Interview with PD section, March 17, US embassy for Libya, Tunis.

* Industrial park, very keen.
* Systems for Libyans to electronically apply to Chinese visas.
* China is opening an embassy for counselor services
* China and Russia are opening academic partnerships to send people back to own countries for education
* Messaging around initiatives. They are very savvy, not just flood the zone with bot inflkuencers but looking at Russian military ambitions, Russians selected Muslim commanders to lead Africorps engagement; he goes to mosque on Fridays
* Russians working with belarusian on mil to mil engagement
* We are looking at messaging and amount of engagement meetings we can get from what we can do but “there is no comparison” with Russians/Chinese
* We cannot do disinformation; we only share the truth, there are no bots; all we do is what we can do in-house

Mil comms

* Dod is doing interesting things in comms space.
* Different miso series that targets different audiences and platforms; come in every four weeks from Africom
* This is better approach. The are at headquarters but have mandate to check in with us. Hope that keeps them focused.
* Good model, gain awareness and resources to take advantage; train them on local context.
* Libya is top priority for Africom; at African comms conference in UK 50 percent of discussion focused on Libya
* Influencers; engaged content company
* Doing research on foreign influence

How view Russia and china?

* We are concerned what we put out on the internet regarding EMB activities and engagements. There is a concern that what we do in Libya will be mischaracterized so we actively communicate activities and quickly put out comms on social media on engagements
* Any us attempt at cooperation in business or elevation in military space viewed as neo colonial
* Countering that narrative is huge challenge for us
* Last year
  + 2-3 specific disinformation initiatives with fake documents supposedly from L4 (Africom commander) after Gen Laighy visit. Fake memo from him and faike memo from Jeremy (the ambassador or charge) for his visit. It is very Russian esque though direct attribution not determined. We put out a message quickly that this is fake and it didn’t get too much traction
  + No example from china likie this. They push out negative US narratives, pushing that Russia and china are not colonial
  + In Tunisia, state agency called TAP, they invited us to buy a subscriptionand we got tour of their newsroom. Both Sputnik and Xinhua provide wire service to Tunisia free of charge. We could see the stories coming off the wire and you normally subscribe and pay for this service but the Russians and Chinese provided it for free. Libya does not have a state media wire so may not apply to them.
  + There is no way to compete with this as for example the Reuters news service is very expensive. It is easy to do this in Tunisia because ther is a state run media. Not sure if this is done in Libya or not.
* PD activities
  + We wear two hats, one side is a comms wing and then a cultural public diplomacy
  + messages and media analysis used for internal USG audiences and interagency
  + we produce content of US diplomatic engagement to promote activities and key milestones; goes out on our accounts on X, Facebook and Instagram
  + we do some inoculation efforts designed to get information out on us engagements. So for example readout of engagements of charge to mitigate risks that will be miosinterpreted
  + if more ersources we could be on the ground and do more people to people engagements
  + our content highlights high level meetings but a lot of what resonates is interactions with the local populace. We could for example attend an IFTAR OR GO THE LOCAL MARKET . WE COULD BUILD REAL RELATIONSHIPS WITH THE MEDIA; HOST CULTURAL EVENTS AND just show up.
  + A lot of stuff in Tripoli gets organized at the last minute, good to show our interest in this but if they organize at the last minute we can’t get package to attend so there are no targets of opportunity
  + Two half: media and information. Money, exchange programs, fullbriight, embassy funds, ivlp, cultural preservation programs. We do a lot of support local architectural efforts. In Tunisia we helped develop handicap access for largest ampitheater in country. One way to make friends is to say we care about what you care about and architecture is important in Tunisia; we got a lot of points for our support of the ampitheater.
  + “it pays dividends way beyond the price tag”
  + One way to increase support to student groups, exchange programs (for example, the MEPI program sends students on full ride scholarships to American university in Beirut, helping to educate the next level of middle east leadership and give them a US perspective.
  + A lot is done through supplement American council is implementer partner
  + FS270, form is what is submitted for reimbursement. You can ask for cash or accrual to be paid at the end of the month. They are planning for this money and trust they will get paid. Even if it is a small program like a university, even if it not cut, if I don’t have implementer who can do it then it is the same as if it got cut (basically, the loss of funds for some programs hurts the ability of implementers to run the programs that already exist). Businesses work project based, hard to get good will I; it makes America look like a bad partner.
  + “I’m sure china delights in this, they may open confuscious institute to help students,
  + “it feels like an own goal”
  + Pd grants are never large, we are limited to $250k.
  + Return on investment? Restoration of ampitheater in Tunisia; there is no chance to do something on that scale with Libya but even potential of it led to an MOU with the Libyans on cultural preservation, this was signed in 2018 renewed in January with a joint action plan.
  + Projects
    - Restoring a couple of sites, training department of antiquities, doing anti-smuggling, record keeping, mapping and enforcement
    - You are showing that you care what they care about. That is the pd tool we had in our kit. Hopefully I’ll be able to sign grants going forward
    - Every student we send to the US is valuable. There is the Yes program where send high achieving high school students to live in the us. That is not happening. For MEPI we picked a scholarship winner for a four year scholarship but we had not told them yet so they may just assume they were not picked. Imagine the goodwill.
    - Very much 21st century strategic competition with china. “Why go into fight without all the tools at your disposal”
    - Americans need to know that their tax value has value and is worthwhile
  + GEC?
    - Many grants implemented through GEC. GEC funded a training influencer program; we identified key Libyans influencers in the market place and a firm was to train 25 influencers; we had picked them to promote message of Libyan unity.
    - That program is on hold. We were training them and had them producing videos to bring together Libyans from east and west. It was meant to be unifying. We put in a waiver request; we want to pay what we own them
    - GEC now has been a black box. Not sure what is next.
* G
* Good partnership with mil to mil engagement; deputy commander of Africom came to visit

PD

* We have various lines of effort to get information out