

MISTF-C

In Operation

INHERENT RESOLVE



by Jared M. Tracy

Shortly after the 11 September 2001 terrorist attacks on the United States, the U.S. Central Command (USCENTCOM) established a Joint Psychological Operations (PSYOP) Task Force (JPOTF) (initially based at Fort Bragg, NC) to provide audio, visual, and printed product support to upcoming operations in Afghanistan. The JPOTF mission grew with the 2003 expansion of the Global War on Terror (GWOT) into Iraq. Two years later, the task force had elements operating at MacDill Air Force Base, FL, and in Baghdad, Iraq.¹ By 2005, the JPOTF had re-positioned and consolidated at Camp As Sayliyah, Qatar, to better enable it to provide PSYOP support throughout the entire USCENTCOM Area of Responsibility (AOR). In 2010, the JPOTF was re-designated the Joint Military Information Support Task Force (Special Operations) (JISTF [SO]) and again in 2015 as the Military Information Support Task Force – Central (MISTF-C).² As of 2015, MISTF-C has been headquartered at Al Udeid Airbase (AUAB), Qatar.³

MISTF-C has thus been providing steadfast PSYOP/Military Information Support Operations (MISO) support to Army Special Operations Forces (ARSOF) and joint, interagency, and combined partners since late 2001. It developed, produced, printed, and disseminated millions of printed products and several thousand audio-visual products in support of Operations ENDURING FREEDOM (OEF) and FREEDOM'S SENTINEL (OFS) in Afghanistan and Operations IRAQI FREEDOM (OIF) and NEW DAWN (OND) in Iraq. Since 2014 it has contributed to international efforts in Operation INHERENT RESOLVE (OIR) against violent extremist organizations in Iraq and Syria, namely the

Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS).⁴ MISTF-C earned six Joint Meritorious Unit Awards between 2008 and 2015 for its MISO efforts in USCENTCOM.⁵

MISO products may originate in a myriad of ways. For example, a forward MISO 'outstation' (such as another task force or a Military Information Support Team) lacking enough time, equipment, or resources might request product design and/or printing support from the MISTF-C. Or, the MISTF-C staff might develop and obtain pre-approval for an original product series so that 'outstations' can later create products without pursuing higher approval each time. Regardless who initiates the product concept or what the nature of the support request is, the MISTF-C is committed to its in-theater 'customers.' These may be other MISO elements or a supported headquarters like the Special Operations Joint Task Force – OIR (SOJTF-OIR) or the Combined Joint Task Force – OIR (CJTF-OIR).⁶

In the following pages, the reader will get a first-hand view of the caliber of MISO products targeting violent extremism in the USCENTCOM AOR. Each entry includes an English translation, the product's objective, and the target audience for whom it was intended. Behind every product is an extensive research, design, staffing, and approval process. This process generally includes a thorough internal legal review; in-depth translations and cultural analyses by vetted experts; and product design and output by U.S. Army PSYOP and Signal personnel. After receiving local command endorsement, products are staffed and approved by supported and higher joint headquarters. Finally, they are delivered to the appropriate personnel or aircraft for dissemination. ▲



U.S. Army and Air Force personnel load a 750-pound M129 E2 bomb canister with MISTF-C leaflets to be dropped by B-52 Stratofortress aircraft. After the M129 is dropped, a time fuse detonates the primer cord between the bomb's two sections, blowing it open and releasing its contents on target audiences within the Combined Joint Operations Area (CJOA).⁷



These two Kodak NexPress S3000 Digital Production Color Presses are owned and operated by the MISTF-C. Each is capable of printing 3,000 A3 sheets (11.7 x 16.5 inches) per hour, or 72,000 per day. Larger sheets containing multiple leaflets are then cut using the Polar 78 cutter (rear center-right). Depending on the number of leaflets per page (and without consideration of downtime for press maintenance and repairs), each press can handle 250,000 to 400,000 leaflets a day.



MISTF-C contract specialists evaluate the linguistic and cultural accuracy of printed, audio, and visual MISO products beforehand to insure best results with target audiences. This contractor records a script in an insulated sound booth which will be incorporated into a product.



A



B



C

- A** MISTF-C Shoulder Sleeve Insignia (SSI) worn on right shoulder of assigned U.S. Air Force (USAF) personnel.
- B** U.S. Army Special Operations Command SSI worn on left shoulder of U.S. Army personnel assigned to the MISTF-C.
- C** Special Operations Command, Central (SOCCENT) SSI worn on right shoulder as the combat patch for U.S. Army personnel and on the left shoulder of USAF personnel assigned to the MISTF-C.

Leaflets

Front



Back



Translation Both Sides | “[ISIS] robs your boys of their childhood ... and turns them into murderers.”

Target Audience | Iraqi and Syrian citizens in ISIS-controlled areas.

Objectives | Decrease public support for ISIS.

Translation |

“The time that you’ve been waiting for has arrived, it is now the time to leave [your location].”

Target Audience |

Iraqi and Syrian citizens in ISIS-controlled areas.

Objectives |

Protect civilian lives and increase public compliance with Coalition directives.



Translation Front | “Stop letting [ISIS] beat your women.”

Translation Back | “This is your country. Stop [ISIS] from ruining your country.”

Target Audience | Iraqi citizens in ISIS-controlled areas.

Objectives | Decrease public acceptance of ISIS.



Front



Back

Front



Back



Translation Front | “Coalition pilots prowl the skies. Listen for their roar and look for the fire and smoke that signifies another [ISIS] has been sent back to *Barzakh*.”

In Islamic theology, *Barzakh* is believed to be an intermediate location between the physical and the spiritual worlds where deceased individuals have time to contemplate their worldly actions before final Judgment Day and entry into eternity.

Translation Back | “Committing atrocities against innocent citizens is cowardly and unforgiveable. [ISIS] have corrupt souls and will see *Jahannam*. Abandon your illegitimate cause.”

In Islamic theology, *Jahannam* signifies Hell.

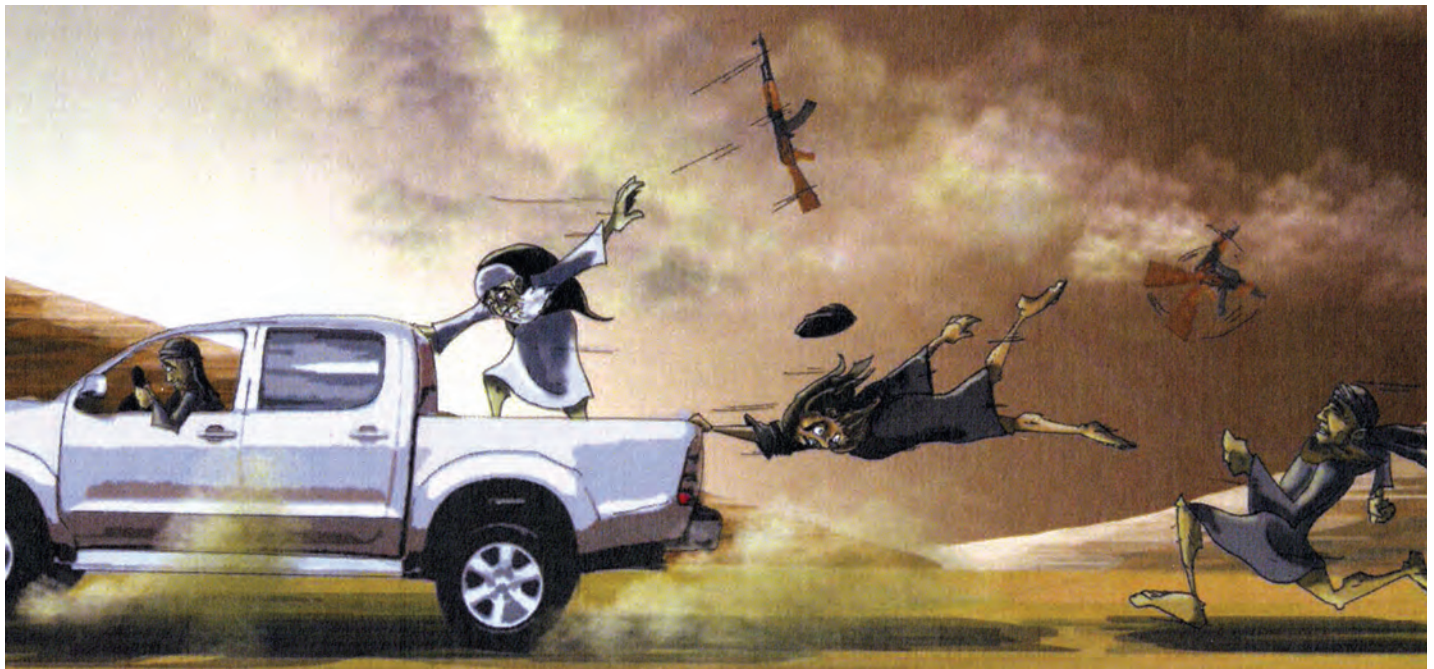
Target Audience | ISIS members.

Objectives | Encourage desertion to weaken ISIS.

Front



Back



Translation Front | Top “ISF [Iraqi Security Force] is Advancing!” Bottom “Quick, just like we did in Fallujah!”

Target Audience | 18-25 year-old, non-ISIS males living in Mosul, Iraq.

Objectives | Discourage public support for ISIS.



Translation |
 “For any oppressor,
 there is an end.”

Target Audience | Newly recruited ISIS fighters.

Objectives | Encourage desertion to weaken ISIS.

Translation |
 “The Invisible Sheikh with the expansion of his false caliphate ... will soon have none to help him achieve his illusions.”

This is a reference to the leader of ISIS and self-proclaimed caliph, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi. He is called “invisible” because his exact location remains uncertain and he hides among civilian populations in ISIS-controlled areas rather than anywhere in the open or near immediate danger.

Target Audience |
 ISIS members.

Objectives | Encourage desertion to weaken ISIS.



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Jared M. Tracy served six years in the U.S. Army, and became a historian at USASOC in December 2010. He earned an MA in History from Virginia Commonwealth University and a PhD in History from Kansas State University. His research is focused on the history of U.S. Army Psychological Operations.

Endnotes

- 1 Christopher J. Lamb, *Review of Psychological Operations Lessons Learned from Recent Operational Experience* (Washington, DC: National Defense University Press, 2005), 45-51.
- 2 MISTF-C, “MISTF-C History” (draft), attached to email from CPT Devon E. Wilson* (pseudonym) to Jared M. Tracy, “SUBJECT: Help with MISTF-C History,” 28 April 2016, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Ft. Bragg, NC.
- 3 JISTF (SO), “CAS to AUAB Relocation,” 15 May 2015, copy in USASOC History Office Classified Files, Ft. Bragg, NC.
- 4 ISIS is also known as the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) and *Da’esh*.
- 5 Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS), “Citation to Accompany the Award of the Joint Meritorious Unit Award to Headquarters, Joint Psychological Operations Task Force,” 21 April 2008 (and accompanying staffing documents); CJCS, “Citation to Accompany the Award of the Joint Meritorious Unit Award to Headquarters, Joint Psychological Operations Task Force,” 13 July 2009; CJCS, “Citation to Accompany the Award of the Joint Meritorious Unit Award to Headquarters, Joint Psychological Operations Task Force-Qatar,” 13 September 2010; CJCS, “Citation to Accompany the Award of the Joint Meritorious Unit Award to Headquarters, Joint Psychological Operations Task Force-Qatar,” 20 January 2012; The Joint Staff, “Joint Staff Permanent Order Number J-ISO-00240-14: Announcement of the Award of the Joint Meritorious Unit Award,” 28 October 2014; and The Joint Staff, “Joint Staff Permanent Order Number J-ISO-0263-15: Announcement of the Award of the Joint Meritorious Unit Award,” 30 November 2015, copies of all in USASOC History Office Classified Files, Ft. Bragg, NC.
- 6 MISTF-C Command Briefing to Jared M. Tracy, AUAB, Qatar, 15 September 2016; miscellaneous MISTF-C interviews with Jared M. Tracy, 16-21 September 2016, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Ft. Bragg, NC.
- 7 “M129E1/E2 Psychological Operations Leaflet Bomb,” www.globalsecurity.org/military/systems/munitions/m129.htm (accessed 29 December 2016).