

Invitation to tender for research in Russia's communication strategy to justify military actions in Ukraine and influence specific audiences

You are kindly invited to submit a proposal to provide research in Russia's communication strategy to justify military actions in Ukraine and influence specific audiences for the NATO StratCom COE's project.

By participating in this tender you are indicating your acceptance to be bound by the guidelines set out in this letter. We provide below the key details of the NATO StratCom COE requirements, which you should take into account in your response. Please acknowledge safe receipt of this letter via e-mail within two working days and confirmation of your intention to tender within seven working days.

To simplify exchange of information regarding this Invitation to Tender (ITT) please nominate a Bid Manager and relevant contact details: phone and e-mail address.

Please direct any questions regarding the ITT content or process to Maj. Raimundas Jareckas. You should not contact other NATO StratCom COE personnel unless asked to do so by the appointed NATO StratCom COE representative. The NATO StratCom COE reserves the right to disqualify and reject proposals from suppliers who do not comply with these guidelines. All questions should be submitted in writing to the e-mail: raimundas.jareckas@stratcomcoe.org.

As part of this tender process the NATO StratCom COE makes no obligations in any way to:

- (i) pay any supplier for an ITT response; or
- (ii) award the contract with the lowest price proposal or any suppliers; or
- (iii) accept any ITT information received from suppliers not covering full set requirements; or
- (iv) include suppliers responding to this ITT, in any future invitations; or
- (v) any other commitment to suppliers whatsoever.

Looking forward receiving your response.

Yours Sincerely,

Maj. Raimundas Jareckas
Staff Officer, Operational Support Branch
E-mail address: raimundas.jareckas@stratcomcoe.org.

Whilst care and attention has been exercised in the preparation of this document, it remains subject to contract, and all warranties, whether expressed or implied by statute, law or otherwise, are hereby disclaimed and excluded.

These limitations are not intended to restrict continued business discussions between the NATO StratCom COE and suppliers.

Any proposal received by the NATO StratCom COE is subject to contract with the NATO StratCom COE.

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Introduction

- 1.1. NATO Strategic Communications Centre of Excellence (NATO StratCom COE), based in Riga, Latvia, contributes to the improved strategic communications capabilities within the Alliance and Allied nations. The NATO StratCom COE designs programmes to advance StratCom doctrine development and harmonisation, conducts research and experimentation to find practical solutions to existing challenges, identifies lessons from applied StratCom during operations, and enhances training and education efforts and interoperability.
- 1.2. NATO StratCom COE is running a tender to conduct research of Russia's communication strategy to justify military actions in Ukraine and influence specific audiences.
- 1.3. The contract will be awarded within two weeks after the announcement of the winner. The contract shall be completed by **19 November 2024**.

1. Background

After Russia's full scale invasion to Ukraine the NATO StratCom COE conducted research to better understand the Kremlin communication strategy for Russian speaking audiences 5 months before full scale invasion and 1 month after, second research is covering 9 months period during the war until end of 2022. This project is third and looks to continue its previous research concerning Kremlin communication strategy for different Russian speaking audiences for 12 months (1 January 2023 – 31 December 2023) during the war.

2. Requirements

- 2.1. The end product will provide an output covering two research parts:
 - First research part will allow to determine how Russia's strategic communication was conducted to different Russian speaking audiences in order to justify government decisions and maintain support in different phases of the Russia war in Ukraine. This report will continue research on Russia's strategic communication related to the Russia-waged war in Ukraine and will address the period 1 January 2023 – 31 December 2023 (12 months).
 - Second part comparative study covering analysis of two previous and 2023 period (1 January 2023 – 31 December 2023) analysis reports on Russia's communication strategies to internal audiences.
- 2.2. NATO StratCom COE is looking to contract one successful applicant to implement both research parts. The applicant must provide all parts of the research.
- 2.3. This research will be published by the NATO StratCom COE on its website and in printed form.
- 2.4. For the **research on Russia's communication strategy to different Russian speaking audiences**, we seek the following:
 - 2.4.1. Data analysis of Russian TV programs, official statements and press releases of political and military representatives to identify Russian communication strategy, possible communication pattern and narratives during the 12 month war period between Russia and Ukraine (1 January 2023 – 31 December 2023):
 - 2.4.1.1. Information published on the official website of the President of the Russian Federation.
 - 2.4.1.2. Information published on the official website of the Security Council of the Russian Federation.
 - 2.4.1.3. Information published on the official website of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation.
 - 2.4.1.4. Information published in the official website of the Ministry of Defence of the Russian Federation.
 - 2.4.1.5. Information published in the official website of State Duma of the Russian Federation.
 - 2.4.1.6. One daily news program airing during the prime time of the broadcast.
 - 2.4.1.7. One daily talk-show program based on the highest viewership within the TV program genre.
 - 2.4.1.8. One weekly information-analytic program based on the highest viewership within the TV program genre.

- 2.4.2. Analysis on Social media platforms and Kremlin narratives:
 - 2.4.2.1. Telegram for inside Russia audiences.
 - 2.4.2.2. Channels targeting Baltic States different audiences (Russian speaking and other).
 - 2.4.2.3. Telegram channels targeting Ukraine audiences in different territories, Russian occupied and unoccupied territories.
- 2.4.3. Physical events analysis on comparison of official communication and communication on telegram channels for Russian speaking audiences.
- 2.4.4. Review of the previously conducted researches by the NATO StratCom COE in order to become acquainted with the methodology.
- 2.4.5. In order to ensure continuity and comparability of the findings, application of the same methodology used in the previously conducted research shall be applied. The NATO StratCom COE is open to receiving suggestions of improvement that would not affect the comparability of the findings or the continuity of the research.
- 2.5. For the **comparative study covering analysis of three (two previous reports) Russia's communication strategies**, we seek the following:
 - 2.5.1. Comparison of communication strategies in Russia, their differences and similarities during different the war stages depending on researches periods.
 - 2.5.2. Comparison of Russia's communications strength and weaknesses.
 - 2.5.3. Narrative comparison in different periods of war.
- 2.6. Develop an executive summary based on the research report of around 500 words in length.
- 2.7. Successful applicant should be prepared to travel in order to present the outcomes of the research at an event organised by the NATO StratCom COE either at the end of 2024 or in early 2025. Exact details will be clarified during Contract negotiations.
- 2.8. Submit research results in academic English language, providing appropriate referencing, following NATO StratCom COE's style guide. The successful applicant should ensure that the output is edited and the language corrected before submission. The NATO StratCom COE is responsible for the layout of the publication.
- 2.9. Provision of relevant data sets that were produced in the research process (for example, data set of documents, publications, interviews).

3. Reporting

- 3.1. We would like to hold an initial meeting to clarify the methodology and delivery process as soon as the tender has been awarded (via videoconference or other means).
- 3.2. We would like to receive:
 - 3.2.1. Detailed methodology by May 29, 2024. Detailed methodology will include a list of the main documents and publications to be included in the analysis.
 - 3.2.2. Initial draft of the report by 14 October, 2024.
 - 3.2.3. Final draft of the report by 4 November, 2024.

5. Deliverables

- 5.1. The tender submission should consist of:
 - 5.1.1. A written proposal for the delivery of the work (see parts 3.4, 3.5 and 3.6 in Requirements).
 - 5.1.2. Detailed budget for the delivery of the work in EUR currency (amount of VAT or any other kind of tax must be clearly specified for each budget position and marked as zero where not applicable). It should indicate the budget estimates for both researches separately, indicating the costs for:
 - Methodology development;
 - Conduct of the research;
 - Development of final report.

- 5.1.3. Copy of Bidder’s Certificate issued by the national Commercial Register. If that is not applicable (for example, the Bidder is an individual), please provide an explanatory statement and a different form of a document confirming your identity and, if possible, permit to engage in a commercial activity.
- 5.1.4. The evidence of the development of at least two similar research projects (national or international level) covering Russian affairs and strategic communications in the last 3 years.
- 5.1.5. Profile of the key personnel to be working on the Contract delivery providing evidence of skills, knowledge and experience (for example, a CV). The Bidder should also indicate the roles of the personnel working on the Contract delivery and the approximate percentage of time each of them will spend for this work.
- 5.1.6. Information about any persons or entities that the Bidder may choose to sub-contract for work on the Contract delivery (company or person’s name, other relevant credentials (such as company’s registration number, website address, contacts), and a short company’s profile or person’s biography).

6. Timetable

General	
Confirmation of bid	Please confirm you have submitted your bid by notifying raimundas.jareckas@stratcomcoe.org
Deadline for submission	23:59 hrs (Eastern European Time zone: UTC +02:00) on March 26, 2024
Contract implementation period	Upon agreement
Questions	Questions arising from this document should be addressed to Maj. Raimundas Jareckas until March 20, 2024 .
Full contact details	Maj. Raimundas Jareckas, raimundas.jareckas@stratcomcoe.org , +371 25663534 (also available via WhatsApp and Signal).

7. Respondent Instructions

- 7.1. This section provides detailed instructions to be followed in responding to this ITT.
- 7.2. Response Guidelines:
 - 7.2.1. You will be required to submit a written proposal that complies with the indicated requirements (see Section 5. Deliverables). The proposal should be submitted electronically in PDF format.
 - 7.2.2. **Please deliver the electronic copy to:**
tender@stratcomcoe.org
by 23:59 hrs (Eastern European Time zone: UTC +02:00) on March 26, 2024.
 - 7.2.3. The NATO StratCom COE will disregard any response submitted after the timetable deadline.
 - 7.2.4. Bidders are expected to supply all required information, or clearly state the reasons for being unable to do so.
 - 7.2.5. Any assumptions used in preparing responses should be clearly stated. Any appropriate supporting documents e.g.: brochures, demo videos, presentations, should be included.
 - 7.2.6. If any of the requested documents in the Section 5. Deliverables is not submitted, the Contract Award Committee shall have the right to exclude the applicant from further participation in the procurement.
- 7.3. Questions relating to clarification of the ITT will only be accepted in writing to NATO StratCom COE representative. Likewise, all responses from the NATO StratCom COE will be written and may also be made available to other suppliers (subject to confidentiality). In the event that any answer materially affects the ITT specification, an amendment of the original requirements will be escalated to all suppliers. The NATO StratCom COE will attempt to answer any questions within

two working days of receipt of that request; otherwise it will respond within that timescale notifying you of the estimated time to obtain the information.

- 7.4. The NATO StratCom COE reserves the right to modify the provisions of this ITT at any time prior to the scheduled date for written responses. Additional scope and requirements can be added. Notification of such changes will be provided to all suppliers.
- 7.5. Should you wish to propose a deviation from the specification please ensure that you clearly identify and highlight where appropriate in your response.
- 7.6. All information supplied in this tender to date, any further information supplied during the tender process will remain confidential and available only to the Contract Award Committee members.

8. Tender Assessments

- 8.1. Evaluation Criteria and Process. A set of evaluation criteria has been prepared by the NATO StratCom COE for the evaluation of every Submission. Within each stage an initial evaluation will consider whether or not every instruction and requirement contained within the ITT has been fulfilled.
- 8.2. The evaluation criteria will be based on all of the following aspects of the Bidders' proposals:
 - 8.2.1. Commercial
 - 8.2.1.1. Clarity of price (in EUR with VAT and w/o VAT);
 - 8.2.1.2. Competitiveness of price.
 - 8.2.2. Service capability:
 - 8.2.2.1. Capacity to conduct the research to high standards, based on previous experience and recommendations;
 - 8.2.2.2. Composition of the research team members and the percentage of time they will devote to implementation of the Contract;
 - 8.2.2.3. Previous experience with Russia and strategic communications research projects;
 - 8.2.2.4. Quality of previously delivered service (based on the evidence provided);
 - 8.2.3. Previous experience in cooperation with national government institutions and international organisations;
 - 8.2.4. Level of compliance with the Requirements, Reporting and Deliverables of the ITT.
- 8.3. You are reminded that through the process the NATO StratCom COE will continually assess all contact with the Bidders' organizations including compliance to the process and presentation. The NATO StratCom COE reserves the rights at its sole discretion to disqualify without further consideration any submission that does not satisfy this basic requirement.
- 8.4. The NATO StratCom COE reserves the right to modify the scope of this tender, after receiving the bids, to include price estimates.

9. Decision Announcement to Participants

The NATO StratCom COE reserves the right to control the format and content of any such announcement, and to limit it in any way believed by the NATO StratCom COE to be appropriate (which includes the right to not provide any explanation).

10. Contract Details

Contractual and payment details will be subject to negotiation with the selected service provider.