Participant name: Grother

Participant organization: SOF-LE US Embassy Ghana

**What’s your take on misinformation and disinformation?**

* This is one of the spaces we don’t really get into. We have 3 parts of our work here: 1) security force assistance that actually focuses on hard skills; 2) civil affairs – on civil-military affairs; 3) MISO/Psyops – on information operations. We don’t actually have MISO here.
* We saw a lot of stuff coming out around election time that can be treated as misinformation and disinformation. It is hard to say where it is coming from. Lots of rumors but nothing specific about who is doing that.

**How about disinformation about U.S. operations**

* Not a ton here because we don’t have a ton of operations here. Our presence here is more like a liaison position for periodic engagement like major exercises. This is not an operations space, more like a liaison.
* For Ghana specifically, their best opportunity for countering messages – not necessarily on the state level, but media – a lot is up in the north. We heard some of this stuff from GAF, through civil engagements. What was explained to us was that the military was used whenever the police wouldn’t handle something. They would be engaged in bad, hard cases. For example, providing medical care. The military here is very well respected.
* Military hospitals on the base are open to the public, not just the military. Whenever they have a base somewhere, they are trying to fix this perspective.
* Not a lot of presence in the north. A lot of tribal/ethnic differences. It is not exclusive to Ghana – anywhere where there is a border. Racism is not a right word; it is more like an ethnic disparity between the North and the South. People didn’t want to be forthcoming about where they came from during one of the engagements with GAF because of their region.
* The bar for misinformation and disinformation is incredibly low. It is a generalization, not Ghana-specific. It is super low. It's enough to offer just 1% better services – security perspective, some sort of health care, better services than the government. It is enough to sway this population because you are meeting basic needs. This is our biggest way to counter some of that – more civil engagement with the GAF. Not Americans coming out; it's GAF coming out, building relationships with this population, with the marginalized and ostracized groups.

**Do we have a role in that?**

* A little bit. That’s a civil affairs side. They just rotated in. We have an active duty civil affairs team in Cote d'Ivoire, but they operate regionally. They will do a lot for the future, not now, because of the engagement.
* Civil-military coordinator – CA officer. They have a guy now who got some training up north. He is taking civil engagement, dealing with the local population. It hindered a lot of capability-building as they did not have a team. They at least started on this. They identified the need, identified a primary officer. We will see more capacity being built – can spotlight GAF. The best way to engage with the local population is to change the perspective of the population on the government. All they see is the military doing violence – they will not have a good feeling of the government protecting them.

**Local USAID staff said they were doing training with the local population in the north – early warning system, training them how to spot activities related to misinformation and disinformation.**

* It's unfortunate that a lot of these decisions are made so far above us. We feel aftereffects. There are a lot of opportunities we see. USAID cannot do a lot, but we can do the same project. With CA teams, we can. SETAF wants to get after community relationship-building. We can look at what USAID had and which projects have been suspended. USAID is gone, but it doesn’t mean Americans are gone – it’s just a shift from doing it through USAID to being military. that’s a SETAF thing. One of the best ways to go after it.
* Civ-mil is going to be everything in this country. The U.S. is building this relationship between their military and the local population, having SETAF take a realistic look at the USAID portfolio.
* We lost the Voice of America. They have been doing misinformation and disinformation training here. That’s another space for psyops or MISO to pick up a little bit.

**Are you working with GAF on public messaging, strategic messaging?**

* I think as long as it is explained to them so they can see the benefit of that – with a bit of buy-in from their top. With Ghanaians, everything is very bureaucratic. Big initiatives have to come all the way from the top. For us to interface with their units, we have to start from the top. One of the things in hindrance is that they cannot fix everything on the spot. A lot of bureaucracy and approvals from the top.

**Can the U.S. military partner with those who have resources while we know how to do it?**

* If there is a buy, it’s a matter of engaging officially. It has to be someone like an Ambassador – someone who says it is important and is willing to do it.

**Can you give us an overview of what you are doing?**

* Not a lot. We are very new. In September of last year, we were just established as part of the Embassy. It’s because we had to be rehomed. It became a lot – we can’t do anything here where we can do things and provide value. A lot of last year was spent figuring it out. Our role here is GAF and any of the SF units. JCATS, build major direct military to military training. we coordinate from this position. We facilitate participation for major exercises – like African lion. It was hosted here in Ghana for the past two years, and it was just moved to Cote d’Ivoire.

**How about messaging about exercises and cooperation?**

* Not 100% sure. Major initiatives. SETAF sponsors – [lock?]. AFRICOM has African lion. High level of engagement – African HQ. It comes from there. I am not vastly involved.

**Local populations?**

* Doing a pretty good job. It is a fairly easy thing to get funding and execute – civ-mil. [Netcap] – met with district council. Had them do a radio release. TV is not huge here. Radio messaging about an exercise – this is going to be happening on this day. Went to local village – met with chief – this is what we are going to do, this is how it’s going to benefit you. Please send a message to your people and neighbors.
* Radio a lot in the north. A lot of complications when coming to messaging. Internet and Facebook are not going to be effective.

**Any other major happening?**

* Two different teams rotated in for doing the presence. The only persistent presence here is the SETAF civ-mil team. We can do training depending on what is going on with a specific partner force. But there is only two of us, so we cannot do a lot of like weapons training.

**Q: any other recommend**

* Looking at the USAID portfolio. They have reserve CA, but I'm not sure they have reserve psyops. If they do, if they can leverage. Otherwise, they have to do it externally – if there is MISO available to come and do misinformation and disinformation training. Talk to POS here.
* Look at the USAID portfolio. Whatever civil affairs is allowed to do – invest in these programs to at least continue will have a huge impact on local populations.
* There are different pots of money for that. We are super limited – we have money tied to authorities. Civil Affairs can reach out to other funding sources.
* Get replaced by the end of May – but accounts and numbers will continue.
* OSC – three years.