

U.S. Special Operations Command

SOVEREIGN



CHALLENGE

A Global Network for a Global Command

*Message or Counter-Message:
Crafting Effective Information Campaigns
in the Internet Age*



Summary of Proceedings

19 September 2018 – Washington, DC



USSOCOM

The United States Special Operations Command (USSOCOM) is the Unified Combatant Command charged with overseeing the various Special Operations Commands of the Army, Air Force, Navy and Marine Corps of the United States Armed Forces. USSOCOM is headquartered at MacDill Air Force Base in Tampa, Florida.

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Counterterrorism Fellowship Program

The Counterterrorism Fellowship Program (CTFP) is a United States Department of Defense program specifically designed to strengthen the capabilities of friendly countries to fight terrorism, as well as construct and strengthen the global network of experts and professionals who are dedicated to this fight.

SOF Truths

- Humans are more important than hardware
- Quality is better than quantity
- SOF cannot be mass produced
- Competent SOF cannot be created after emergencies occur
- Most Special Operations require non-SOF support

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Seminar Overview

United States Special Operations Command hosted the 2018 Sovereign Challenge program fall seminar, entitled, “Message or Counter-Message: Crafting Effective Information Campaigns in the Internet Age,” on September 19, in Washington, DC. The seminar followed up on the program’s annual conference, “Is Truth a Commodity? Sovereignty in the Information Age.” Through the lens of a number of experienced practitioners, including journalists, academics, senior government officials, and other policy leaders, the discussions examined the basic elements of strategic information campaigns and countering malign information activity against us, our allies and partners.

In his welcoming remarks for the event, USSOCOM Vice Commander Lt Gen James Slife assured participants that USSOCOM views the Sovereign Challenge program as a valuable means for maintaining strategic dialogue and sustaining exposure to a wide range of perspectives on the difficult problems we are collectively facing. The information environment, he asserted, is once again one of those difficult challenges, and our competitors in this field are growing. To succeed, he continued, we cannot allow ourselves to be dazzled by vast amounts of data and exciting technologies, because success lies in the human domain. Recalling Dr. Ajit Maan’s comments at the 2018 annual conference, Lt Gen Slife recommended that we become better storytellers, building our narratives from the standpoint of humility and infusing them with humor, because truth alone is often insufficient to neutralize an adversary’s narrative that is first into the market.



Sovereign Challenge is valuable to USSOCOM, because it ... "is a unique platform to do the one thing we all need to do a little more of, ... listen."

– Lt Gen James Slife

In a keynote fireside chat, award-winning international journalist Indra Lakshmanan and German-Marshall Fund scholar Jamie Fly framed the challenges that sovereign states are facing from authoritarian regimes' and other malign actors' disinformation and propaganda campaigns. They reviewed a number of Kremlin-sponsored techniques that have undermined sovereign state institutions and fanned the flames of anger and confrontation between domestic political groups in countries across Europe and North America. Likewise, they outlined some of the various methods China is employing to expand its influence in Asia and beyond, and noted that Iran is actively pursuing similar strategies in the Middle East. To counter these strategies, Lakshmanan and Fly recommended strengthening traditional media, publicly identifying entities involved in disinformation



"Effectiveness in the human domain requires a diversity of perspectives"

– Lt Gen James Slife

activities, warning citizens of potential disinformation, and building deepening public resilience through improving critical thinking skills.

Led by Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense (DASD) for Special Operations and Combating Terrorism Andrew Knaggs, the seminar's panel discussion delved deeply into practical approaches to the crafting of effective narratives, messages, and counter-messages. After DASD Knaggs warned that "... the United States, its partners and allies face a more competitive and volatile security environment today than seen in a generation," Andy Paine and Captain Mike Santos explained some of the methods and strategies that the U.S. State Department's Global Engagement Center and U.S. Central Command's Web Operations team are using to develop and disseminate messages in support of counterterrorism and counter-Iran efforts in the Middle East. Both stressed the requirement of speed in responding effectively to terrorist and Iranian disinformation. However, former U.S. diplomat Farah Pandith rejoined that these efforts are

insufficient, because the billion or so Muslim millennials and members of Generation Z, from whom ISIS and other terrorists recruit, view U.S. origin message content and messengers as inauthentic and unconvincing. Ambassador Deborah McCarthy provided counter-Kremlin messaging success stories from her service as U.S. Ambassador to Lithuania. Finally, Professor Sara Cobb stressed the necessity of adopting more interactive communications models based on positive narratives and agreed with Ms. Pandith that governments, to be successful, must scale their information efforts through the private sector, NGO community, academia, and other platforms.

The seminar featured over 100 participants, including 32 senior diplomatic, military, and security officials from 26 countries. USSOCOM and its Sovereign Challenge program thank the Atlantic Council for its support in recruiting speakers and contributing substantive content to the program.



Authoritarian State Interference in Sovereign Democracies – What We Must Do About It

In a wide-ranging, thought-provoking discussion, internationally-renowned journalist Indira Lakshmanan and German Marshall Fund scholar Jamie Fly reviewed the nature and practices of major nation-states' using disinformation campaigns to undermine sovereign democracies. Responding to Ms. Lakshmanan's question, Mr. Fly said that his interest in the topic had arisen after the 2016 election, during which pro-Kremlin websites had not only targeted the Clinton campaign, but also those of Republicans, including Senator Marco Rubio, for whom Fly had worked as foreign policy advisor.

Post-election briefings from the outgoing Obama Administration, Mr. Fly continued, led him to conclude that the U.S. government had been caught unprepared in 2016 regarding malign election influences. This, he said, was not a partisan political failure; rather it was a bureaucratic failure of imagination to recognize and comprehend a major international relations paradigm shift. Although U.S. officials had witnessed these disinformation tactics employed against allied and partner nations, the U.S. national security establishment was unable to grasp that this threat might actually be directed at the United States and its citizens. Moreover, stovepipes within the U.S. bureaucracy stymied effective reaction and limited U.S. diplomatic initiatives towards President Putin on the topic.

Mr. Fly went on to assert that Americans should not view this as a partisan problem, because Putin's intentions are to pit Republicans against Democrats by exacerbating existing and emerging divides in U.S. society.

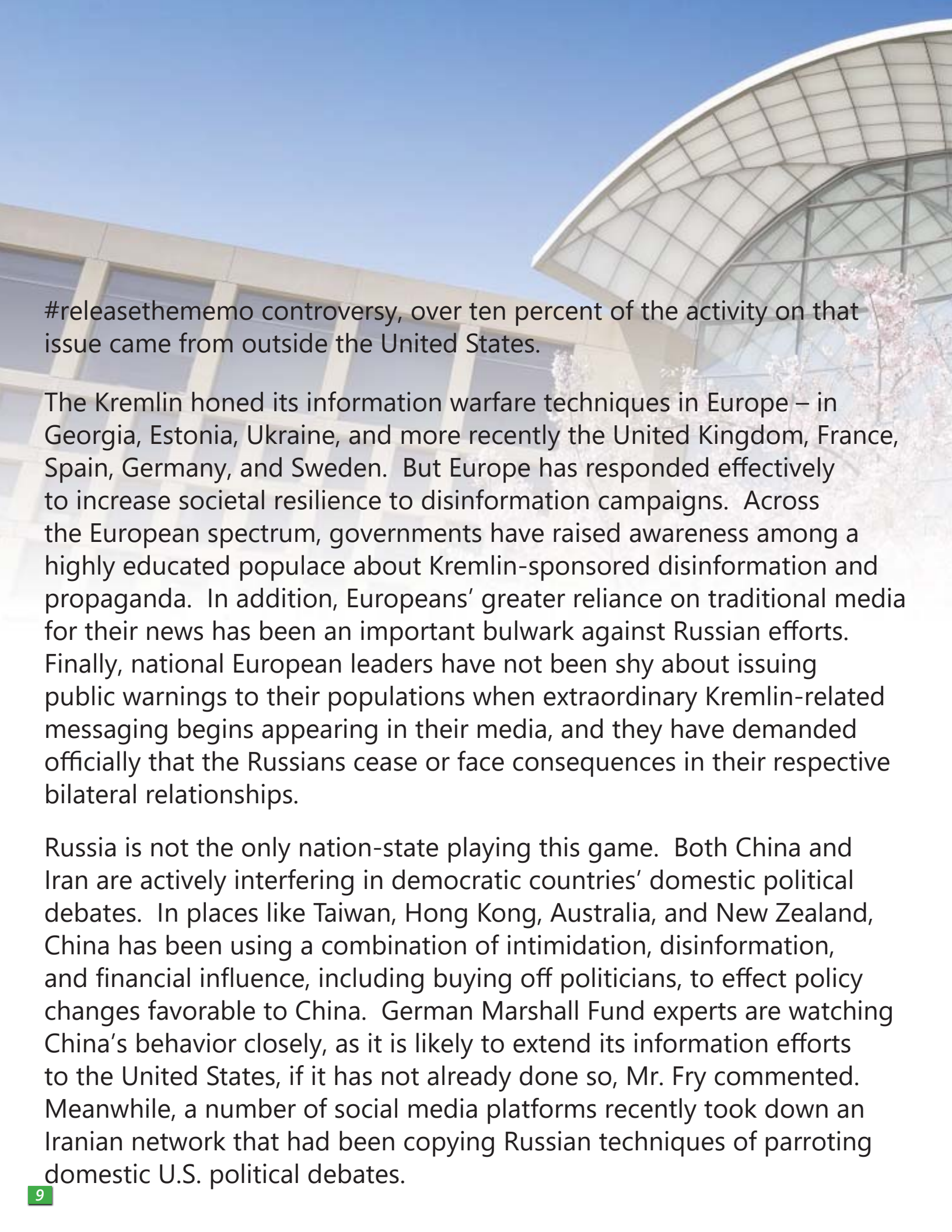


"You're never going to completely deter this sort of activity. You're never going to convince, ... Vladimir Putin, ... to cut this activity out. They've decided that this is something that's low cost and that actually has high impact compared to the cost. You really need to try to insulate your society, raise awareness, and make it more difficult for the disinformation campaigns to really penetrate society."

– Jamie Fly

As documented in the Mueller indictment, Russia's Internet Research Agency organized in May 2016 competing rallies in Houston, Texas. One group cast themselves as American Muslims; the others were supposedly Texas secessionists. Over two hundred people showed up for these rallies at exactly the same time and place, and violence was only avoided because the police showed up as well. Earlier in 2018, the Internet Research Agency stimulated some left-leaning U.S. groups to organize protests against President Trump.

The German Marshall Fund has been monitoring for the past year roughly 600 accounts that are likely linked to the Kremlin. These accounts are often acting in concert to push certain issues into contentious political debates in democratic states. Consisting of both people and bots often operating as a constellation, they frequently mimic major American political debates, like the NFL national anthem controversy or issues related to the Mueller investigation, with the goal of amplifying fringe messages and stoking anger on both sides of the debate. During the



#releasethememo controversy, over ten percent of the activity on that issue came from outside the United States.

The Kremlin honed its information warfare techniques in Europe – in Georgia, Estonia, Ukraine, and more recently the United Kingdom, France, Spain, Germany, and Sweden. But Europe has responded effectively to increase societal resilience to disinformation campaigns. Across the European spectrum, governments have raised awareness among a highly educated populace about Kremlin-sponsored disinformation and propaganda. In addition, Europeans' greater reliance on traditional media for their news has been an important bulwark against Russian efforts. Finally, national European leaders have not been shy about issuing public warnings to their populations when extraordinary Kremlin-related messaging begins appearing in their media, and they have demanded officially that the Russians cease or face consequences in their respective bilateral relationships.

Russia is not the only nation-state playing this game. Both China and Iran are actively interfering in democratic countries' domestic political debates. In places like Taiwan, Hong Kong, Australia, and New Zealand, China has been using a combination of intimidation, disinformation, and financial influence, including buying off politicians, to effect policy changes favorable to China. German Marshall Fund experts are watching China's behavior closely, as it is likely to extend its information efforts to the United States, if it has not already done so, Mr. Fry commented. Meanwhile, a number of social media platforms recently took down an Iranian network that had been copying Russian techniques of parroting domestic U.S. political debates.



"...these may be real issues, but if they're falsely being amplified, it's fanning the flames and creating deeper divisions than maybe actually exist in real life."

– Indira Lakshmanan

Lakshmanan commented that the effort to exploit preexisting polarization in the American political space is very clever. The fractured, hyper-partisan media space on the Internet creates opportunities for manipulation. On the other hand, traditional media does not fall victim as easily to disinformation campaigns. In the United States, trust in traditional media, as measured by Gallup and the Pulitzer Center on Crisis Reporting, has been rising since reaching its record low point in 2016. Lakshmanan asserted that Americans trust their local media the most, but trust in the national media lags, especially among Republicans.

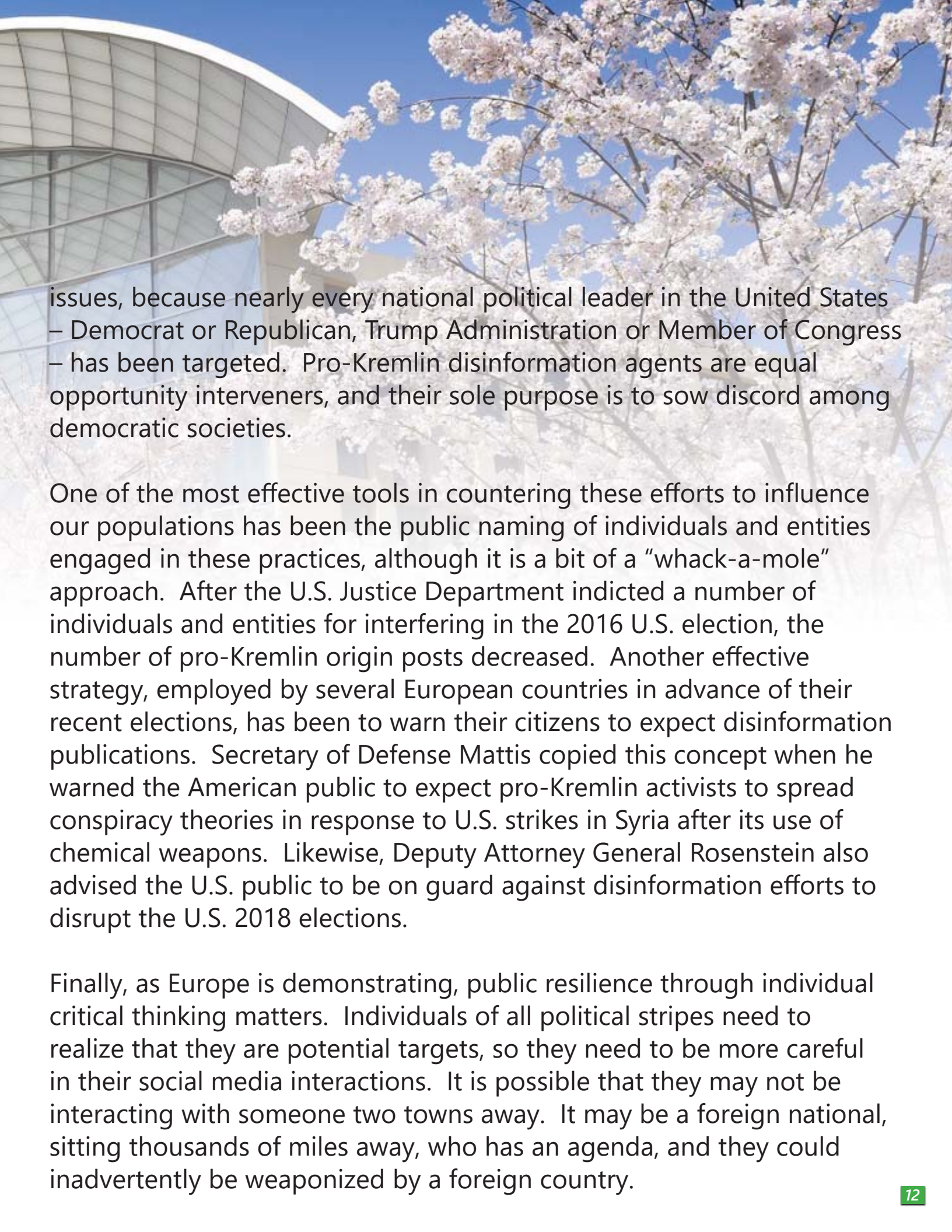
However, rebounding American trust in local news appears to have attracted the attention of pro-Kremlin and other media manipulators. For instance, German Marshall Fund analysis has identified a network of Twitter accounts portraying themselves as local news outlets. Typically, they surface in a particular local market, initially tweeting about traffic and weather for several months. After picking up followers, they suddenly switch content to foreign policy – like the latest news from Syria or other Kremlin-inspired stories.

U.S. traditional media, as in Europe, can buffer disinformation campaigns; however, even its reporters can be suborned and traditional media platforms' reputations' sullied. After the Internet Research Agency accounts were revealed, research showed that every major media organization, except one, had cited in their reporting fake material originating from Internet Research Agency accounts. Fly noted that politicians from every political party and philosophy have referred to fake stories in their statements and speeches.

Finally, there is a real danger when journalists accept any leaked information without knowing the full agenda of the source. Fly shared, "what worries us is that we haven't seen much debate among traditional media journalists about this practice. In many of these cases, the leaks are from pass through sources, so journalists really have no clue from whom they have acquired this information." Pro-Kremlin groups continue to deploy this methodology, and there is evidence that other actors are starting to head in the same direction.

Addressing this challenge in today's hyper-partisan political environment is critically important because the problem is not limited to Twitter or Facebook. Pro-Kremlin and other actors have posted material aimed at different segments of democratic societies around the world using major social media platforms, including some very obscure websites. Social media platforms need to grapple with this fake amplification of





issues, because nearly every national political leader in the United States – Democrat or Republican, Trump Administration or Member of Congress – has been targeted. Pro-Kremlin disinformation agents are equal opportunity interveners, and their sole purpose is to sow discord among democratic societies.

One of the most effective tools in countering these efforts to influence our populations has been the public naming of individuals and entities engaged in these practices, although it is a bit of a “whack-a-mole” approach. After the U.S. Justice Department indicted a number of individuals and entities for interfering in the 2016 U.S. election, the number of pro-Kremlin origin posts decreased. Another effective strategy, employed by several European countries in advance of their recent elections, has been to warn their citizens to expect disinformation publications. Secretary of Defense Mattis copied this concept when he warned the American public to expect pro-Kremlin activists to spread conspiracy theories in response to U.S. strikes in Syria after its use of chemical weapons. Likewise, Deputy Attorney General Rosenstein also advised the U.S. public to be on guard against disinformation efforts to disrupt the U.S. 2018 elections.

Finally, as Europe is demonstrating, public resilience through individual critical thinking matters. Individuals of all political stripes need to realize that they are potential targets, so they need to be more careful in their social media interactions. It is possible that they may not be interacting with someone two towns away. It may be a foreign national, sitting thousands of miles away, who has an agenda, and they could inadvertently be weaponized by a foreign country.

Narrative and Messaging to Meet New Information Threats The U.S. Defense Department Response

Information operations being directed against the United States, our allies and partners should be viewed as a key component of modern irregular warfare campaigns, said Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations and Combating Terrorism Andrew Knaggs. While the United States has focused its efforts in recent years on combating terrorism in the Middle East, revisionist competitors and rogue regimes have been busily redefining what it means to conduct irregular warfare in the modern era. The United States, its allies and partners must now accept that for some time, we have been in an era of renewed global competition, in which our adversaries seek to undermine our shared security through nonconventional means both as a primary strategy and to support potential conventional approaches.

These irregular warfare challenges have been enabled by the proliferation of modern technology and have been diffused to the point that small irregular groups can be hyper enabled to induce military effects short of actual armed conflict. The U.S. National Defense Strategy offers a clear eyed view of the threats we face as a nation and a prioritized approach to meet these challenges. Consistent with this guidance, the Department of Defense (DoD) is modifying U.S. irregular warfare strategy, and revising its information operations element.

DoD's overarching approach involves accelerating the transition away from Industrial Age thinking about influence and towards Information Age dominance. Major underlying elements of the strategy include developing a strong collective narrative while focusing on social drivers of human behavior and new technical means for engaging modern audiences.



"[I]n many ways the United States, our partners and allies face a more competitive and volatile security environment today than seen in a generation."

– DASD Andrew Knaggs

The bottom line is that the United States, our allies and partners, need to get better at telling our stories. Our target audiences' perceptions of their environments are far more expansive than just an exclusive focus on communication. They include other considerations such as history, physical environment, social trends, culture, religion, as well as preconceived opinions about the United States, its allies and partners.

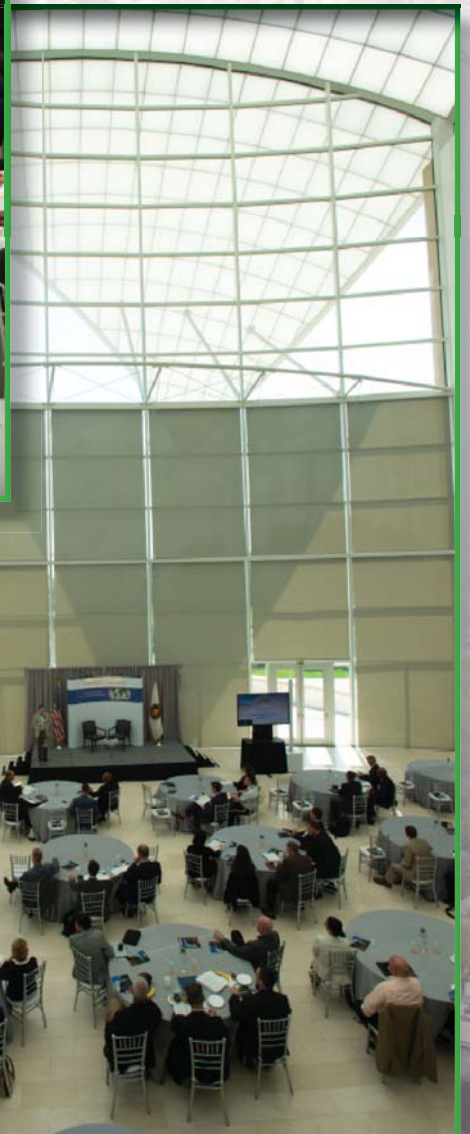
In this environment, the narrative that matters is the one that our target audiences construct. To effectively craft messages, we must understand precisely who we seek to persuade and what behaviors we want to induce. We need to understand how our audiences perceive their world and how those perceptions drive their behaviors. We must remember that our policy choices and actions all present images that are open to interpretation and that by beginning with an understanding of our target audiences, we will craft more compelling narratives to support more effective policies.



"[T]he immediate problem we're all facing is crafting a comprehensive and synchronized narrative in today's complex information environment."

– DASD Andrew Knaggs





Panel Discussion – “So What Should Our Message Be ...?”

Mr. Andy Paine from the State Department’s Global Engagement Center (GEC) described the standard, infinite loop of the message development cycle – product creation, release, monitoring of outcomes, assessing impact, and feedback into the next products under development. While one can relatively easily define the goal for a message, assessing the ability of an audience to receive and act on the message and measure its impact are extremely difficult tasks, especially in the international environment.

Crafting messages, he continued, requires extensive study of the intended audience. To motivate them, the message crafter must understand the audience’s vulnerabilities and susceptibilities – emotional touch points, perspectives on key issues, and predispositions – on important matters. Then, and only then, he emphasized, can a message crafter prepare a persuasive product that motivates the target audience to proceed along a path that it is already predisposed to follow.

In a recent campaign, Mr. Paine said, we focused on select audiences in the Arab world to counter Iranian propaganda designed to demonstrate a growing Iranian military prowess. In one instance, the Iranians released a video announcing their new fighter jet, the “Kowsar.” We recognized that this new fighter was in fact, nothing more than a repainted American-made F-5 from the former Shah of Iran’s air force, and we released a video into the market that demonstrated exactly this fact. Based on our analysis of views on Twitter, this particular product was successful in reaching the desired audiences in Lebanon and Iraq and discrediting the Iranian story.

There is one caveat about GEC messaging efforts, Paine clarified. The GEC’s work is not the messaging of a huge media star or other highly popular figure. GEC program numbers are never going to be in the millions, because



"We have, on average, 46 minutes to get in front of a narrative before it collapses. Delegation is essential."

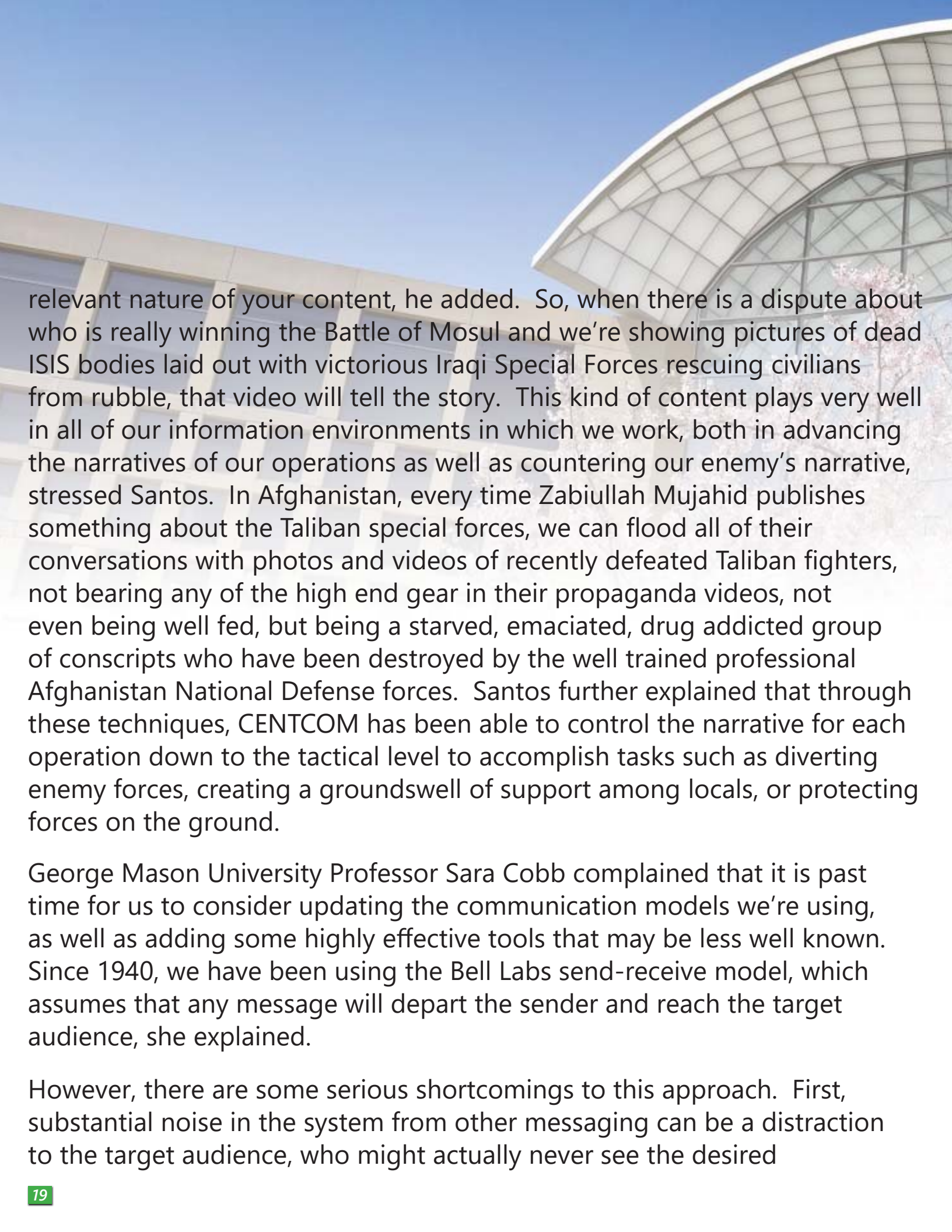
– Captain Mike Santos.

it is looking to affect niche audiences on topics that are generally not all that popular.

U.S. Central Command's (CENTCOM) Captain Mike Santos stated that CENTCOM's U.S. military influence activities are neither military deception, electronic warfare, nor cyber warfare, and he went on to emphasize that the command's social media programs are implemented in a manner consistent with U.S. Department of Defense rules. These programs, he said, are based on our experience that people, whether reasonable or unreasonable, knowledgeable or ignorant, all function the same on the internet. They may believe that they can discern propaganda, but in reality, they never do, Santos related. For example, CENTCOM attributes its websites as U.S. government activities through a link on these sites labeled "about us." After over 12 million reads in the past two years, less than one percent of those accessing these sites have clicked on that "about us" link.

No one has time on the internet; no one is checking, Santos said. There is just so much information being pushed so quickly, that no single person can sift through it all. The whole point of the internet, he added, is that you get to lie about who you are. In many ways, Sun Tzu's *The Art of War* is guiding our work more than standard military theories, he stressed.

Our other lesson from working on the internet is that content is king, he said. Who you are on the internet is less relevant than the compelling and



relevant nature of your content, he added. So, when there is a dispute about who is really winning the Battle of Mosul and we're showing pictures of dead ISIS bodies laid out with victorious Iraqi Special Forces rescuing civilians from rubble, that video will tell the story. This kind of content plays very well in all of our information environments in which we work, both in advancing the narratives of our operations as well as countering our enemy's narrative, stressed Santos. In Afghanistan, every time Zabiullah Mujahid publishes something about the Taliban special forces, we can flood all of their conversations with photos and videos of recently defeated Taliban fighters, not bearing any of the high end gear in their propaganda videos, not even being well fed, but being a starved, emaciated, drug addicted group of conscripts who have been destroyed by the well trained professional Afghanistan National Defense forces. Santos further explained that through these techniques, CENTCOM has been able to control the narrative for each operation down to the tactical level to accomplish tasks such as diverting enemy forces, creating a groundswell of support among locals, or protecting forces on the ground.

George Mason University Professor Sara Cobb complained that it is past time for us to consider updating the communication models we're using, as well as adding some highly effective tools that may be less well known. Since 1940, we have been using the Bell Labs send-receive model, which assumes that any message will depart the sender and reach the target audience, she explained.

However, there are some serious shortcomings to this approach. First, substantial noise in the system from other messaging can be a distraction to the target audience, who might actually never see the desired



"We have to get away from second-grade models of accusation, counter-accusation to succeed."

– Professor Sara Cobb

communication. Second, intercultural differences between senders and audiences can lead to miscommunication and even unanticipated adverse effects, she added.

Cobb proposed that a better model for the 21st Century information environment is the social construction model. In it, knowledgeable, experienced individuals prepare narratives that form a basis for interacting with others. With this model, the objective is to create a dynamic, interactive system based on the generation of more positive narratives and creation of greater connectivity with audiences.

Research shows, Cobb related, that there are significant differences between the kind of narratives that generate conflict and those that lead to resolution, evolution, or relationship building. It is well-known, she continued, that if your messages position the audience as illegitimate, then such messaging is more likely to contribute to or enhance conflict. On the other hand, if messaging identifies audiences as legitimate, then relationships are more likely to be built. After all, she stressed, our mission should not be just to marginalize the bad guys, it should also be to build quality relationships with all the non-violent people in the communities where we are working.

According to Cobb, six key tools comprise the social construction model for messaging. Positive connotation is the attribution of positive intent. Reframing of issues has already been described. Circular questions

can change the dynamic of interaction with people. Externalization separates a problem from the people. Appreciation inquiry examines a problem from the “glass half-full” aspect, rather than its opposite. Finally, scaffolding accents unique alternative outcomes to a very generalized narrative. With this kind of approach, she concluded, our narrative can not only achieve their intended outcomes and generate followers, but also shift the dynamic of relationships as a whole.



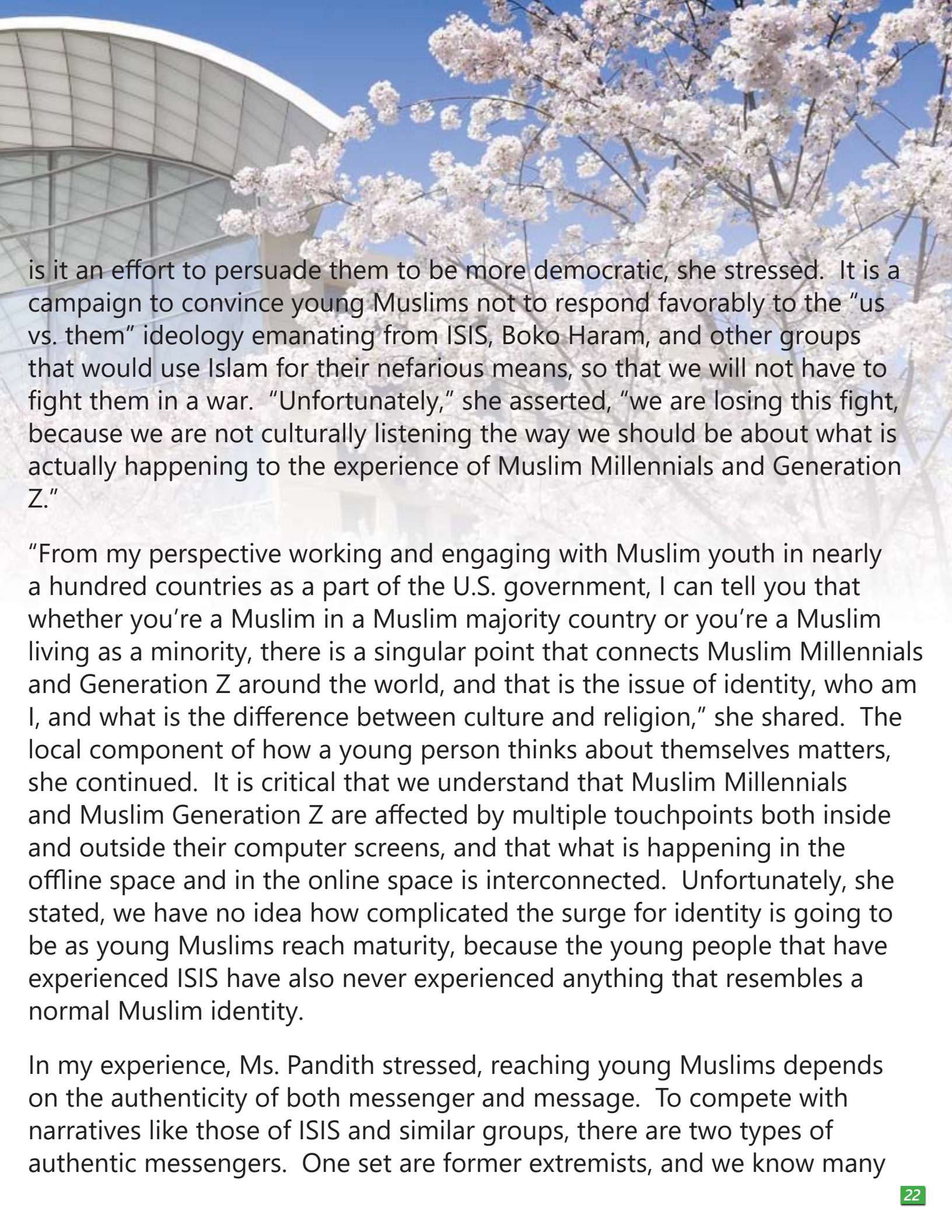
After attesting to her status as an American Muslim, former U.S. diplomat Farah Pandith noted that there are over one billion Muslims under the age of thirty around the world, and that, she stressed, is the demographic from which ISIS and similar groups

“...we are losing this fight, because we are not culturally listening the way we should be about what is actually happening to the experience of Muslim Millennials and Generation Z.”

– Farah Pandith

recruit. Despite nearly twenty years of information campaigns run from the State Department, National Security Council, and the Pentagon, we have failed to affect the way young Muslims think about themselves, Pandith asserted. We have been unable to scale the influencers that we know to maximize impact.

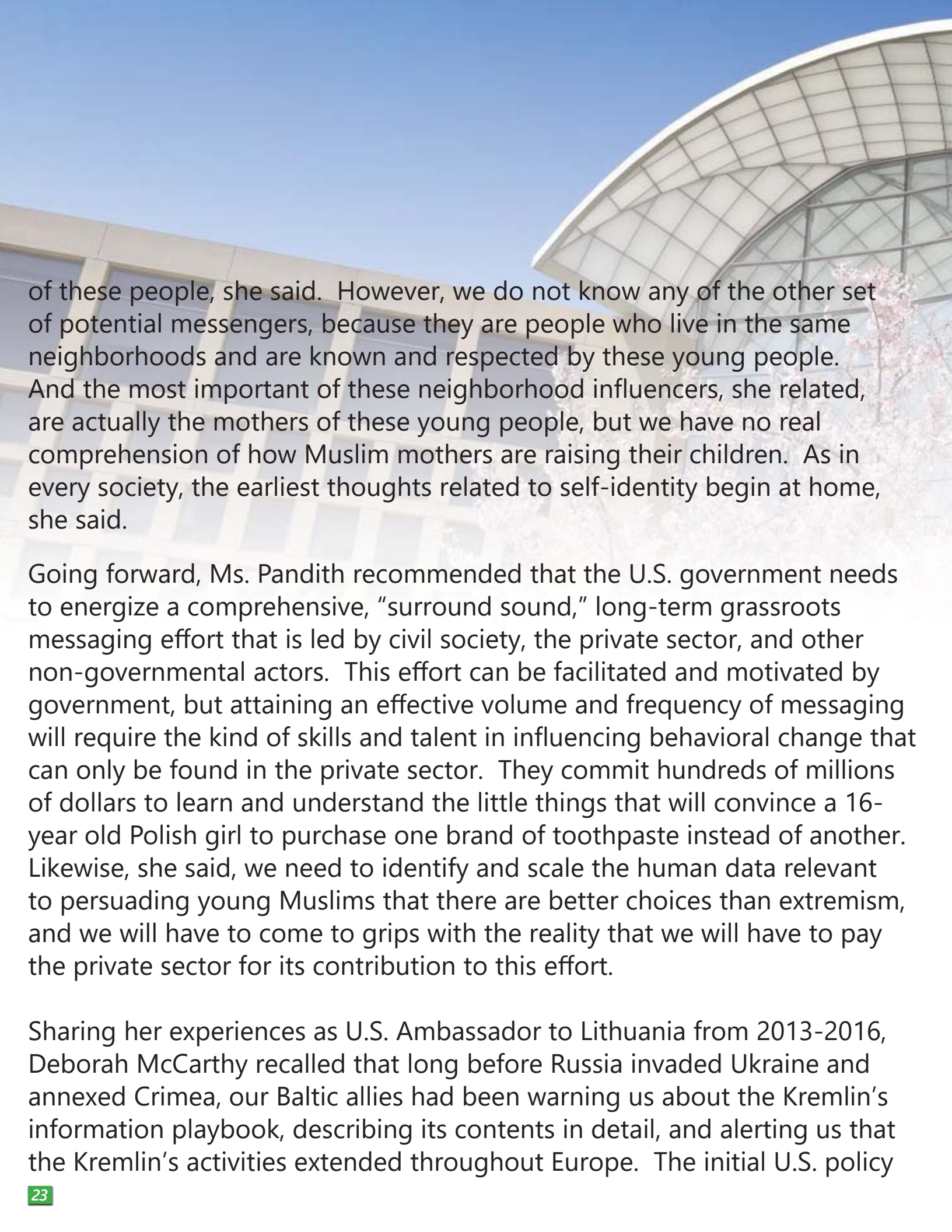
This is not an exercise in convincing young Muslims to like America, nor



is it an effort to persuade them to be more democratic, she stressed. It is a campaign to convince young Muslims not to respond favorably to the “us vs. them” ideology emanating from ISIS, Boko Haram, and other groups that would use Islam for their nefarious means, so that we will not have to fight them in a war. “Unfortunately,” she asserted, “we are losing this fight, because we are not culturally listening the way we should be about what is actually happening to the experience of Muslim Millennials and Generation Z.”

“From my perspective working and engaging with Muslim youth in nearly a hundred countries as a part of the U.S. government, I can tell you that whether you’re a Muslim in a Muslim majority country or you’re a Muslim living as a minority, there is a singular point that connects Muslim Millennials and Generation Z around the world, and that is the issue of identity, who am I, and what is the difference between culture and religion,” she shared. The local component of how a young person thinks about themselves matters, she continued. It is critical that we understand that Muslim Millennials and Muslim Generation Z are affected by multiple touchpoints both inside and outside their computer screens, and that what is happening in the offline space and in the online space is interconnected. Unfortunately, she stated, we have no idea how complicated the surge for identity is going to be as young Muslims reach maturity, because the young people that have experienced ISIS have also never experienced anything that resembles a normal Muslim identity.

In my experience, Ms. Pandith stressed, reaching young Muslims depends on the authenticity of both messenger and message. To compete with narratives like those of ISIS and similar groups, there are two types of authentic messengers. One set are former extremists, and we know many



of these people, she said. However, we do not know any of the other set of potential messengers, because they are people who live in the same neighborhoods and are known and respected by these young people. And the most important of these neighborhood influencers, she related, are actually the mothers of these young people, but we have no real comprehension of how Muslim mothers are raising their children. As in every society, the earliest thoughts related to self-identity begin at home, she said.

Going forward, Ms. Pandith recommended that the U.S. government needs to energize a comprehensive, “surround sound,” long-term grassroots messaging effort that is led by civil society, the private sector, and other non-governmental actors. This effort can be facilitated and motivated by government, but attaining an effective volume and frequency of messaging will require the kind of skills and talent in influencing behavioral change that can only be found in the private sector. They commit hundreds of millions of dollars to learn and understand the little things that will convince a 16-year old Polish girl to purchase one brand of toothpaste instead of another. Likewise, she said, we need to identify and scale the human data relevant to persuading young Muslims that there are better choices than extremism, and we will have to come to grips with the reality that we will have to pay the private sector for its contribution to this effort.

Sharing her experiences as U.S. Ambassador to Lithuania from 2013-2016, Deborah McCarthy recalled that long before Russia invaded Ukraine and annexed Crimea, our Baltic allies had been warning us about the Kremlin’s information playbook, describing its contents in detail, and alerting us that the Kremlin’s activities extended throughout Europe. The initial U.S. policy



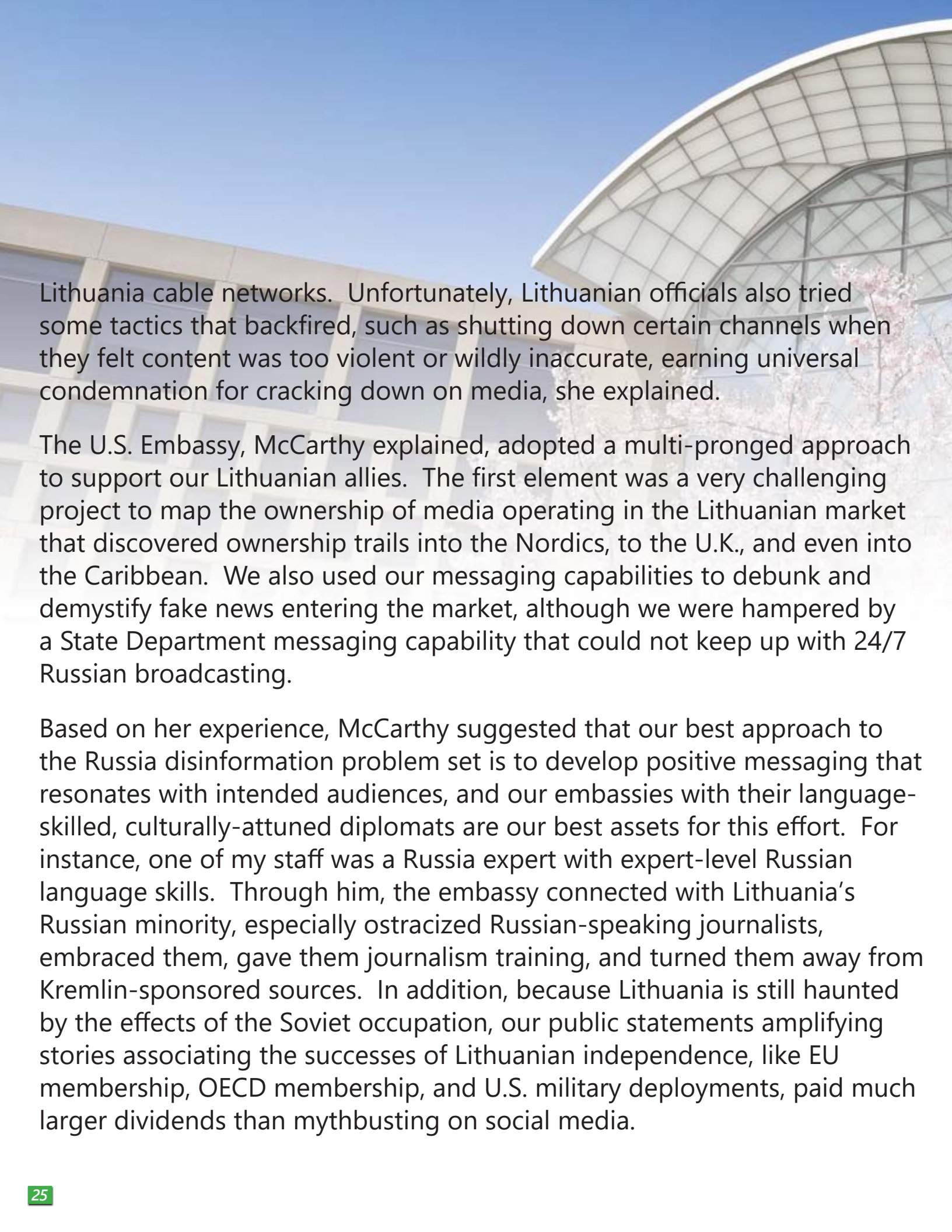
response was to focus exclusively on Russian minorities in the Baltics, but U.S. government agencies did not examine messaging aimed at the region's entire population, mostly through television.

"There are three key tools for countering Russian influence campaigns: mapping local media ownership, training local journalists, and the involvement of U.S. private media in the game. A U.S. government "media machine" will not get it done."

– Ambassador Deborah McCarthy

At the time, the TV cable packages available in the Baltics were all designed for the Russian market, so they were heavy on Russian news sources, including RT (Russia Today). Recognizing the basic problem, including that the United States was not paying attention to the core issue, the Lithuanians moved on several fronts domestically to mitigate the situation. They set up a strategic communications team, which has done fine work, especially forming teams comprised of government civilians, military personnel, and business representatives to visit every village and school in the country to educate their population about the fake news and other disinformation from Kremlin-inspired sources.

The Lithuanians also worked very hard to get other European television channels to come into the country, an arduous task when your national market is only three million people. To that point, she quipped, the best thing that happened was the serendipitous arrival of Netflix on



Lithuania cable networks. Unfortunately, Lithuanian officials also tried some tactics that backfired, such as shutting down certain channels when they felt content was too violent or wildly inaccurate, earning universal condemnation for cracking down on media, she explained.

The U.S. Embassy, McCarthy explained, adopted a multi-pronged approach to support our Lithuanian allies. The first element was a very challenging project to map the ownership of media operating in the Lithuanian market that discovered ownership trails into the Nordics, to the U.K., and even into the Caribbean. We also used our messaging capabilities to debunk and demystify fake news entering the market, although we were hampered by a State Department messaging capability that could not keep up with 24/7 Russian broadcasting.

Based on her experience, McCarthy suggested that our best approach to the Russia disinformation problem set is to develop positive messaging that resonates with intended audiences, and our embassies with their language-skilled, culturally-attuned diplomats are our best assets for this effort. For instance, one of my staff was a Russia expert with expert-level Russian language skills. Through him, the embassy connected with Lithuania's Russian minority, especially ostracized Russian-speaking journalists, embraced them, gave them journalism training, and turned them away from Kremlin-sponsored sources. In addition, because Lithuania is still haunted by the effects of the Soviet occupation, our public statements amplifying stories associating the successes of Lithuanian independence, like EU membership, OECD membership, and U.S. military deployments, paid much larger dividends than mythbusting on social media.

Speaker Biographies



Lt Gen James C. "Jim" Slife, Vice Commander, U.S. Special Operations Command, Washington, D.C. Lt Gen Slife is a career helicopter pilot who has commanded U.S. Air Force Special Operations units from the Squadron to the Wing level; he has also held general officer positions in the U.S. Central Command and the United Nations Command and U.S. Forces Korea. Prior to assuming his current duties, Lt Gen Slife was the Chief of Staff of the U.S. Special Operations Command at MacDill Air Force Base, Florida.



Dr. Sara Cobb, Ph.D., Drucie French Cumbie Professor, George Mason University

Director of the School for Conflict Analysis and Resolution (S-CAR) at George Mason University, Professor Cobb teaches and conducts research on the relationship between narrative and violent conflict. She is also the Director of the Center for the Study of Narrative and Conflict Resolution at S-CAR which provides a hub for scholarship on narrative approaches to conflict analysis and resolution. Formerly, she was the Director of the Program on Negotiation at Harvard Law School and has held positions at a variety of tier one research institutions such as University of California, Santa Barbara, University of Connecticut, and more recently at the University of Amsterdam.



Jamie Fly, Senior Fellow, The German Marshall Fund of the United States (GMF)

Director of GMF's Future of Geopolitics and Asia programs, Mr. Fly also works with GMF's Alliance for Securing Democracy. From 2013-2017, he served as

counselor for Foreign and National Security Affairs to Senator Marco Rubio (R-FL) and was his foreign policy advisor during the 2016 presidential campaign. Previously, Mr. Fly served in the Bush administration at the National Security Council (2008–2009) and in the Office of the Secretary of Defense (2005–2008).



Mr. Andrew Knaggs, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations and Combating Terrorism

Mr. Knaggs' current responsibilities include counterterrorism, counterinsurgency, unconventional warfare, and information operations. Prior to his current position Mr. Knaggs was the founding partner of Knaggs Law PLLC; Mr. Knaggs has also served as the Deputy

Director for Special Operations and Irregular Warfare in the office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations/Low-Intensity Conflict, and while on active duty, as a Green Beret in 5th Special Forces Group.

Ms. Indira Lakshmanan, Executive Editor, *Pulitzer Center on Crisis Reporting*



In addition to her new position with the Pulitzer Center, Ms. Lakshmanan is the Washington columnist for the *Boston Globe*, and a frequent contributor to *Bloomberg*, the *International New York Times*, *NPR*, *PBS*, and *Politico Magazine*. She has covered coups, campaigns and revolutions in over 80 countries and

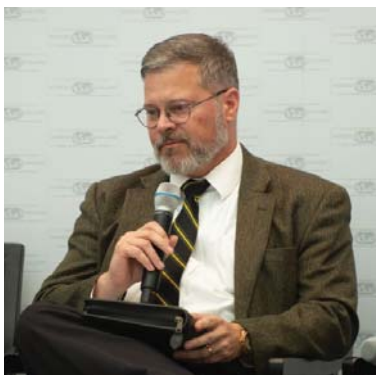
has spurred thought leadership on restoring trust in journalism through transparency and accountability.



Ambassador Deborah A. McCarthy (ret.), *The American Academy of Diplomacy*

An international security strategist with over 30 years of experience in leadership, teamwork and negotiations at the highest levels of government and private sector in Europe, the Western Hemisphere and the United States, she currently is the producer

and moderator of the Academy of Diplomacy podcast series “The General and the Ambassador” on U.S. diplomatic and military leadership. Until November, 2017, she was the Executive Director of the Diversity and Leadership in International Affairs Project at the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS). During her distinguished diplomatic career, she served as the U.S. Ambassador to Lithuania and Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Economic and Business Affairs at the Department of State. In addition to Lithuania, she has served in Canada, the Dominican Republic, France, Greece, Haiti, Italy, and Nicaragua.



Mr. Andy Paine, Deputy Director, *Content Development Office of the Department of State Global Engagement Center*

Prior to his current position Mr. Paine served in the US Army for over 27 years, where his assignments included Office of the Secretary of Defense, NATO’s joint headquarters, NATO’s Joint Command South-Center in Larissa, Greece, and the 4th PSYOP battalion.

His military deployments included tours in Bosnia, Albania, Kosovo, Afghanistan, Iraq and South Sudan.



Ms. Farah Pandith, Adjunct Senior Fellow, *Council on Foreign Relations*

Ms. Pandith is a pioneer in the field of countering violent extremism (CVE). Her book, *How We Win: How Cutting-Edge Entrepreneurs, Political Visionaries, Enlightened Business Leaders, and Social Media Mavens Can Defeat the Extremist Threat*, will be released in early 2019. Her government career has included political appointments in the National Security Council, Department of

State and US Agency for International Development during the George H.W. Bush, George W. Bush, and Barack H. Obama administrations. Post government, she served on the Homeland Security Advisory Council and was chair of the CVE Task Force. She is a Senior Fellow at the Kennedy School of Government and advises governments, companies and NGOs on Countering Violent Extremism.



Captain Mike Santos, Officer in Charge, *U.S. Central Command's Web Operations Regional Web Interaction Program*

Previously, he was a Tactical Psychological Operations Detachment Commander and also spent two years at the State Department's Office of High Threat Protection in Afghanistan. CPT Santos joined the U.S. Army in 2001 as

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