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Participant organization: US Embassy Burkina Faso

1. How are different actors sharing false, malign or harmful forms of information in Libya and West Africa? What is the impact of such efforts?

* From my viewpoint I see info in a couple different ways. There is the state sponsored media that is fairly controlled by the government to put out good news story. And there have been arrests of journalists that have been negative to the government. MOD and CHOD are active on FB, promoting military message in the way we would want them to. Promoting Mil-Civ relations, graduations, military training and travel. Not sure if they are doing anything on tiktok, but very active on FB. Great seeing them do that, because it is what we would recommend. A lot of messaging coming out of France, very critical of Burkinabe government. Accusing of HR violations. Government accusations not terrorist orgs. On the Whatsapp groups that keep getting shared around, tiktok videos of people talking with icons that are very pro TA (President) and AS – pro-government. Really pushing the Burkina Faso govt message in snippet tiktok like videos.
* A lot of chatter that whatsapp videos and messaging may be being pushed from Russia, but haven’t heard a lot about China. Probably Russia is promoting misinfo campaigns through Whatsapp and Tiktoks. Local media references the French media reports that are critical of BF government.
* Government worried about mis/disinfo coming from terrorists or France. Saying these are mis/disinfo campaigns. Mostly blame France for all things negative. A lot of these atrocities, the government blames it on the terrorists orgs, but French media blames it on the BF security forces. They will put out info debunking the French media reports. They say it is damaging the success of the military campaigns and government. Go to the main page of the president and you can see press releases about misinfo campaings from external parties, usually meaning France.

1. In what ways are governments, military and civil society organizations in Libya and West Africa working to counter this? What more can be done in this respect?

* Locally just seems like they do press releases, publish statements about accusations and then they arrest journalists. Critical of the government.
* For awhile VOA was kicked and then they were allowed back in with a fee.

1. In what ways are the U.S. or allied governments working to counter this in Libya/West Africa? How are they working to build institutional capacity in Libya/West Africa?

* In the info space, regularly post on the embassy pages – promote our relationship, promote anything we are allowed to do. Had a Gen Off visit back in December – advertise that we have a relationship and want to support it. That we want to support the BF government to professionalize.
* Nothing on the mil side programmatically. Don’t even know who manages the FB page. The topic of civ-mil relationship comes up and then go towards PA relationship or exchange.

1. What more can the U.S. or allied governments do in this respect?
   1. Haven’t seen a lot of effort from other governments. Mostly using news agency and social media accounts. Biggest military partners are Russia and Turkey and probably Egypt. Foreign military sales is China but no relationship with their military. High level visitors. There is an org that came down, the alliance of Islamic states – a regional grouping – led by a general from Libya. Germany used to have a big program here but canceled everything in December. UK not really active. Mali, CDI, Italy, Turkey, Tunisia and US only DATT presence. Italy not really doing anything. Turkey is doing a lot. All with UAVs. Turkey not really active in info space. They see the attache all the time, they have been good partners there. They don’t promote their relationship on social media.
2. How does the U.S. conduct interagency coordination or inter-government coordination with respect to its policies and operations in Libya/West Africa?
   1. A lot of Burnkabe go to DC. First we verify that there isn’t any issue promoting whatever it is. Talk to the PAO hosting – DC National Guard usually – check with Burkinabe mil participants about images. Then fire away on the embassy FB page.
   2. When we promote something on the FB, the government usually reshares it – military working together. They are approved to share our stuff and they promote it.
   3. Big scale promotion of the use of English language – doesn’t fall under restrictions because it isn’t green suiters – military training is the restriction. Someone promoted today on Whatsapp status, giving the message in English in the next flight. Posted about how Enlgish is the international language. High level government official – a lot of people talked to in upper level circle that all have a sense of English that speak it decently. Don’t see restrictions. If we wanted to build an English language lab under DLI – may or may not fall under restrictions. In school for military. Usually supports IMET training which is under restrictions.
   4. English language would definitely be a win for us. IF they could open up a program with the PAO of the Burkinabe military – probably would reject it without opening up direct commercial sales.
   5. Opening up IMET – helps shape senior leaders of the military. 7008 restrictions.
3. Who else should we speak to?

* Try to get with USAID – on admin leave.
* Should see Kevin Garcia in Accra. Col Ruamba is the Army chief that will be there. They are very open to sharing their perception of the wrongful info coming against them.

There is a very willing partner. They will take any resources they can get to help in Burkina. Military thinks there is mis/disinfo com

Have a MIST team – two person MIST team. Don’t have any programs going on right now, waiting for pro-US programs. Waiting for new visa request for two new guys coming in. Military visas very difficult. Most time don’t get them approved, sometimes it is our own fault because it is hard to properly to submit for visas and hard to coordinate.

ADF (magazine – ADF) – take them everywhere can drop them of – Burkina Faso was in it – about the negative impacts of the relationship with Russia – had pictures of BF president with Russia – can’t share it – they will hate us. Only time we put President Troy’s picture in there. The imagining in it, being in English – not going to share it around. Under AFRICOM. Stratcomm coordination needed.