

Countering Information War

Lessons Learned from NATO and Partner Countries

“Countering Information War – Lessons Learned from NATO and Partner Countries”

Expert Workshop in Bratislava

November 28 – 29, 2016

Venue: Falkensteiner hotel, Pilárikova 7372/5, Bratislava, Slovakia

DAY 0, SUNDAY, 27 NOVEMBER

Arrival of participants

20:00 – 23:00 DINNER AT FALKENSTEINER HOTEL (UPON INVITATION)

DAY 1, MONDAY, 28 NOVEMBER

9:00 – 9:30 REGISTRATION OF PARTICIPANTS

9:30 – 10:30 OFFICIAL OPENING

JAKUB WISNIEWSKI, Director, GLOBSEC Policy Institute, Bratislava

KEYNOTE ADDRESS:

MARK LAITY, Chief of STRATCOM at SHAPE, NATO, Brussels

10:30 – 11:30 **SESSION 1: BUILDING INSTITUTIONAL STRATCOM CAPACITIES - INCREASING AWARENESS AND RESILIENCE**
In today's information environment, characterized by the rise of social media and the interconnectedness of people around the world, having adequate STRATCOM capacities is crucial in preventing and mitigating the negative effects of information warfare. Using the traditional or internet-based media, to build awareness, understanding, and support for decisions and operations is a key. For this there needs to be a coherent institutional approach, coordination of effort of allied nations. What are the lessons learned from developing STRATCOM capacities at national level? What are the main obstacles in building effective STRATCOM capacities? Is there enough awareness and will to put words into action? How can NATO support newly established STRATCOM units at national level? What are the models for effective cooperation at national and international level?

KAREL ŘEHKA, Director of Special Forces Directorate of the Armed forces of the Czech Republic
KONSTANTIN OTKHMEZURI, Head of Defence System Analysis Division, Department of Defence Policy and Development, Ministry of Defence of Georgia
Led by: MILAN NIČ, Head of European programme at GLOBSEC Policy Institute, Bratislava

11:30 – 12:00 COFFEE BREAK

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11:30 – 13:30 **SESSION 2: SOCIAL MEDIA: NEW ASYMMETRIC BATTLEGROUND?**

The social media changed every aspect of our lives, from the role of authorities and experts to political debates. Their impact on political campaigns as well as on relations between nations is currently hotly debated all over the world. Viral campaigns proved to have much more impact on the public than TV ads as more and more content as well as audience is moving from the TV to the Internet, and namely to social media. What are the latest trends in using social media for information war purposes? What can we learn from analysis of information war efforts on social media? Do we see new emerging patterns? How to mitigate the potential impact of trolls and disinformation outlets on social media on the trust in institutions and authorities?

BEATA BIALY, Senior Expert, NATO Stratcom CoE, Riga

MARIA ZHDANOVA, Stopfake.org, Ukraine

Led by: **BRIAN WHITMORE**, Senior Russia Analyst, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, Prague

13:30 – 14:45 **LUNCH**

14:45 – 16:15 **SESSION 3: ROLE OF TRADITIONAL MEDIA: JOURNALISTS IN POST-FACTUAL WORLD**

Media used to be called the guardians of the democracy due to their high level of integrity, professionalism and independence. With the rise of so called alternative media seriously eroding this perception the journalism is facing the most crucial crisis, possibly in its history. What happens with democracy when the 'guardians' are under-nourished, under-staffed and there are bandits in town? What role could investigative journalism and citizen journalism play in the counter-information war efforts? How to win back the attention and the trust of public? Is enough done in the field of exposing those who pretend to produce investigative journalism? What are the lessons learned from East and West?

JAMES MILLER, Managing Editor, The Interpreter/RFE, United States

MARTIN M. ŠIMEČKA, Journalist, Slovakia

Led by: **HOVHANNES NIKOGHOSYAN**, Adjunct Lecturer, American University of Armenia,

16:15 – 16:45 **COFFEE BREAK**

16:45 – 18:15 **SESSION 4: COUNTER-NARRATIVES: HOW TO COMMUNICATE OUR STORY SUCCESSFULLY**

Being able to develop and communicate our own narrative, based on a positive vision of the society is key in winning hearts and minds. Faced with the rapid spread of anti-European and anti-NATO narrative by various actors, there is a need to re-evaluate the current approach to communicating our own values. What are the lessons learned from counter-narrative efforts applied in previous conflicts? What are the main challenges in communicating our story effectively? Who should be the messenger? How to transfer the existing best practices and know-how among NATO and partner countries?

ALEXANDER GUITTARD, Senior Policy Fellow, Institute for Strategic Dialogue, United Kingdom

JAKUB JANDA, Deputy Director, European Values, Czech Republic

Led by: **NODAR KHARSHILADZE**, Program Director, Georgian Foundation for Strategic and International Studies, Tbilisi

19:30 – 23:00 **DINNER IN BRATISLAVA OLD TOWN**

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DAY 2, TUESDAY, 29 NOVEMBER

9:00 **KEYNOTE ADDRESS: PAVEL MACKO**, 1st Deputy Head, General Staff of the Slovak Armed Forces (TBC)

9:30 – 10:30 **SESSION 5: USE OF AUTOMATED SYSTEMS, BOTS AND SOFTWARE IN INFORMATION WARFARE**

Use of automated software tools, bots and other IT systems by political actors in online information warfare is on the rise. Due to their increasing capabilities, such automated systems present a new layer of challenges urging the need to develop new counter-measures. At the same time, similar automated systems can become an important tool in analysis and identification of disinformation, exposure of propaganda networks and shutting down of trolls. What are the current trends regarding the use of bots and automated systems for offensive and defensive/analytical purposes? How are the tools developed for these purposes protected? Are there any best practices to be used across the NATO?

MIRIAM LEXMANN, Director of the EU Office, International Republican Institute, Brussels

PHILIP N. HOWARD, Author, Professor, Oxford University, United Kingdom

Led by: **LJUBICA PENDAROSKA**, President of C3 Institute, Macedonia

10:30 – 11:00 **COFFEE BREAK**

11:00 – 12:00 **SESSION 6: FROM PROPAGANDA TO HYBRID – THE CASE OF MONTENEGRO AND SERBIA**

The Balkan region has seen an unprecedented increase of Russian influence in the last period. As the region moves closer to NATO and EU integration, the economic and political pressure on the region not to do so is increasing. Recent parliamentary elections in Montenegro are a point in case. From heavy and intensive propaganda efforts aimed at derailing the Montenegro's bid to join the NATO, the next phase in hybrid warfare was used – an attempted coup. Does this mean an escalation of pressure tactics in the Balkan? What are the current trends in other countries? Is there a risk of reviving old conflicts for the sake of destabilisation of the whole region? What should be the role of NATO in the current situation?

ALEKSANDAR DEDOVIĆ, ALFA Centar, Montenegro

NIKOLA PETROVIĆ, Executive Director, ISAC- Fund Serbia

Led by: **JAN CINGEL**, Research Fellow, GLOBSEC Policy Institute, Bratislava

12:00 – 13:00 **SESSION 7: VIGILANTES AND PARAMILITARIES – ACTIVE CITIZENS OR A TROJAN HORSE?**

Current security situation in some NATO and partner countries has led some individuals to form groups with aim to protect their homeland. The growth of this phenomenon of paramilitary groups operating in NATO and partner countries is seen by many as a potential threat to security and safety of these countries. Their sole existence is challenging the authority of institutionalized security forces in given countries. Are they a Trojan horse to be used by foreign actors in a case of military confrontation or rather a genuine expression of the desire to protect their homeland? What should be the reaction of state authorities to vigilante and paramilitary groups? Is criminalisation and repression the right answer or rather the opposite? What is the experience of NATO and partner countries to deal with such tendencies?

ANTON SHEKHOVTSOV, Fellow, Institute for Human Sciences/Legatum Institute, Vienna

KACPER REKAWEK, Head of Security and Defence Program, GLOBSEC Policy Institute, Bratislava

Led by: **DANIEL MILO**, Senior Research Fellow, GLOBSEC Policy Institute, Bratislava

13:00 – 13:30 **CONCLUSIONS AND SUMMARY**

13:30 – 14:30 **FAREWELL LUNCH**