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RESEARCH ARTICLE

OP BENTENG: MEDIA PLANNING BY THE NATIONAL TASK FORCE OF MALAYSIA IN CREATING PEOPLE AWARENESS IN ERADICATING CRIME

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Abstract

The Government of Malaysia established the National Task Force (NTF) led by the Malaysian Armed Forces in collaboration with other enforcement agencies as an effort to restrain various threats and crimes especially non-traditional security threats which can threaten national security. Nineteen agencies join forces in a joint operation named, OP BENTENG (Benteng Operation), at once realizing a comprehensive defence approach *pertahanan menyeluruh* (HANRUH, or total defence) which has been introduced by the government earlier on. The objective of this study is to explain the organisational roles of NTF, clarify the implementation and media planning in creating awareness among citizens to eradicate crime and analyse the effectiveness of the media planning in OP BENTENG. Bibliographic study, document analysis, interviews, survey and observation were employed in obtaining and analysing the data. Results of the study show that there are constructive efforts and approaches by the National Task Force in constructing awareness of the people to be together with the government in eradicating security threats, be they traditional or non-traditional threat.

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Introduction:-

National security environment and challenges have evolved and a significant challenge is the emergence of security threat which is of the non-traditional form. Among the issues of non-traditional security threat which are meant here include the issue of global warming, food shortages, the issue of clean water, environmental pollutions, human trafficking, cross-border crimes, drug smuggling, diseases, natural disasters, terrorism, illegal money laundering, criminal cyber activities and crimes which are transnational in nature.

According to Caballero-Anthony (2007), all new threats are characteristically more serious and systematic. The emergence of non-traditional threats requires new security and defence measures to ensure national security specifically along land and maritime state border areas which need to be fortified as the threats are possibly posed by non-state actors and originate from non-human sources (Afolabi 2016). To Oshio (2009), security risks to national interests in globalisation era do not only take the form of traditional threats but also small-scale crimes involving physical body, properties and belongings, illegal immigrants and product smuggling. In this matter, Hans Morgenthau (1978) in his book, *Politics among Nations*, emphasised upon security characteristics as core to 'a

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state's territorial and her institutional sovereignty'. Malaysia is geographically located in Southeast Asia and Peninsular Malaysia is the southernmost point of three continents which are Asia and Europe. The Indian Ocean and South China Sea are separated by the Peninsula and apart from that, Sabah and Sarawak are often linked with Indonesia and the Philippines. Malaysian border is physically divided into two landmasses of West and East Malaysia. Peninsular Malaysia has a land area of 131,585 square kilometres while East Malaysia has a land area of 198,161 square kilometres which is located in the Island of Borneo at a location of 650 kilometres from Peninsular Malaysia. Countries which share the same border with Malaysia are Singapore, The Philippines, Brunei, Thailand and Indonesia (Ruhanas 2009).

Issues related to non-traditional security threats also involve Malaysia as a large portion of its land border is not fully developed and due to this factor there are a lot of security issues. Besides, its maritime border which has been recorded as the most exposed area to crimes is the area along Rantau Panjang to Pangkalan Kubur in the state of Kelantan of length 29.9 kilometres as many daily activities are conducted through illegal routes (Mohd Azmir 2016). Apart from that, border areas are also exposed to drug smuggling activities as well as becoming a focus of entry for illegal immigrants from Myanmar, Thailand, Indonesia and Bangladesh. Clearly, all these have an adverse effect from the aspects of national security and socio-economic stability.

Establishment of the National Task Force of Malaysia (NTF)

Based on the current national security development, the government of Malaysia through the Majlis Keselamatan Negara (MKN) (National Security Council) established the National Task Force on the 6th of May 2020 to unify and manage risks and an operation with the name OP BENTENG aimed at preventing entries of illegal immigrants and curbing the spread of COVID-19 along Malaysian borders. Border control operations were carried out by arranging actions of integrated forces to control core areas (land) and advanced areas as well fronts (maritime and aerial) through a 6D method which are *deter, detect, deny, detour, detain* and *deportation*. In general, the NTF which carried out OP BENTENG involving 19 agencies with the Malaysian Armed Forces or *Angkatan Tentera Malaysia* (ATM) appointed as the leading agency of NTF together with the Royal Malaysian Police *Polis Diraja Malaysia* (PDRM), Maritime Enforcement Agency Malaysia (Maritim Malaysia) and 15 other enforcement agencies including the Ministry of Health Malaysia (MOH) (Maimunah 2021).

Role of the Media in Raising Awareness to the Public

Generally, the media also have a role to play in the issues concerning national security. Caballero-Anthony (2015) in her article, *'From Comprehensive Security to Regional Resilience: Coping with Non-traditional Security Challenges'* explained that media relation with security agencies is important and has a deep impact. In addition to that, regional and global information network influence as well as the use of advanced technology have become a security medium which has its own autonomy. Therefore, the power to use the media in assisting the government to build a public perception and behaviour towards security issues and the need to launch strategic national agendas through an orderly media approach are necessary actions to take (Mughan & Gunther 2000).

Furthermore, global media capability of broadcasting news in both audio and visual forms at a quick, continuous and transborder pace, while being transnational and multinational in nature renders public and domestic issues as well as of the people, either within the state or abroad known with virtually immediate effect (Abraham 2012). To Afolabi (2016), functions of the media in reporting conflicts or natural disasters can, not only inform the public of the state of security and its development but also, portray policies and matters related to the economy and military affairs of any nation. For that, Bedford (2016) concluded that the role of the media in issues of security enable them to consciously decide on the matter based on presented facts and proofs. The media and security agencies nonetheless ought to be aware of their respective roles and be capable of to adapt with current technology and developing situation as well as new emerging threats (Kaid & Holtz-Batcha 2008).

Hence, information obtained or presented through any medium should become a soft power instrument and it can be made as a strategic and effective weapon (Carroll 2007). For this reason, the authority and security agencies need to utilise the media to the best possible and be capable of maintaining good relation and mutual cooperation to educate the masses, recognise national security policies and acknowledge all well-defined government programs to ensure that the nation's security and defence are secured (Klepka 2019). This is reinforced by a view of Abraham (2012), which stated that the media are the most powerful entity on earth which wields the power to put a blame on people, individual, group or any innocent body for that matter, and make a wrong to be right as well as control public thoughts, views and opinion. Because of this, security campaign through the media is a role of significant

importance. Media campaigns and planning involving various aspects and approaches can influence awareness and behavioural patterns in a variety of life aspects. The aim of safety campaigns is to benefit the public through undertaken initiatives which are not for-profit in a short term. Of the utmost importance is the mass interaction with the media must be continuous (Theaker 2020). To effectively ensure the success of media planning, certain aspects need to be monitored. According to the views of Taylor and Workman (2018) there are four characteristics of existing media which must be identified and utilised and they are government-controlled media, paid media, social media and those under agency control. This is illustrated in Figure 1 as follows:

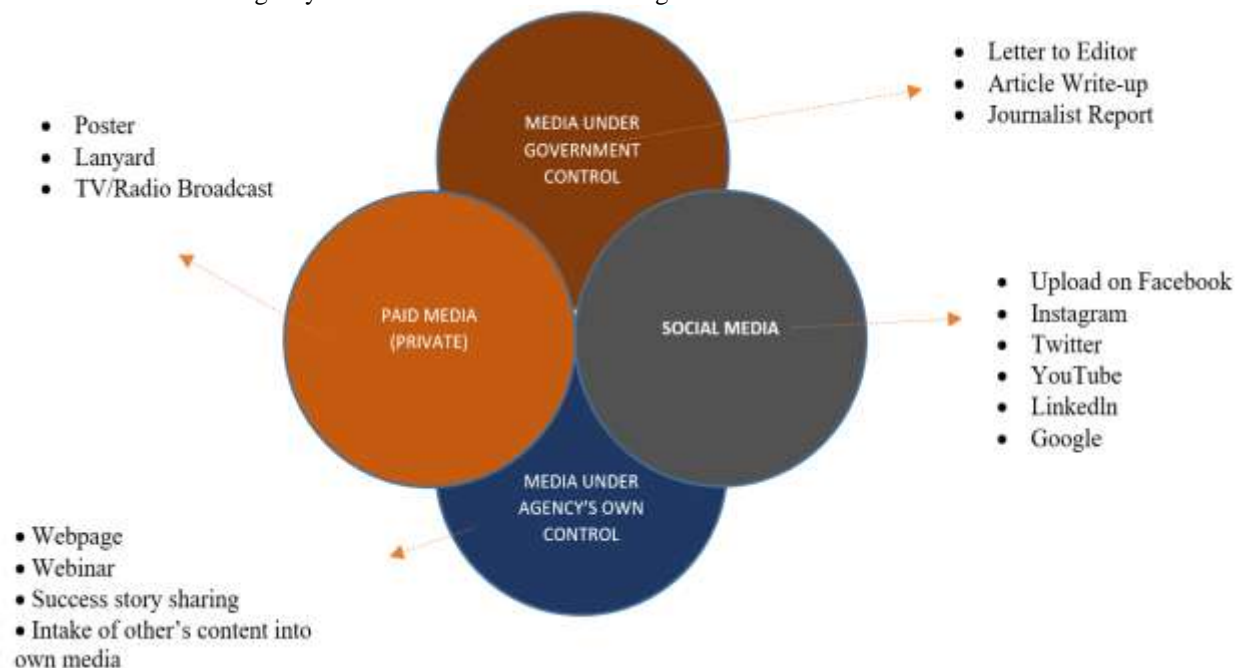


Figure 1:- Media Characteristics in Media Planning Implementation

Source: Marta (2022).

Media Planning by the National Task Force

To successfully implement media planning for OP BENTENG, key agencies media units which are members of NTF were given main roles. Among them were Malaysian Armed Forces Headquarters Affairs and Communication Division, Corporate Communication Division of PDRM, Public Relation Division of TDM Headquarters, Strategic Communication Division of the Royal Malaysian Navy Headquarters, Public Affairs Division of the Joint Forces Headquarters, Malaysian Armed Forces Headquarters and Malaysian Armed Forces Defence Intelligence Division, all of which were under coordination by NTF Communication Division led by a Grade 54-ranked Senior Officer of the Armed Forces (Markas Angkatan Bersama, Markas Angkatan Tentera 2022).

The main objective of media planning for OP BENTENG was to create awareness among the public on the existence, roles and responsibilities of NTF enforcement agencies under a theme '*Kedaulatan Dikuatkuasakan, Sempadan Dilindungi* or Sovereignty Enforced, Border Protected' or the often-used slogan of '*Perbatasan diperkasa Kedaulatan terpelihara*' which translates into 'Borders strengthened Sovereignty preserved' (Bahagian Media Markas, National Task Force 2022). To achieve the aims and objectives, a suitable approach was taken based on the operational objectives, types of media as well as the desired aim which has been outlined earlier. Through media planning, OP BENTENG identified a number of approaches based on media planning as shown below:

Table 1:- OP BENTENG Media Planning.

Platform	Element/Agency	Programme
Social Media	1. Facebook 2. Instagram 3. Twitter 4. YouTube 5. Telegram	Public service announcement 1. E-Poster 2. Video 3. TV/Radio 4. External advertisement

Electronic Media	6. SMS	Television Programme (Talk shows and magazines) 1. TV3 – Malaysia Hari ini (Morning segment) 2. RTM – Selamat Pagi Malaysia (Morning segment) 3. BERNAMA – Ruang Bicara (Talk show) 4. TV3 – TV magazine and documentary 5. AWANI – Talk Show 6. Radio RTM – Radio interview
	1. RTM 2. BERNAMA 3. Astro Awani 4. Media Prima 5. Radio Stations 6. Television networks	
External Media	1. Billboard 2. ATM machine 3. Petrol station 4. Toll Plaza 5. TnG Card	
Printing Press Media	1. Newspaper article/advertisement 2. News information and event reporting 3. Press Statement.	

Source: Bahagian Media Markas, National Task Force (2022).

There are a number of methods which have been employed to disseminate information, concern or awareness of crime issues which occur in either local or global environment. Some of the considered approaches based on the views of Weinberg and Pehlivan (2011) is by ensuring that information can be delivered via three approaches namely clarity from the aspects of message and narrative, identification of the target group and accurate determination of duration or time phase.

1. **Message and narrative.** To ensure accurate message and narrative are channelled to the target group, such as those who frequently violate rules and commercial law as well as illegal activities which violate state laws, appropriate messages and slogans such as '*memusnahkan pengkhianat negara* or eliminating traitors of the state' and '*memperkasa kedaulatan negara* or strengthening sovereignty of the nation' are used to show resolve of the agencies in tackling the problems.
2. **Target group.** The focus of NTF target group to deliver accurate information in preventing various crimes encompasses the whole Malaysian citizens, foreigners, international community and also family members of NTF agencies and officials. The public or Malaysians in general should be informed of issues concerning security, immigrants, border encroachment, smuggling, crimes, illegal immigrants and human trafficking. For foreigners and the international community, media messages and content are produced in a variety of foreign languages so they can be conveyed to foreign visitors or workers who enter Malaysia illegally. Some of the messages delivered are affirmation that entry into Malaysia without proper and legitimate documentation is considered a huge violation against the law and that they should not be easily deceived by the so-called "agents" or traffickers who are said to be capable of giving protection to them when entering Malaysia. Based on the gathered information as a result of the delivered messages through various media, most of the illegal foreign workers registered their regret for violating the law and felt cheated after forking out tens of thousands of ringgits as payment for getting employment and a new comfortable life in Malaysia. In reality, however, they were detained by the authority and deported back into their country of origin. Another important target group consists of members and officials of NTF as well as their family members who play the role of delivering information and positive messages apart from getting the accurate message to others. Their interaction with the community or family can deliver correct and true information and they also serve as an effective agent for information delivery.
3. **Implementation based on phase and duration.** Media planning implementation at this stage covers a phase of educating the masses which portray aspects of enforcement, motivation, acknowledgement and appreciation, reminder, emotional touch and preventive measures. This phase also runs for a certain duration and normally each stage lasts for four months, during which it is hoped that the message is understood and achieves its aim.



Figure 2:- Media Planning Considerations
Adapted from Marta (2022).

Based on the media planning which were implemented, in general NTF carried out the implementation through strategic sharing with various media agencies in Malaysia to spread specific narratives of crime containment and deterrence towards reinforcing Malaysian border security and defence. Some examples of NTF media planning are shown in Attachment 1.

Analysis of Media Planning Effectiveness in OP BENTENG

In public relation and communication, each agency which carries out its duties and roles often measures the extent of delivery and level of effectiveness of its efforts carried out through media planning which was made. According to Marta (2022), media monitoring is crucial in preparing reliable information and source for the next media planning. Also, according to her (Marta 2022), in today's media monitoring particularly in the era of the internet and new media, measurement and media monitoring are becoming even more important. Internet users nowadays use the internet not only for communication purposes but also extending to commerce, business, product development, security and political issues as well as health. Anyone who has a smartphone or access to the internet will use such convenience in various ways and for organisations such amenity can be used as a tool or instrument which can control and change perception of their goods or services through implemented media planning (Schwarz 2012).

Based on the views of Marta (2022), there are three items which are emphasised in media monitoring which are keywords, parameter selection and level of information dissemination as illustrated in Figure 3 below:

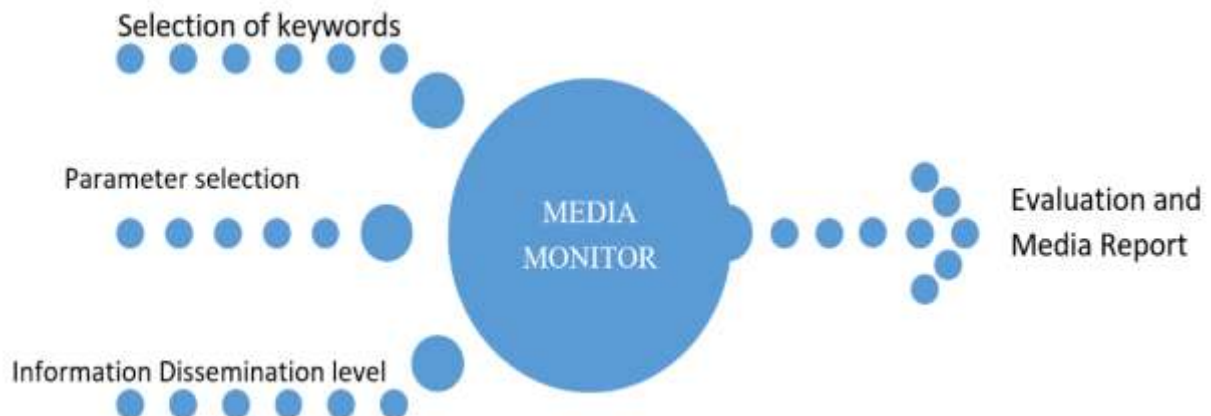


Figure 3:- Media Monitoring Process
Source: Marta (2022).

Based on media planning carried out by NTF, specifically with regards to OP BENTENG, NTF did an analysis of media planning effectiveness based on three key indicators on the internet which are volume mention, sentiment analysis and estimated reach. In order to achieve this, NTF employed a service of media monitoring agency Isentia which supplied the service of media monitoring, information management and analysis capable of providing media planning and management services. Isentia software is capable of making evaluation fast, easy and is media friendly which covers the printing press, electronic media, radio, television and various new media. For example, during the carried-out study, in the 24-hour duration media monitoring was done using Isentia on 21 April 2021, monitoring was made on four aspects: media platform, media agency, news value and estimated reach. It has been shown that it managed to obtain various feedback and a high value of estimated reach. A number of activities related to media planning and monitoring done by NTF are shown in Attachment 2 (Isentia 2020).

In addition to this, NTF also carried out an online survey from 10 until 17 December 2020 concerning the role of NTF and crime issues. A total of 800 respondents gave their feedback and the result of this survey is shown in Figure 4 below:

90%	70%	RESULTS OF SURVEY	97%	80%
Knew and have heard of NTF and OP BENTENG	Agreed that arrival of illegal immigrants has implications to national security.		Knew about NTF and OP BENTENG from social media	Knew and have heard of NTF and OP BENTENG
65%	70%	60%	73%	66%
Government effectiveness in managing illegal immigrant issues	Agreed to convey information concerning security issues through social media	Knew and have heard of NTF and OP BENTENG	Did not know how to report to the authority if they knew or witnessed a crime taking place	Stated that the government fails to manage illegal immigrants (PATI) and that needs to improve

Figure 4:- Results of OP BENTENG and NDF Online Survey

Source: Bahagian Media Markas, National Task Force (2022).

Conclusion:-

In general, the role of NTF is not much different from tasks of other security agencies, but in terms of national defence strategy, its existence directly supports Defence White Paper and realizes the concept of HANRUH (*Pertahanan Menyeluruh* Holistic Defence) which has long been introduced. HANRUH is a concept of understanding and emphasis that the responsibility of defending national sovereignty and security does not only lie upon the shoulders of security forces alone but it is a responsibility of each individual who was born in and admit to be a citizen of Malaysia. Based on the report up until 31 May 2021, a total of 14,013 illegal immigrants or PATI's and 1,055 traffickers were captured. A total of 1,409 sightings were recorded, in addition to 379 cases of deportation involving PATI, ships, boats and others. A further 1,590 cases of confiscation were reported with a total amount of confiscated materials worth exceeding RM501 million (Maimunah 2021). Generally, there have been constructive efforts and measures carried out through media planning by the National Task Force in building people awareness to join the government in eradicating security threats, of both conventional and non-traditional forms, in Malaysia.

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