

**INVITATION TO TENDER (ITT) CPG 01737 – STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS (STRATCOM)
SUPPORT TO THE MODERATE SYRIAN ARMED OPPOSITION (SUPREME MILITARY COUNCIL
(SMC) AND WIDER FREE SYRIAN ARMY (FSA))**

HMG Desired Outcomes

1. STRATCOM delivery is part of the wider HMG objective to enable an effective, coherent, credible and diverse Syrian opposition that respects the rights of all Syrian citizens and is capable of playing a constructive role in a future managed transition away from the Assad regime.

Background

2. While it has many capability shortfalls, the SMC/FSA's credibility suffers partly because of its poor Strategic communications (STRATCOM). While improved STRATCOM can only build on what exists in reality, it can ensure that SMC/FSA competence and operational performance, where this does exist, is better exploited.

Objectives

3. As part of a broader package of HMG supported Syrian opposition, STRATCOM activity (which includes the Syrian National Coalition (NC) and independently-minded media activists) aims to:
 - enhance the reputation of the SMC/FSA and thereby degrade the Assad regime narrative through effective STRATCOM. This work should result in the SMC/ FSA gaining greater support from the Syrian people.
 - serve to improve FSA discipline and to moderate its battlefield behaviour. As part of this work, the SMC's communications will need to be better coordinated with the NC.

Need

4. There is a clear need for improved STRATCOMS: the Assad regime's narrative remains effective and a large proportion of the Syrian people remain either loyal to the regime or as 'middle-ground' yet to be convinced by the opposition narrative.
5. Like its civilian counterpart the NC, the SMC/FSA is not as effective a player in the information domain as it will need to be if it is to win and retain sufficient Syrian public support and to erode the regime's will to fight. The FSA has, thus far, been unable to establish a strong and convincing identity as a coherent and well-disciplined fighting force; it has been unable to conduct effective media operations; and its reputation has been tarnished by the efforts of extremist elements within the opposition that, in some instances, better understand the importance of the 'information war'.
6. The SMC/FSA has an almost complete lack of STRATCOM capacity. The underlying issues are similar to the problems faced in the NC Media Function at the start of this year: lack of skills; insufficient facilities and equipment; a lack of organised press office functions; limited senior leader understanding of the importance of STRATCOM; and the lack of strategic vision and a plan.

COMMERCIAL IN CONFIDENCE

Attachment 2: Statement of Requirements

Solution

7. The supplier will deliver an enduring campaign of media and outreach activity that builds and then sustains FSA reputation and credibility as a force that will ultimately prevail in Syria.
8. The project will need to exploit HMG's existing relationship with the SMC to build the SMC/FSA's STRATCOM capacity, almost from nothing. To deliver an enduring solution, this will need to be an iterative process, to support the SMC's nominated representatives to deliver a structure and approach tailored to their needs and capabilities rather than the imposition of an HMG-determined template. The delivery of a Syrian solution to this Syrian problem will therefore require tact, diplomacy and patience. The Syrians will own the comms activity, but will require a high level of support/ mentorship, particularly in the initial months of the project to ensure effective delivery. However, this support will need to be reduced over time as the Syrians increase their capacity. We therefore envisage that the supplier has a gradual staged approach to increasing Syrian capacity, with minimal support required after the first stage of project (by April 2014).

Deliverables

9. There will be some assistance available within existing HMG arrangements but the large majority of the requirement will need to be met through contractor support. Innovative solutions to meet the project objectives are invited and will add to appeal, however, the broad requirement is as described below and tenders will be primarily evaluated on their ability to deliver on each point:
 - Provide suitable mentorship to the head of SMC STRATCOM and, potentially, also Gen Idris.
 - Provide a media strategy that will employ mass media to strengthen the FSA 'brand', at the expense of the more extremist elements within the opposition where this is possible. The delivery of this strategy will likely require the FSA to be able to tell its story on favourable terms. Accordingly, we would expect the winning contractor to be able to create such opportunities and support the placing of content on prominent and respected media channels.
 - Provision of an SMC press office complete with web (there will need to be an FSA website) and media production capacity (including office hire and equipment purchase). To be effective, this office will need to establish linkages with each of the five FSA Front commands so accurate information of STRATCOM significance flows swiftly to where it is needed.
 - Provide a range of media training which could potentially include; spokesperson, press officer, webmasters, combat camera/journalists and digital editing training.
 - Equipment purchase, to include the capacity to collect and transmit imagery of FSA Front operations from inside Syria (e.g. cameras, satellite communications).
 - Strategy and implementation for improved linkages between the SMC and NC media offices to deliver better coordinated and consistent, Syrian opposition communications. If the SMC press office is not to be located in the vicinity of the NC media office (in Istanbul) then a suitable liaison function will need to be established and detailed in the response to the evaluation criteria.

Budget

10. As an initial planning figure, contractors should seek to deliver a solution below £500k over the period Oct 13 to the end of Mar 14, not including office hire and equipment purchase. Subsequent

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funding arrangements will need to be identified but the expectation is that the work will be supported into the next Financial Year but at a significant lower scale (see next para).

Sustainability

11. In the short term, the need for a surge of international mentor support is accepted. However, in order to be sustainable financially, and acceptable to our Syrian partners, the medium term (from Apr 14) arrangements will need to be almost entirely Syrian with only minimal international mentors. See paragraph 8 above. Tenders should include a robust plan for how this will be achieved within the timeframes.

Confidentiality

12. UK's support to moderate Syrian opposition STRATCOM has been publicly announced. However, there is no desire for the detail of this work to be the subject of media interest. All in receipt of this ITT are therefore requested to treat its content accordingly and agree to the Non Disclosure Agreement (NDA) located on the Bravo portal.