

Proposal to understand and counter Russian Active Measures

Russia poses a *potential* military threat and an *actual* (in most cases non-military) Active Measures threat. Therefore, while our existing military response is necessary it is insufficient to counter the *whole* threat posed by Russia. This proposal is for a project that will contribute towards identifying, understanding and countering Active Measures. This will help provide defence and deterrence against this comprehensive and integrated whole Russian threat.

Active Measures are currently and continuously in use by Russia across what they see as a single global theatre of operations. These Measures are designed to alter population perception to create an artificial reality that benefits Russia. This includes influence at many levels through existing societal frameworks and by undermining the rules of international governance.

The Proposal

The 2018-19 FY proposal covers the period November 2018 to March 2019 with a budget of £20,000 to cover two specialists at a rate of £250 a day and all their travel and administration costs. The project will build upon existing work to identify more precisely how Active Measures are being undertaken and analyse whether there is a single 'playbook' from which they are orchestrated or whether they are the product of more flatly networked control. The output from this would be a report to the FCO with a refined conceptual model that distinguishes Active Measures from other background activities. It will also include presentations to an agreed list of trusted partners.

The output from this project also provides the baseline from which a framework can be developed that will provide responses, countermeasures and defences against Russian Active Measures. Neutralising Active Measures will contribute to deterrence against Russian aggression. This could also be applied to similar activities that the IfS has identified as being taken by China and more widely, for example Iran.

The Responses, Countermeasures, Defence and Deterrence project in 2019-20 FY would be in three phases. The first would involve working with trusted partners to gather evidence with which to further strengthen the model. The second phase would be to design the countermeasures framework and apply it to defence and deterrence. The third phase would be to present the output to agreed audiences (including in civil society, government, media and other influencers). All three phases would be led by the same two specialists as above but will draw in other expertise and administrative support as required from the IfS network. All costs including travel and research would be covered by the proposed £100,00 budget.

Context of Proposal

Two IfS specialists have designed a model that has identified in broad conceptual terms how Active Measures might be distinguished from legitimate state and non-state activities. They have mapped 'significant acts' in military exercises against this model and found significant levels of correlation. They have also started to map to the model real world non-military Russian influence in southern Europe and some Scandinavian countries and have found significant levels of correlation there as well. They have identified that there are several strands and approaches taken by Russia in the use of Active Measures, possibly location and context specific, but with some underlying thematic similarities. The 2018-19 proposal builds from this point.

This project is best undertaken outside direct government control to minimise the inevitable accusation of being part of an orchestrated state-sponsored active measure. Using the IfS extensive and trusted network, including its existing Integrity Initiative, can keep the project somewhat under the radar while still accessing state and non-state actors that may not be so open with central government approaches in this area.