

## **WHY ARK/Accadian?**

### **Known and trusted by the SMC and HMG**

ARK is already well known to the SMC, having provided judges and senior armed opposition actors with Law of Armed Conflict training in April 2013. This training focused on familiarising participants with international law on the conduct of armed conflict as well as the treatment of civilians, the wounded, and prisoners of war. ARK has an existing relationship with Muhamad Mustafa, Media Advisor to General Idriss, and with Louay Mokdad, the FSA spokesman. Mustafa has already participated in the UK-funded NC Media and Communications workshop.

ARK is in the early stages of an HMG-funded analytical mapping exercise to determine the structure and activities of extremist actors. This analysis will inform HMG's core counter narrative, which will in turn be delivered through a series of ARK-led STRATCOM campaigns (ARK and Accadian are collaborating on the Deliver phase of this CVE programme). This research will enable the development of a highly effective counter narrative for the SMC.

Accadian is well known to HMG for its Middle East work, including the recent Project VERONA. Accadian's Directors leverage a strong network of specialists who they have worked with over the last decade, including trusted local partners across the Middle East.

### **Synergies with opposition entities**

ARK has a proven record of effectively utilising its extensive network of Syrian civilian and military contacts at the national, provincial, and local levels, and operating as a trusted bridge between donors and Syrian partners.

### **Demonstrable Experience of Effective STRATCOM in Syria**

ARK is a current provider of strategic effects/information campaign services to HMG and the US Government through the media production house Basma, enabling synergies to be exploited in this area. Basma is a fully Syrian media entity with 15 Syrian staff and extensive reach and networks in Syria. ARK is also delivering an extensive portfolio of Syria programming with the governments of the UK, US, Canada, Denmark and the EU across a broad range of disciplines spanning STRATCOM and media, human rights and accountability, civilian opposition support, police and justice sector programming and civil defence. This enables ARK to facilitate linkages between the SMC press office and the provision of parallel STRATCOM and other initiatives, including enhanced civil-military cooperation.

## Strong Syrian Network

Over the past 18 months, ARK has built a strong reputation with the opposition political entities, including the National Coalition, Assistance Coordination Unit, Local Administrative Councils and local police services. At an early stage, ARK sought to encourage collaboration between the media offices of opposition political entities. The Media and Communications workshop, designed and led by ARK in July 2013, brought together the SMC Media Office with Media Officers from the National Coalition and ACU Communication Units.

## Detailed Understanding of Situation and Key Drivers

ARK conducts nationwide public opinion polling inside Syria through its fieldwork partners KA Research in order to understand the social and political landscape it operates in and enable detailed statistical analysis of results to provide segmentation and key-driver analysis of the population. ARK also conducts regular nationwide media polling to inform its product deployment decisions.

## Majority Syrian Staffed

80% of ARK's staff in Istanbul are Syrian nationals and all have been vetted by the UK or US governments. ARK's Syrian staff include a former Syrian special forces officer who enjoys extensive relationships of trust with senior security stakeholders, including the Free Syrian Army; a former political leader of a high profile Revolutionary Council serving as an advisor to NC President Jarba; a media activist who has been asked to provide media support to the Office of the President, and a lobby reporter working with the NC.

## Innovative

ARK's approach to current UK-funded strategic communication programming, through its Basma products, is a radical departure to previous multi-million dollar programming in Iraq and Afghanistan in that it has **raised and trained local national staff as the core element of the capability**. This has resulted in a resonance of product not seen in products produced and disseminated by non-native staff. Basma products carry local language syntax and dialect. This approach very closely matches that of Accadian in other environments.



Figure 3. A video placed on a Kafnabel website with English subtitles. While professionally produced, it failed to resonate with Syrians due to unrealistic images, such as the one depicted above of a photogenic FSA soldier placing a flower in his rifle barrel.