

## IRAQ STRATEGIC INFORMATION CAMPAIGN SIX-MONTH ADVERTISING PLAN

*"Those who have control over qarat (decision making) will naturally try to transfer the ancestral fear of the West onto the idea of democracy itself... Identifying democracy as a western malady, decking it out in the chador of foreignness, is a strategic operation worth millions of petrodollars... It is a complex undertaking because it builds on unpredictable emotional elements like hope [and] desire..."*

~ Fatema Mernissi, Islam and Democracy: Fear of the Modern World (1992)

### PURPOSE

This communications plan discusses the concept, structure and continuing administration of an effective strategic TV advertising campaign to promote confidence and public support in the constitutional and electoral processes in the period up to and including the elections in Jan 05.

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

For the past three months the Coalition has been producing a series of TV advertisements, principally for broadcasting on the major Middle East television stations, which are the predominant source of news and entertainment for the Iraqi people.

The purpose of this campaign has been to underpin the Coalition's other communications and outreach efforts on the ground, highlighting milestones in the transition to democracy and encouraging the Iraqi people to support the security, infrastructure, economic and education programmes that sustain the transition.

The campaign has become the central plank of a strategic information campaign that facilitates Iraqi openness to all other communication efforts in support of the transitional process. It is now the Coalition's single most effective means of delivering controlled messages to the Iraqi people and provides an alternative to what would otherwise be a mostly negative stream of messaging from Iraqis' preferred information sources.

Already, four of five planned waves of integrated television, radio, newspaper and poster ads have been produced and aired. The campaign budget – from March to July 10 – totals \$8.9 million. Each wave has featured prominently in media outlets used by more than 20 million Iraqis. Focus group testing indicates that each successive wave is landing its messages with more success.

The Coalition's contract with the consortium responsible for producing the campaign is due to expire on 10 Jul 04, more than 6 months before elections are due in Jan 05. The Coalition must now decide whether to extend this important campaign until that time and allocate funds accordingly.

Initiatives to obtain funds from DFI and bi-lateral approaches through US channels have proven unsuccessful. The requirement is therefore brought to the attention of partners with the object of obtaining a unified Coalition response which shares the burden.

The cost would be between approximately \$13.3 and \$20.3 million. Three funding level options are presented.

## INFORMATION ENVIRONMENT

Polling data collected over the past 4 months identifies several major characteristics of the information environment which any information strategy must keep in mind:

- The top two concerns of the vast majority of Iraqis are *security* (with 80% identifying it as one of their top two concerns) and the *economy* (57%).
- Television is by far the most-used information source for Iraqis, with immediate outreach that no other information operations or civic education initiative can duplicate in six months' time. A full 95% of Iraqi homes surveyed have TVs, and 76% of those Iraqis say they watch TV 7 days a week. Any successful information strategy must employ TV to counter the unbroken repetition of negative information and misinformation by groups opposed to the coalition presence or the progress of democracy in Iraq. Where the editorial slant of key pan-Arab stations may make it difficult to do this through traditional media relations activities, advertising techniques provide an effective alternative to open minds in the short run.
- Communications efforts must have an Iraqi face and an Iraqi voice to be credible. Coalition forces and the Coalition Provisional Authority have very low public support in recent polling, at 7% and 9% respectively.
- Iraqis generally are optimistic that the period following the transfer of sovereignty will be better for Iraq (70%) and better for their families (61%). Iraqis will not likely arbitrarily oppose ads that inspire confidence in their future.

## STRATEGY

The TV advertising campaign is conceived as following a logical progression of ideas—a narrative that traces Iraq's orderly progression towards freedom and stability in accordance with the TAL. The overall 'message' of the ads so far is Iraq's continuing progress toward democracy – up to and beyond the first national elections in January 2005. As shown in Figure 1 below, this message supports more detailed operational- and tactical-level information efforts as well as the work they describe.

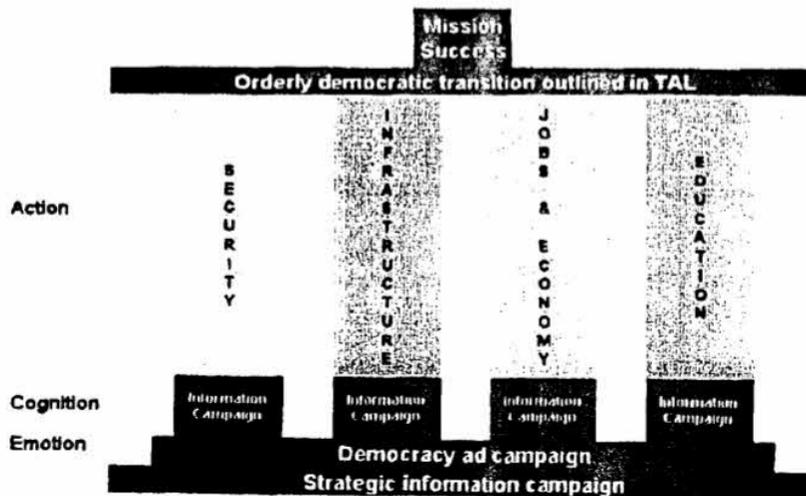


Figure 1. Advertising campaign as it relates to operational and tactical information and education programmes in Iraq.

Since the ad campaign is designed to promote Iraq's democratic transition at the strategic level, it must incorporate the informed views of several international and Iraqi agencies supporting the transition.

## LEVERAGING THE ADS

The TV ads are just a part of a multi-pronged effort to inculcate and encourage democratic attitudes in support of elections and against violence. The campaign also consists of radio and newspaper ads along with mass poster placements to generate the broadest possible public awareness of each wave's key message. Information Operations (PSYOP, civil affairs, PAO, and NGO activities) have and can be used in concert with the TV ads.

Key messages will be strategic—all pointing toward making Iraqis prone to accept non-violent democratic means toward self-determination. But launching new ads every 3 to 4 weeks also allows for considerable accommodation of changing realities. Strategic messages should not be overwhelmed by tactical concerns, but they can be made to adapt significantly to the projected communication needs of the month in which each ad will air.

30-second TV ads are not the main vehicle for educating the audience on these themes; they are the main vehicle for promoting acceptance of more detailed education and information efforts about these themes. The campaign will take place in – and will need to be aligned with – a media environment increasingly full of specific voter education and democratization efforts. These will include information campaigns by the Independent Electoral Commission-Iraq, political parties, Iraqi ministries, and the civic dialogue programmes and public service announcements supported by USAID.

## AUDIENCE

The primary audience for this plan is the 'moderate majority' of Iraq's citizens. Market research indicates that more than 20 million Iraqis will see, hear or read each wave of advertisements in their preferred media 20-30 times each. Pan-Arabic regional television viewers are a secondary audience, with an intended effect of moderating their views on the prospects for a peaceful, stable Iraq.

## KEY MESSAGES

Each ad's key message will be developed through the cooperative efforts of Coalition and Iraqi government representatives and the contracted advertising team's creative group. The current campaign so far has been deliberately emotive, designed to express the aspirations of ordinary Iraqis. In focus group testing, it has succeeded in establishing a generally positive response to the themes of national pride, Iraqi unity, potential for the future, the need for Iraqi teamwork, and democratic values. The ads are distinctly Iraqi in look and feel, employing familiar language, images and characters to engage popular support for the transition process. Polling confirms that they are not seen as 'government ads,' nor as products of the Coalition, thus accounting for their credibility.

In this next phase of the campaign the ads are intended to become more substantive in portraying how security, infrastructure, economy and education programmes support democracy but depend on Iraqi popular support. Possible future themes sketched by the current creative working group include:

- Law and order through community support for Iraqi police and armed forces
- Public probity in the fight against corruption
- The provision of basic public services built from taxpayers' revenues
- Reconstruction
- Job creation