From:	SMART Archive
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Cc:	PACOM IDHS HONOLULU HI; ASEAN MEMBER COLLECTIVE; NCTC WASHINGTON DC; DEPT OF JUSTICE WASHINGTON DC
Subject:	MALAYSIA: RLA Workshop on Countering Online Violent Extremist Narratives Results in New Project Ideas, Strengthened Networks in Southeast Asia

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From:	AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR
Action:	WASHDC, SECSTATE *IMMEDIATE*
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TAGS:	PREL, PGOV, PTER, ASEC, KISL, MY
Captions:	SENSITIVE
Subject:	MALAYSIA: RLA Workshop on Countering Online Violent Extremist Narratives Results in New Project Ideas, Strengthened Networks in Southeast Asia

1. (SBU) Summary: Embassy Kuala Lumpur's Resident Legal Advisor Program, in partnership with the Southeast Asia Regional Center for Counterterrorism (SEARCCT), hosted a highly successful three-day regional workshop November 4-6 on Countering Online Violent Extremist Narratives for over 50 civil society representatives, academics, law enforcement officials and other counterterrorism and countering violent extremism (CVE) practitioners. The workshop provided participants with practical guidance and best-practices, and resulted in new ideas for organizations and governments to more effectively counter terrorist recruitment online, with a particular focus on the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). Malaysia's _____ convened a roundtable following our workshop, tasking   **B6**
approximately 25 influential youth to develop counter-messaging campaigns on social media. SEARCCT   **B7(F)**
intends to publish a detailed report of the workshop presentations and results. Post is following up with
_____ Google, and other partners to develop and implement counter-narrative campaigns. End Summary.   **B6**
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2. (SBU) Action Request: The success of our November 4-6 workshop resulted from having a diverse group of speakers from government, civil society and the private sector, who provided action-oriented, practical suggestions, which resulted in new partnerships and counter-messaging program ideas. Through additional funding from the CT Bureau, Post will continue to focus on building regional capacity for online CVE activities. Unfortunately, due to limited capacity at Post and with the Malaysian government, which is starting its chairmanship of ASEAN, another CVE Counter-Communications workshop is unlikely before July. With this, we propose utilizing our time and resources over the next six months to strengthen civil society

organizations that are keen key to engage online, to include engaging Google and Twitter to host country-specific Content Creators Workshops in Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines to continue the momentum and build partner capacity. Post encourages the CT Bureau to move promptly with plans to authorize additional funding that could be utilized as seed grants to give these organizations additional tools and resources to develop and implement their counter-messaging campaigns. End Action Request.

Strengthening the Swarm: Government, Civil Society, Private Sector Partnerships

3. (SBU) Ambassador Fernandez, head of the Center for Strategic Counterterrorism Communications (CSCC), discussed the U.S. government's overt counter-messaging activities, and emphasized the importance of partnerships with civil society and the private sector. He said that the role of government is essential, but limited, as countering terrorist propaganda must be conducted on multiple levels. He also encouraged government and civil society representatives to take risks in developing counter-messaging campaigns, learn from mistakes, and, most importantly, "contest the space" by directly engaging in the social media forums and websites where the terrorists spread their narratives.

4. (SBU) [   ] from the Against Violent Extremism network, which includes 500 former violent extremists now promoting peace and tolerance, gave a dynamic presentation on innovative ideas to reach youth susceptible to terrorist ideologies, including how organizations can use targeted ads, filtering, and diagnostic tools on Facebook to reach specific audiences. He emphasized the need for "swarms" of individuals and organizations from multiple, diverse disciplines and backgrounds to counter increasingly sophisticated – and appealing – terrorist propaganda.

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5. (SBU) In addition to SEARCCT, which is part of Malaysia's Foreign Ministry, representatives from over 15 Malaysian government agencies and institutions participated, indicating that Malaysia is starting to approach the broader ISIL threat from a broader whole-of-government approach.

Taking Down Extremist Websites Not the Best Approach

6. (SBU) Ambassador Fernandez and several of the other speakers emphasized that removing violent extremist websites is not effective, as terrorist supporters are technologically savvy and can easily create new sites, links, hashtags, and other online resources for their followers; in fact, the speaker from Google echoed the counter-effectiveness of the take-down approach. Law enforcement officials can gather extensive information about terrorist networks and recruitment methods through monitoring extremist websites, including collecting evidence for use in court. Furthermore, governments, academics, journalists, researchers, and others intent on countering extremist messages can utilize the terrorists' websites and social media pages to directly engage in the violent extremists' arena. [   ] of the Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission said that Malaysia blocked over 800 websites in 2013, mostly gambling or fraud related sites, but added, "We know it is an exercise in futility, but we must do it to send a message."

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Motivations for Joining ISIL Amplified Online

7. (SBU) Various speakers cited a number of factors for individuals – particularly youth – being particularly susceptible to ISIL's violent extremist narrative, including an attraction to "end times" prophecies; the Sunni-Shia divide; the humanitarian crisis in Syria; grievances of injustice and human suffering; and a motivation

to "do something". The internet and social media have enabled ISIL fighters to become "overnight celebrities" who show off their actions and inspire others to replicate their deeds. One speaker said that the internet keeps even deceased terrorists "alive" through propagating old videos and images, describing this as the "Sixth Sense" effect, modifying the popular movie's tagline "I see dead people" to "I see dead terrorists."

Practical Insights from Google

8. (SBU) [   ] Google Malaysia's [   ], gave a practical overview of how   B6
governments and civil society organizations can utilize administrative and diagnostic tools in Google and othe B7(F)
websites to more effectively reach their intended audience. He also offered that Google could conduct a two or three day "Content Creators Workshop" to guide organizations in developing and implementing counter-messaging campaigns. Post is following up with Google and other partners on this initiative.

Six Step Approach to Developing an Effective Counter-Message

9. (SBU) [   ] the International Islamic University of Malaysia, discussed ISIL's   B6
online presence in Malaysia and mapped out six practical steps that organizations can take to more effectively   B7(F)
design counter-messaging campaigns. These include: 1) identify specific websites, social media pages, and key players; 2) understand the language and discourse; 3) identify key arguments in the extremist narrative; 4) prepare the counter-narrative, which is the most difficult part and requires strategic thinking; 5) disseminate the counter-narrative, both online and offline; 6) monitor, evaluate and improve the counter-message.

[   ] **CVE Roundtable Discussion**   B6
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10. (SBU) As a follow up to our three-day workshop, [   ]
[   ] hosted a roundtable discussion with approximately 25 young bloggers, journalists, documentary film makers, NGO activists, and representatives of several Muslim youth organizations. The young participants – many of whom have significant online followings – shared a variety of potential ideas on how they can develop messaging strategies to more effectively counter terrorist narratives. [   ] tasked the group – including an up-and-coming documentary filmmaker – to present specific ideas on how they will counter violent extremism online and through social media. In addition, several of these participants subsequently submitted project proposals to us through the CVE Local Grants Program. We see this as a positive development tapping into highly talented, creative, and influential youth with whom we have not yet partnered. We intend to further build on this work through subsequent workshops, CVE grants, and programs to bring civil society together with Google, Facebook, and other social media companies.

11. (SBU) In addition to articulating best practices and strategies to develop counter messaging programs, discussions at the workshop focused on the evolving threat of online radicalization; the roles of government, civil society, and the private sector in countering extremist narratives; and challenges and successes countering terrorist narratives online. Following a discussion on emerging trends in online radicalization, the participants viewed several ISIL recruitment videos. Working in small groups, they brainstormed possible campaigns and strategies to effectively counter those messages. Other speakers included:

- [   ] of Radical Middle Way, a London-based organization conducting innovative work   B6
to promote tolerance and counter violent extremist activities, introduced a number of possible CVE   B7(F)

program ideas and told us after the workshop that he developed at least five new partnerships in the region.

- [   ] of the Institute for International Peace Building, discussed the important role of NGOs and social entrepreneurship, and provided practical examples of programs to de-radicalize extremists.   B6 B7(F)
- [   ] suggested the need for a "holistic approach" that addresses root causes of violent extremism and promotes voices of moderation.   B6 B7(F)
- [   ] of the Australian Attorney General's CVE Unit, who discussed Australia's mixed range of CVE efforts to engage with "many audiences, across many mediums, with many messages."   B6 B7(F)
- [   ] at the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies in Singapore, identified 16 groups in Southeast Asia (including 5 in Malaysia) currently supporting ISIL.
- [   ] gave an overview of the evolving threat of online radicalization and recruitment in Southeast Asia.   B6 B7(F)
- [   ] SEARCCT [   ] described online CVE efforts as a "battle of storytellers" and emphasized growing concerns with the "connected lone wolf" who can more easily connect with other extremists online.   B6 B7(F)
- [   ] in Singapore, stressed the need to avoid "short-termism" and develop longer term, sustainable counter-narrative campaigns that are creative, clever, and more effectively reach vulnerable individuals.

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