

# USMC MISO Assessment BALIKATAN 2012

By Sgt Brandon Simmet (USMC)

Often and easily commanders are fixated on measures of performance and lose sight of the next required action: assessing effectiveness. Evaluation—to examine and judge carefully; in other words, to identify and track impact indicators and measures of effectiveness (MOE) for military information support operations (MISO) products, series, and programs—is a critical step in the MISO process. This article is the summary of a method used to collect MOE and assess MISO in support of Exercise BALIKATAN 2012 in the Philippines. The method is based on Expeditionary MISO Team 31's (EMT 31) experience and lessons learned while supporting BALIKATAN 2012 in Palawan, Philippines.

*The purpose of BALIKATAN 2012 (and 2013) was to maintain a military-to-military relationship between US Armed forces and the Armed Forces of Philippines (AFP) and to continue to develop a partnership with the US and the Philippines that promotes security and the rule of law.*

By fostering development and regional stability and improving the capacity of the AFP in internal security missions, the US is better postured to pursue national security interests in the Pacific. In support of this objective, the Marine Corps Information Operations Center's (MCIOC) EMT 31 promoted civic action programs (CAPs) conducted by the Combined Joint Civil Military Operations Task Force task organized under Marine Forces Pacific. EMT31's focus was not only to promote the CAPs, but also to increase the AFP's role in regional and international security operations by increasing the AFP Civil Relations Group's — the AFP organization charged with conducting influence operations — capability to message through a multimedia information combined arms approach.

While supporting BALIKATAN 2012 in Palawan, Philippines, EMT 31 nested its MISO efforts and products under two existing programs: Security Cooperation and Humanitarian Operations in accordance with CJCSI 3110.05E, Military Information Support Operations Supplement to the Joint Strategic Capabilities Plan, 30 September 2011.

*EMT 31 determined that three MISO objectives under the Security Cooperation program supported the overarching BALIKATAN 2012 objectives:*

1. Increase professionalism and professional ethics within HN [(the Philippines)] security forces.

2. Increase HN public support for their security forces.

3. Increase acceptance of United States as a reliable, capable, and responsive security partner.

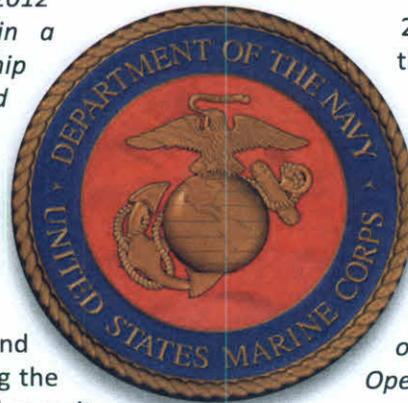
*Further, EMT 31 supported the specific CAPs through MISO objectives under the Humanitarian Operations program:*

1. Increase positive reception and cooperation with U.S. Assistance to HN.

2. Increase compliance with humanitarian directives and procedures to promote public order, safety, and health of affected populations.

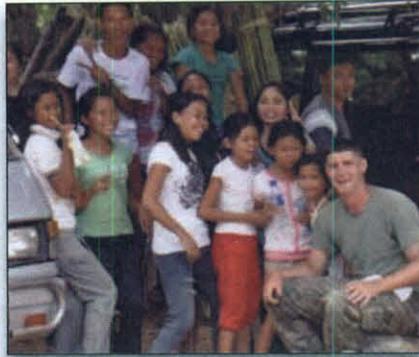
3. Increase public participation in preventive health measures and other activities designed to lower the spread or occurrence of disease.

During predeployment target audience analysis (TAA), and then once interacting with potential target audiences in Palawan, EMT 31 assessed that there was a requirement to change Palawan-indigenous target audiences' attitudes and beliefs. There was an existing belief on island of Palawan that the US had ulterior motives of



exploiting natural resources. EMT 31 MISO messaging facilitated the change among indigenous target audiences' attitudes and beliefs to an understanding that US Forces were present to promote local progress while working shoulder-to-shoulder with the AFP. It is important to note that "shoulder-to-shoulder" is the English translation of the Tagalog term "BALIKATAN".

Additionally during TAA, EMT 31 identified that the most effective form of media to access local target audiences was text messaging. Filipinos take great pride text messaging and have dubbed their country "the texting capital of the world." Text messaging, specifically in the Philippines, offers a reliable



and inexpensive medium that is common among the population. EMT 31 was able to cost-effectively leverage text messaging to maintain communication with various and specific target audiences. In Palawan, text messaging on the same cellular network is free-of-charge on pay-in-advance cellular phones. Therefore, the cost-effectiveness of text messaging is distinct in that it is cost-effective for both the target audience and the disseminator.

Text messaging, as an information dissemination conduit, not only provided accessibility to susceptible target audiences, but also provided EMT 31 with a useful tool to collect MOE and support the assessment of effectiveness. The number of text messages received from target audiences during the promotion of specific CAPs provided a useful data point during operations when correlated to target audience attendance at the respective CAP. For example, when EMT 31 received over 50 text messages during the same day as a CAP from the target audience, attendance at the CAP trended towards a spike. Text messaging offers a means to quantify and qualify responses—impact indicators—in support of military activities by collecting and evaluating the nature of the target audiences' responding text messages.

During BALIKATAN 2012, EMT 31 established a multimedia—again, information combined arms—approach for engaging target audiences. The multimedia approach consisted of a text message hotline, AM and FM radio broadcasts,

loudspeaker broadcasts, AFP social media initiatives (a BALIKATAN Facebook page established by the AFP under concurring PN or organization attribution outlined in CJCSI 3110.05E, Enclosure C, Section 1, paragraph a.), and many different types of visual MISO products promoting CAPs and cooperative health engagements. Through the text message

hotline, EMT 31 received between 75 and 100 text messages per day requesting CAP location updates and conveying appreciation for US support to the local communities. The text messaging hotline enabled EMT 31's ability to manage data from target audiences and correlate the target audiences' behavior (e.g.,

attendance at CAPs) to the text message data—quantitatively and qualitatively. Text messaging, unlike most of the other MISO products that EMT 31 disseminated, facilitated a feedback loop from target audiences. Two other products provided a feedback loop from target audiences: a call-in radio show and post-CAP exit surveys. The difference between these two other feedback techniques and text messaging was the quantity and quality of the responses. Text messaging was, for the most part, easier, anonymous, and cheaper for target audiences than the call-in radio show; these were all motives for target audiences to participate in text messaging compared to a call-in radio program. Exit surveys provided useful qualitative and quantitative feedback; however, the surveys did not hold up well to the humid environment and often created an obstacle to the flow of foot traffic through the CAP.

EMT 31's experience demonstrates two points. First, if considered during TAA, specifically accessibility and susceptibility, then text messaging as a conduit for information dissemination will likely be successful supporting military activities, such as BALIKATAN 2013. Second, due to its global ubiquity, availability, lack of expense and its unique ability to provide a feedback loop supporting MEO collection and MISO assessment, text messaging should be a MISO product dissemination consideration during 21st Century expeditionary operations.

