused on challenging the actions of Violent Extremist organizations. For example, in Iraq, MISO forces are conducting an advise and assist role to help Iraqi forces learn how to develop indigenous Military Information Support

Operations and counter-propaganda activities. Central Command's online influence strategy is used to counter adversary narratives, shape conditions in their AOR, and to message specific target audiences. These operations include using existing web and social media platforms to support military objectives by shaping perceptions. For example, Central Command is active on Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and other online communications platforms for its Middle Eastern and Central Asian audiences; using these forums to highlight ISIL atrocities, coalition responses to ISIL activities and to highlight Coalition successes. They remain vigilant and stand ready to adapt and reshape their approach as new dissemination platforms potentially emerge.

European Command's efforts include exposing Russian mistruths and their concerted efforts to mislead European audiences as to their true intentions. We are in the final stages of staffing the European Reassurance MISO Program (ERMP), which will provide expanded authorities to conduct MISO training and in some cases, messaging support, to our partners in the region. Additionally, EUCOM is preparing to launch a pilot program in 2016 that will leverage social media to deliver information to critical target audiences. EUCOM is also looking to expand its partnership with the Broadcasting Board of Governors to further improve its information dissemination capabilities.

Pacific Command has already expanded their partnership with the Broadcasting Board of Governors to develop a new initiative that expands existing BBG counterterrorism efforts. This initiative, named BenarNews.org, was designed to address the gap left by the termination of PACOM's counterterrorism websites. Pacific Command is synchronizing a holistic counterterrorism effort consisting of BenarNews, interactive internet activities which target specific enemy actors, on line military magazines, and Military Information Support Teams.

The bottom line is that regardless of the region of the world or the enemies that we face, the DoD understands the criticality of countering an adversary's and their supporters' confidence, conviction, will and decision making while shaping behaviors supportive of our military objectives. We understand that these actions must be taken while not exceeding the authorities we have been granted and while always operating within the boundaries the Department has been given and with close coordination among our interagency partners.

Finally, I also want to express my appreciation for the support this committee has given acknowledging DoD's need to operate "across all available media to most effectively reach target audiences" and for your unwavering support of our men and women in uniform.

Thank you again for the opportunity to appear this afternoon, I look forward to answering your questions.