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**Invitation to Tender for Research on Russian Information Operations
in Kenya and South Africa**

You are kindly invited to submit a project proposal to provide research on **Russian Information Operations in Kenya and South Africa** focused on the changing perceptions in the case study countries.

To simplify exchange of information regarding this Invitation to Tender (ITT) please nominate a Bid Manager and provide their contact details within your submission.

Please direct any questions regarding the ITT content or process to LtCol. Bonnie Golbeck in writing at Bonnie.Golbeck@stratcomcoe.org. 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 makes no obligations in any way to:

1. Pay any service provider for an ITT response;
2. Award the contract with the lowest price proposal or any service provider;
3. Accept any ITT information received from service providers not covering the full set of requirements;
4. Include service providers responding to this ITT in any future invitations;
5. Any other commitment to service providers whatsoever.

We look forward to receiving your response.

Yours sincerely,

Bonnie Golbeck, LtCol.

Staff Officer, Operational Support Branch

E-mail address: Bonnie.Golbeck@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 service providers.

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

Reference -- *Russian information operations outside of the Western information environment* (Revised version) <https://stratcomcoe.org/publications/russian-information-operations-outside-of-the-western-information-environment-revised-version/316>

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1. Introduction

- 1.1. The NATO StratCom COE, based in Riga, Latvia, contributes to strategic communications capabilities within the NATO Alliance, Allied nations, and Partners. The NATO StratCom COE designs programmes to advance strategic communications doctrine development, harmonization and implementation, conducts research and experimentation to find practical solutions to existing challenges, identifies lessons from applied strategic communications during operations, and enhances training and education efforts and interoperability.
- 1.2. The NATO StratCom COE is running procurement to conduct research on **Russian Information Operations in Kenya and South Africa** focused on a deeper understanding of the messaging techniques and approaches used by Russia to identify potential counter-narrative strategies.
- 1.3. The contract will be awarded within four (4) weeks after the announcement of the winner. The contract shall be completed within twelve (12) months from signing the contract.

2. Background

- 2.1. In its war against Ukraine, Russia's narratives are being spread and are already resonating in Latin America, Africa and Asia. Previous research efforts used a macro approach to identify the themes used, the audiences targeted, and the possible overall effects by both Russia and China as they frame the West or Western agendas to adversely influence perceptions in third nations.
- 2.2. NATO StratCom COE's ongoing research into Russian narratives in third nations will now seek to use micro and meso methods to study the language, linguistic features along, and delivery techniques used to identify the types of persuasion and psychological tactics used.
- 2.3. This project builds on the results of previous research by the NATO StratCom COE into the case study countries of Reference in order to start exploring counter-narrative strategies.

3. Requirements

- 3.1. This project aims to identify more precisely how Russia spreads its narratives in Kenya and South Africa, so that potential counter-narrative strategies can be identified. It will do this in three phases:
 - 3.1.1. Firstly, this report will validate that the previously identified narratives are valid and still being actively communicated by Russia.
 - 3.1.2. Secondly, it will analyse the language and delivery methods used to classify the communications using a 5D model of threat actors as discussed in <https://euvsdisinfo.eu/eeas-1st-fimi-threat-report-february-2023/> , the 4D Model of Disinformation Campaigns as discussed in <https://online.umich.edu/teach-outs/disinformation-misinformation-and-fake-news-teach-out/lessons/4d-model-disinformation-campaigns/> or another appropriate model.
 - 3.1.3. Finally, based on the type of communications used, the report should identify counter-narrative strategies to pursue in future research or operationalize and test.

- 3.2. Counter-narrative strategies should be understood as choosing communications styles such as Fact-Based Counter (logos), Affective Style Communications (Pathos) or logic exposing (Metacognitive). Another framework could be used.
- 3.3. The report should serve as practical support to decision-makers and stakeholders of NATO member nations and partners on Russian information influence operations.
- 3.4. The aim of report is not to establish causality or test effectiveness of Russian information influence operations and audience perceptions, but to provide recommendations on how to style future narrative campaigns aimed at countering Russian false narratives.
- 3.5. The main output will be an analytical study (desk study and audience research) which will seek to answer the following research questions:
 - 3.5.1. Phase One: Desk Study validating Russian narratives:
 - 3.5.1.1. Are the narratives identified in *Russian information operations outside of the Western Information Environment* (Reference) still valid?
 - 3.5.1.2. Are the target audiences previously identified in Reference still accurate?
 - 3.5.1.3. Does a literature review identify any significant changes to the Reference conclusions?
 - 3.5.1.4. Is Russia still actively communicating these narratives?
 - 3.5.1.5. Select valid and active narratives for deeper analysis:
 - 3.5.1.5.1. Emphasis should be put on narratives related to Russia's war against Ukraine, and NATO in general.
 - 3.5.1.5.2. Emphasis should be put on audiences that could be considered actors or stakeholders and not just the public at large where possible.
 - 3.5.2. Phase Two: Narrative Analysis
 - 3.5.2.1. Identify the data needed related to study the selected narratives.
 - 3.5.2.1.1. Data scraping for social media may be possible at no cost through the NATO StratCom COE. Bids should include the desired social media networks, date ranges, and either a desire for post or posts and comments. The search would need to be limited to certain accounts or keywords. An expected volume should be indicated. Include a line item in the budget proposal for outside data procurement in case the NATO StratCom COE cannot meet the data needs. NATO StratCom COE data scraping availability will be announced with contract award.
 - 3.5.2.2. Analyse data for linguistic trends. This is a detailed study of the language used to identify the types of speech used. This section aims to expose the type(s) of manipulation used in each narrative. These could be classified according to categories of hostile rhetoric, 4D Model of Disinformation Campaigns, 5D model of threat actors, or another selected and approved framework.
 - 3.5.2.2.1. AI/LLMs may be used to analyse text, language and linguistic trends and facilitate data analysis in local languages.

3.5.3. Phase Three: Suggest Counter-narrative Strategies

3.5.3.1. Based on the type of rhetoric or speech used what types of narratives are best used to counter them?

3.5.3.1.1. Group the recommendations into categories of how to stylise narratives. This could mean suggesting more than one method that would have to be tested for effectiveness.

3.5.3.1.2. These recommendations can be narrowed or honed by convening key insight interviews in each country.

3.5.3.1.3. Possible groupings include but are not limited to: fact based logos style narratives, affective pathos style narratives or logic-exposing metacognitive style narratives. Other frameworks can be suggested and approved by the NATO StratCom COE for use.

3.5.3.2. Recommend ways forward to research this further or operationalise the research's output. This is not meant to formulate actual counter-narratives or to design a messaging plan. It is designed to identify broad strategy and provide a starting place for future research of operational design.

3.6. The deliverables include the following:

3.6.1. In cooperation with the NATO StratCom COE, develop the methodology needed to address the stated research questions above. All methodological developments shall be reviewed and approved by the NATO StratCom COE prior to execution.

3.6.2. Produce a report 40-60 pages (excluding references and endnotes), to include an executive summary, relevant findings from the desk study, an overview of the research questions and methodologies, a summary of the analytical findings from audience research, and conclusions and recommendations. NATO StratCom COE must be advised of use of AI, (for analysis, text enhancement, etc.) and this must be identified in the report.

3.6.3. Be prepared to deliver briefing(s) of the key findings of the research to cross-government stakeholders and civil society actors, as relevant, organised and funded by the NATO StratCom COE.

3.7. The research would be published by the NATO StratCom COE on its website and possibly in printed form. Anonymous publications are not accepted.

3.8. NATO StratCom COE is looking to contract one service provider to implement all deliverables listed above. The service provider must provide all parts (paragraph 3.5.) of the research. The service provider is encouraged to partner or subcontract with experts and/or NGOs in the countries or regions covered by the report in order to analyse and interpret data, conduct interviews (as relevant), and disseminate the outputs.

3.9. The service provider is expected to actively solicit and integrate inputs by the NATO StratCom COE by applying a fully transparent and inclusive process throughout the project period. This may include overseeing additional contributors in order to ensure, in particular, the application of the common methodology and the overall coherence of the output.

3.10. The service provider is expected to participate in a review process of the submitted report and incorporate feedback from the NATO StratCom COE into the work, and

offer suggestions and data for graphs, illustrations and supporting material for the final publication of the report.

- 3.11. The service provider is expected to submit the analytical study in academic English language, providing appropriate referencing, following the NATO StratCom COE style guide. The NATO StratCom COE is responsible for the final English language editing as necessary, the layout, and the printing of the publication as decided.
- 3.12. The service provider is expected to provide relevant data sets produced in the research process (for example, data collected through analytical tools, documents, publications, interviews, surveys, etc.).

4. Reporting (timings approximate)

- 4.1. Meet to clarify and confirm the approach, scope, research objectives and delivery process as soon as the tender has been awarded (via videoconference or other means).
- 4.2. Provide an interim reporting schedule.
- 4.3. Submit methodology for review and comments within one (1) month of signing the contract.
- 4.4. Submit summary of literature review and top critical narratives in each country concerned based on initial data collection with a recommendation of which to select for further study and proposed methodology for audience research within three (3) months from signing the contract.
- 4.5. Initial draft of the report (including raw data) within six (6) months from signing the contract.
- 4.6. Final report (including data sets) delivered for review and comments within eight (8) months from signing the contract.
- 4.7. NATO StratCom COE may request progress updates and chapter reviews throughout the project period.

5. Tender Submission

- 5.1. The tender submission should consist of:
 - 5.1.1. A brief written proposal of up to seven (7) pages for the delivery of the work specified in paragraphs 3.4 and 3.5 (see Section 3, Requirements). The proposal should be based on the methodology in the Reference document. It should outline a conceptual approach toward conducting the analysis of the case study countries to deliver the required results;
 - 5.1.2. The proposal should include the desired social media networks, date ranges, and either a desire for post or posts and comments. The search would need to be limited to certain accounts or keywords. An expected volume should be indicated. Include a line item in the proposal for outside data procurement in case the NATO StratCom COE cannot meet the data needs. NATO StratCom COE data scraping availability will be announced with contract award.
 - 5.1.3. Describe the analysis tools the service provider intends to use in producing the report, and include links to previous research using such tools if available.
 - 5.1.4. A total budget for the full proposal and a budget breakdown, in EUROS (with VAT and without VAT; other tax must be clearly specified for each budget position, marked as zero where not applicable). This may be submitted as an

annex, which is not counted towards 7-page limit. Provide budget estimates for each output, indicating the costs for:

5.1.4.1. Step 1 Desk Study validating Russian Narratives

5.1.4.2. Step 2 Narrative Analysis

5.1.4.3. Step 2 Data Collection

5.1.4.4. Step 3 Suggest Counter-narrative Strategies

5.1.4.5. Report production

5.1.4.6. The budget should include milestones for suggested payments.

5.1.5. Copy of service provider's Certificate issued by the national Commercial Register or a National Register covering other types of legal entity (for example, civil society organisations). If that is not applicable (for example, the Service provider is an individual), please provide an explanatory statement and a different form of a document confirming your identity. This may be submitted as an annex, which is not counted towards 7-page limit.

5.2. Evidence of previous relevant work experience from the last three years, e.g. links to publicly available sources. This may be submitted as an annex, which is not counted towards 7-page limit.

5.3. Information regarding persons or entities that the service provider may choose to sub-contract for work on the Contract delivery (company or person's name, other relevant credentials, e.g. company registration number, website address, contacts, etc., and a short company profile or person's biography). This may be submitted as an annex which is not counted towards 7-page limit.

6. Timetable

General	
Deadline for submission	30 September 2026 by 23:59 hrs (Eastern European Summer Time zone)
Contract implementation period	Upon agreement
Questions	Questions arising from this document should be addressed to LtCol. Bonnie Golbeck until 25 September 2026 at the latest.
Full contact details	LtCol. Bonnie Golbeck, Bonnie.Golbeck@stratcomcoe.org

7. Respondent Instructions

- 7.1. A written proposal is required that complies with the indicated requirements (see Section 5, Tender Submission). The proposal should be submitted electronically using an official email of the entity, in PDF format.
- 7.2. The file(s) should be submitted to tender@stratcomcoe.org by **23:59 hrs Eastern European Summer Time zone on 30 September 2026**.
- 7.3. Submissions after the deadline will not be considered. Proposals must be submitted exclusively to the designated submission address. Any proposal sent to a different address will not be accepted or taken into consideration.
- 7.4. The service provider is expected to supply the required information or state clearly any reason for being unable to do so.
- 7.5. Any assumptions used in preparing responses should be clearly stated. Any appropriate supporting documents (brochures, demo videos, presentations) should be included.
- 7.6. If any of the requirements specified in Section 3 (Requirements) are not met, or if any of the requested documents in Section 5 (Tender Submission) are not submitted, the Contract Award Committee reserves the right to exclude the service provider from further participation in the procurement.
- 7.7. The Contract Award Committee reserves the right to reject any proposal that is considered abnormally low, including in cases where the service provider fails to provide a satisfactory justification for the proposed price upon request.
- 7.8. 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 service providers (subject to confidentiality). In the event that any answer materially affects the ITT specification, an amendment of the original requirements will be sent to all service providers. The NATO StratCom COE will attempt to answer any questions within two (2) working days of receipt of that request; otherwise it will respond within that timescale notifying the service provider of the estimated time to obtain the information.
- 7.9. 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 service providers.
- 7.10. Should the service provider wish to propose a deviation from the specification please ensure that you clearly identify and highlight where appropriate in your response.
- 7.11. 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.
- 7.12. The NATO StratCom COE reserves the right to cancel this procurement procedure at any time without awarding a contract.

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. At each stage an initial evaluation will consider whether or not every instruction and requirement contained within the ITT has been fulfilled.
- 8.2. Evaluation criteria is based on “best value”, an objective assessment by the Contract Awarding Committee as to who offers the best combination of price and service. The following is considered:
 - 8.2.1. Cost and budget breakdown;
 - 8.2.2. Quality of service provision (based on the evidence provided);
 - 8.2.3. Previous experience with conducting similar projects; and
 - 8.2.4. Level of compliance with the requirements, reporting and deliverables of the ITT.
- 8.3. The NATO StratCom COE will continuously assess all interactions with bidders throughout the procurement process, including compliance with the requirements of this ITT and the quality of submissions. The NATO StratCom COE reserves the right, at its sole discretion, to disqualify any bidder whose submission does not comply with the requirements set out in this ITT.
- 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 are subject to negotiation with the selected service provider.