**SOCOM SMA Gray Zone Follow-on Virtual Conversation IV**

**12 August 1000-1130 ET**

**You can attend in person or dial in (866-712-4038; 60114984#)**

**Topic 1: Gray Zone Working Definition**

"The Gray Zone is a conceptual space between peace and war, occurring when actors purposefully use multiple elements of power to achieve political-security objectives with activities that are ambiguous or cloud attribution and exceed the threshold of ordinary competition, yet fall below the level of large-scale direct military conflict, and threaten US and allied interests by challenging, undermining, or violating international customs, norms, or laws."

Gray Zone activity:

An adversary's purposeful use of single or multiple elements of power to achieve security objectives by way of activities that are ambiguous or cloud attribution, and exceed the threshold of ordinary competition, yet apparently fall below the level of open warfare.

\* In most cases once significant, attributable coercive force has been used, the activities are no longer considered to be in the Gray Zone but have transitioned into the realm of traditional warfare.

\* While Gray Zone activities may involve non-security domains and elements of national power they are activities taken by an actor for the purpose of gaining some broadly-defined security advantage over another.

Gray Zone Threat

Actions of a state or non-state actor that challenge or violate international customs, norms and laws for the purpose of pursuing one or more broadly-defined national security interests without provoking direct military response.

\* Gray zone threats can occur in three ways relative to international rules and norms, they can:

1) challenge common understandings, conventions and international norms while stopping short of clear violations of international law (e.g., much of China's use of the "Little Blue Men");

2) employ violations of both international norms and laws in ways intended to avoid the penalties associated with legal violations (e.g., Russian activities in Crimea); or

3) VEOs and Non-State Actors integrating elements of power to advance particular security interests

**CAPT Phil Kapusta, Mr. Jay Rouse, Dr. Allison Astorino-Courtois, and Mr. Gary Phillips**

**Topic 2: Historical Precedents**

Using Crimea and South China Sea as recent and ongoing Gray Zone Conflicts, present a couple slides that use the SMA’s definitions to describe and bound the security dilemma – taking Gray Zone discussions from the academic to the operational.

**Mr. Jay Rouse**

**Topic 3: “Indicators” and “Watch Center Concepts” in the Gray Zone**

What dimensions of data/tracking/indicators/analysis should be included in a Watch Center concept?

* PMESII spectrum indicators?
* Other dimensions?
* Cross-domain indicators? Is some sort of standard taxonomy needed for linking/relating indicators?

What should be the role of causal reasoning/modeling in a watch center concept?

What Phenomena should be covered/raised for attention?

* Changes in behavior (2-3 sigma) along various dimensions of activity {bottom up}
* Changes/challenges to international norms of behavior (bottom up)
* Established patterns of Gray Zone activities {top down}
* World events aligned with country master narratives {top down}
* User Defined patterns of concern {top down}
* Others?

Where should a watch center be located and who should be involved in its management and operation? DoD? IC? DoS?

Who would be the primary consumers of GZ Campaign analysis/indicators?

**Mr. Mark Hoffman**

**Topic 4: Biological and Environmental factors in anticipating GZ behavior**

1. How do risk and ambiguity affect repeated interactions between actors over time, e.g. leading to escalation or de-escalation?

2. How do risk and ambiguity lead to more or less *stable* gray zone confrontations?

3. How do effects of risk and ambiguity differ in gray zone confrontations with *multiple actors*: allies, neutrals, adversaries and domestic audiences?

4. How can understanding the *neuroscience of social and political behavior* impact on responses to gray zone challenges: both for understanding local populations and adversaries?

**Dr. Nick Wright**

**Topic 5:** Social Movements and their impact on GZ conflicts. GZ conflicts exhibit fair amount of uncertainty and ambiguity. Dealing with such challenges requires fair amount of statecraft. Social movements with their tendencies for certainty, etc...may limit leadership latitudes.

**Mr. Bob Warburg and Dr. Dana Eyre**

**Topic 6: Training, education and doctrine**

1. Does the institution (training, education, doctrine) need to change in order to satisfy new, non-conventional warfare analysis?

2. Are Gray Zone activities and Gray Zone conflict adequately addressed in existing Professional Military Education curricula, even if under another name?

3. Does Joint Professional Military Education Policy adequately address GZ? If not, should it?

**Lt Col Seitz (JS/J-7)**

**Topic 7: Cyber in the Gray Zone**

1. Given that cyber activity is very common below the threshold for gray zone activity (e.g. related to espionage) what can make cyber activity exceed the threshold of normal competition?

2. Can cyber activity in the gray zone exceed the upper bound of the gray zone activity to reach the level of large-scale direct military conflict and, if so, how?

3. Are there specific types of action that push cyber activity beyond normal competition into the gray zone or above the gray zone into war?

4. Can the quantity of actions rather than just their quality lead them to go beyond normal competition into the gray zone or into war?

5. Are the characteristics of these thresholds perceived differently by different international actors, e.g. US, China, Russia or Iran?

6. How is cyber used against different types of audience in the gray zone, e.g. states and populations?

**Dr. Martin Libicki (Rand)**

**Topic 8: Potential Parallels and Lessons learned from the Public Health and Medical “Gray Zone”**

Gray zones exist in other realms, and some of the approaches used in health could be (in VERY general terms) be applied to conflict gray zones.

1. How does decision making vary between ambiguity in the gray zone environment, vs ambiguity about the outcomes of particular actions/approaches?
2. Can gray zone conflicts be “bounded”, i.e. can we define red lines, beyond which action must be taken vs. should never be taken?
3. How does economics affect actors’ decisions/options in the gray zone?

**Dr. Diane DiEuliis**

**Topic 9: The Role of Strategic Communication in the Gray Zone**

1. If either ambiguity or uncertainty is necessary components of GZ capability, then denying an adversary ambiguity or uncertainty moves the activities out of the GZ allowing traditional responses.
2. Strategic communications can be used to rebut adversary frames obscuring intent and propagate information eliminating uncertainty. To deter and compel, we must deny the adversary the ability to create uncertainty. We must improve capabilities related to identifying adversary frames, themes, and messages and appropriate counter strategies. A demonstrated capability and will to release timely, compelling information decreases the equivocation space of hesitant allies and denies adversaries benefits from planned uncertainty.

**Dr. Hunter Hustus**