PUBLIC-FACING COUNTER-TERRORISM STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION CAMPAIGNS:
USING 'THE STARS FRAMEWORK' TO MAP AND RESPOND TO SOME KEY CHALLENGES

STARS

Key Considerations

S — Situation

- What is the location and likely activity of the intended audience to be influenced, e.g., urban, rural, travelling?
- Are the principal audiences likely to trust messaging from government / police?

T — Threat

- Is the threat being centred the right one, and does it cohere with public concerns?
- What is the temporal threat situation like? E.g., have there been recent terror attacks?

A — Adapt

Continually reviewing and adapting assets, methods, and logics in light of evolving contexts is a key thread of good practice, e.g., can new technologies be used to develop and deliver the message in innovative ways? Should 'new' threat scenarios be portrayed?

R — Response

- What cognitive, emotional and behavioural responses are being sought and is this clearly communicated?
- What other messages are being sent by government?
- Have assets been used recurrently/in the same form?

S — Signals

- Within deployed assets, are the signals of risk that the public should attend to clearly demarcated?
- How can and why would the public 'signal back'?

SITUATION

Considerations – what are the key questions here?

- What is the location and likely activity of the intended audience to be influenced, e.g., urban, rural, travelling?
- Are the principal audiences likely to trust messaging from government / police?

Technique – what are the tools for addressing this?

- ☐ Localised, 'normal', everyday scenes
- ☐ One-way dissemination
- ☐ Partnership seeking
- ☐ Community messengers

Mitigate – what are the issues in the way?

- ✕ Public's hyperlocal preoccupation
- ✕ Diffusion of the message
- ✕ (Dis)Trust Climate

Moderate – what approaches might work?

- ✓ Identify local norms of risk and threat in areas/activities for 'hooks' for core message
- ✓ Communicate successful local disruptions
- ✓ Consider tailored methods (not just messages)
- ✓ Think small: 'micro areas' for captive audience
- ✓ Set a realistic trust benchmark
- ✓ Identify avenues for community engagement and delivery

THREAT

Considerations – what are the key questions here?

- Is the threat being centred the right one, and does it cohere with public concerns?
- What is the temporal threat situation like? E.g., have there been recent terror attacks?

Technique – what are the tools for addressing this?

☐ Fear or reassurance appeals

☐ Appeals to wider crime or public safety concerns

☐ Aftermath targeting

Mitigate – what are the issues in the way?

✕ 'Fear traps'

✕ Reinforcement of (crime) concerns/dilution of terrorism threat

✕ Agenda-setting framing

Moderate – what approaches might work?

✓ Communicate broader benefits for crime and public safety – link to a wider inclusive agenda - but don't disguise CT central goal

✓ Be mindful of potential traumatic effects and risk of 'turning off' the audience

✓ Consider when and how agenda setting events should be reinforced e.g., anniversaries rather than direct aftermath

RESPONSE

Considerations – what are the key questions here?

- What cognitive, emotional and behavioural responses are being sought and is this clearly communicated?
- What other messages are being sent by government?
- Have assets been used recurrently / in the same form?

Technique – what are the tools for addressing this?

☐ Graphics, framing, discourse, and design

☐ Recurrent techniques

☐ Multiple mediums

Mitigate – what are the issues in the way?

✗ 'Fame traps'

Moderate – what approaches might work?

✓ Clear call to action, accessible words / visuals

✓ Pursue emotional connection and narrative

✓ Communicate desired behavioural response and the positive outcomes, not just the threat

✓ Evaluation: capture metrics beyond recall, pre and post delivery

✓ Build planned-for review and refresh stages for visual and audio assets

✓ Identify coordination and conflict points across government / authorities

✓ Embrace new media but don't neglect 'traditional' / face to face methods

✓ Leave space for grassroots 're-framing'

SIGNALS

Considerations – what are the key questions here?

- Within deployed assets, are the signals of risk that the public should attend to clearly demarcated?

- How can and why would the public 'signal back'?

Technique – what are the tools for addressing this?

☐ Specify what to spot

Mitigate – what are the issues in the way?

✗ 'Fame traps'

Moderate – what approaches might work?

✓ Exploit 'gut plays'

✓ Demonstrate responsiveness and outcomes – legitimate anomalies

✓ Explain 'confidential reporting'

✓ Signpost clear reporting mechanisms

✓ Reassure the audience that it is better to report even when uncertain, than to do nothing – it won't get them in trouble or waste police time