

**U.S. House of Representatives Armed Services Committee
Subcommittee on Terrorism, Unconventional Threats and Capabilities**

**“Strategic Communication and
Countering Ideological Support for Terrorism”**

**Statement of Captain Hal Pittman
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Thursday, November 15, 2007

Chairman Smith, Congressman Thornberry, and distinguished Members of the Subcommittee, Good morning. First, I'd like to thank the Committee for all you have done to support our military and our men and women in uniform. In particular, some of you have military bases in your districts, and as a uniformed service member, I am grateful for your efforts to ensure our war fighters have the tools and training they need to accomplish our mission.

I appreciate the opportunity to speak with you today about the Department of Defense's efforts in strategic communication. As a military officer and professional communicator by trade, I have served in multiple assignments in the Central Command's area of responsibility, and have observed first-hand many of the communication challenges we face today. I believe strongly in the need for collaboration, coordination, and horizontal integration of our actions and words within both the Department and the Interagency, and I realize this process of communication integration will require a long term commitment and sustained effort on the part of the Department of Defense.

Today, I will try to briefly describe for this Subcommittee some of the efforts to date that the Department of Defense has undertaken in this regard. Specifically, I'll cover a couple of areas where the Department is working to institutionalize the process of strategic communication –

- The Quadrennial Defense Review Strategic Communication Execution Roadmap, designed to track the development of supporting capabilities across the Department;
- The Strategic Communication Integration Group, or SCIG, process, which is the Department's collaborative planning effort for strategic communication;
- Support to State Department and Interagency;
- And education and cultural change efforts focusing on helping strategic communication thinking occur naturally in every action.

The information environment we live in today has radically changed from a decade ago. New technologies, collaborative social media, and the proliferation of 24-hour-a-day news and information sources have created an explosion of information. Information speed has exponentially increased, and traditional barriers and gatekeepers have diminished. We live in a world of citizen journalists, where every action or operation is witnessed, taped and reported, individual actions are amplified, and organizations face the challenge of strategic implication. In today's flat world, a seemingly isolated interaction in the morning becomes fodder for bloggers immediately, appears on local television news by noon, and is international news by evening.

Our enemies—violent extremists around the world—have also recognized the utility of this environment for their cause, where the virtual world can be used to proselytize, recruit, raise money, and coordinate violence against American citizens and interests.

Deputy Secretary of Defense Gordon England, during remarks at this past summer's DoD Worldwide Strategic Communication Seminar, stressed that strategic communication has assumed an integral role in the military's operational environment, calling strategic communication "professional war fighting," and indicating that the Department needs to integrate SC at the beginning of all operational planning.

Since 9-11, the Department of Defense has wrestled with improving the process that integrates actions, words and images of the Department. Senior leaders in the Department recognized the growing importance of information, and the need to enhance the supporting communication capabilities of Public Affairs, Visual Information, Defense Support to Public Diplomacy, and Information Operations, including Psychological Operations.

In 2005, the Joint Chiefs of Staff approved the recommendation to create the Joint Public Affairs Support Element (JPASE) at U.S. Joint Forces Command. With its creation, JPASE was given the responsibility of providing dedicated and sustained improvement of joint public affairs capabilities; enhanced, integrated PA training for joint warfighters; and a trained, equipped, scalable and expeditionary PA capability to support regional combatant commanders worldwide.

Since its creation, JPASE has been fully integrated into the U.S. Joint Forces Command's Combatant Command training and mission rehearsal program. It has been involved in helping Joint Force Commanders develop and execute effective communication strategies, and has provided a rapidly deployable expeditionary PA capability for contingency and humanitarian relief operations on eight separate occasions -- twice in support of hurricane relief efforts in the U.S. in 2005, as well as in support of Pakistan earthquake relief, where JPASE efforts significantly impacted audiences that had previously held negative views of the U.S.; deployed supporting military operations facilitating the departure of U.S. citizens from Lebanon in 2006 during hostilities there; and this year deployed to Afghanistan supporting the NATO International Security and Assistance Force. In the last few weeks, JPASE has provided extra public affairs support for military units fighting California wildfires.

Recently, JPASE was designated a component of the Global Response Force a rapid response capability available for world wide deployment within 72 hours. This organization provides a substantial capability to the Department, but even upon reaching full operational capability, JPASE will still have less than 50 people.

In their proponenty capacity, JPASE has also sponsored studies regarding the Department's public affairs and visual information capabilities—studies that are helping to identify and fill gaps in the Department's ability to communicate.

Another milestone in developing the strategic communication capability of the Department was the creation of the billet I currently occupy. After briefings to the Joint Chiefs of Staff in 2004 and 2005 which outlined the Department's capability gaps in conducting public affairs in a war fighting environment, senior leadership identified a requirement for a Flag or General Officer in the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs to coordinate efforts helping develop some of these supporting communication capabilities.

On December 1, 2005, my predecessor, Rear Admiral Frank Thorp was assigned duties as the first Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Joint Communication, or DASD (JC). The office of DASD (JC) is responsible for overseeing Department of Defense activities directed at shaping department-wide communications doctrine, organization, and training for the joint force.

The efforts of DASD (JC), working with the DASD for Support to Public Diplomacy, directly complement efforts led by the Department of State.

Joint Communication focuses on two major mission areas -- Communication Integration, which includes future communication planning within the Department of Defense, and Communication Proponency, which includes helping ensure the Department's communicators are properly organized, trained, and equipped to support the Joint War Fighter.

Other Joint Communication responsibilities include assisting with the development of doctrine and policy to infuse “SC thinking” at the front end of operations, securing resources to develop, sustain, and enhance SC supporting capabilities, standardizing SC education and training, and institutionalizing the SC process across the Department.

Under the Joint Communication proponent mission, my office is assigned as the primary office overseeing implementation of the QDR Strategic Communication Execution Roadmap.

Thirteen months ago, on September 25th, 2006, Deputy Secretary of Defense Gordon England signed the 2006 Quadrennial Defense Review Strategic Communication Execution Roadmap. The creation of the Quadrennial Defense Review SC Execution Roadmap is a milestone in institutionalizing strategic communication across the Department.

As the QDR concluded, several important initiatives were identified that warranted a greater degree of attention prior to execution, and the Department of Defense instituted follow-on QDR Execution Roadmaps in these areas. The roadmaps define important objectives, timelines, and an oversight process.

The SC Execution Roadmap defines strategic communication as:

“Focused United States Government processes and efforts to understand and engage key audiences to create, strengthen or preserve conditions favorable to advance national interests and objectives through the use of coordinated information, themes, plans, programs, and actions synchronized with other elements of national power.”

While there is still some debate over this specific definition, the combatant commands and military services have implemented it and have implemented processes for communication integration.

The SC Execution Roadmap articulated three primary objectives:

- 1) Institutionalize a DoD process by which principles of Strategic Communication are incorporated in the development of policy formulation, planning and execution.

 - 2) Define roles, responsibilities and relationships, and develop doctrine for Strategic Communication and its primary communication supporting capabilities: Public Affairs (PA); aspects of Information Operations (IO), principally PSYOP; Visual Information (VI), and the DoD activities of Military Diplomacy (MD) and Defense Support to Public Diplomacy.
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- 3) Properly resource Military Departments and Combatant Commands to organize, train, and equip DoD’s primary communication supporting capabilities.

These Roadmap efforts are ongoing. Roadmap tasks are assigned to offices of primary responsibility (OPRs) across the Department, and these offices are responsible for the development of their assigned capabilities or completion of specific actions. Roadmap implementation is guided by roadmap co-chairs, and an advisory team reviews task progress bi-monthly and advises co-chairs on key issues.

One of the most significant successes of the Roadmap to date is the establishment of an integrating process with the creation of a Strategic Communication Integration Group and a process for implementing strategic communication within the Department.

On August 25, 2006, the Deputy Secretary of Defense directed establishment of a Strategic Communication Integration Group (SCIG) Secretariat, tasked with ensuring that communications plans and concepts from the Office of the Secretary of Defense, the Joint Staff, the Combatant Commanders, and the Military Departments are coordinated and synchronized, and also established a SCIG Executive Committee, or EXCOM, to provide senior leadership for the Department's strategic communication initiatives.

I serve as the Director of the SCIG Secretariat—which means that more than half of my day-to-day focus is on ensuring Department-wide communication plans and annexes are staffed and approved through the SCIG process.

In early 2007, DASD (Joint Communication) established a Strategic Communication Directors' Group (SCDG), composed of general and flag officer-level SC directors from the combatant commands, the military services, Joint Staff, and offices of the Under and Assistant Secretaries of Defense. The SCDG conducts weekly video teleconferences to facilitate staff action, information sharing and collaboration across the Department on SC-related actions, and serves to bring issues of importance into the SCIG process for resolution.

An early Strategic Communication planning effort coordinated through the SCIG process was focused on countering al Qaeda and the Taliban in Afghanistan. The plan was signed out on 12 September 2007 and is comprehensive and actionable. An execution matrix directs tasks, assigns leads, and includes desired effects and measures of effectiveness. Some of the tasks listed in this plan are being accomplished as we speak, some are not yet started, and some may require additional examination or resources. An initial assessment of planned tasks and measures of effectiveness will be compiled within the next few months, and will be updated every six months thereafter.

Development of this initial Afghan Plan took time, but enabled us to refine the Department's process for Strategic Communication planning. Our current vision relies on broad, strategic guidance synchronized with other US Government departments and agencies to frame the effort, with the actual deliberate planning occurring within service or combatant command staffs, where there resides a greater depth of understanding and expertise. Some cross-cutting SC plans may still be created in Washington, but under

this model, most strategic communication plans or annexes will be created in a decentralized fashion.

Under this process, a strategic communication issue, concept, or proposed plan is submitted to the Strategic Communication Integration Group by a COCOM or service SC Director for staffing. It is coordinated across the Department by the SCIG Secretariat, staffed in the Interagency through regular staffing channels, passed through the 3-person SCIG EXCOM, and is approved at the Deputy Secretary of Defense level.

Dialogue, discussion and information-sharing with the Interagency, especially between DoD and the State Department, has greatly increased. DASD (JC) participates in working groups and has joined Sub-Policy Coordinating Committees on a variety of topics and issues, including research, new media engagement, outreach, and content sharing.

There are standing meetings at various levels, including a Collaboration Group with DoD, State, & USAID, and a weekly Fusion Team meeting in which members reach across bureaucratic boundaries to offer or to seek support for their strategic communication plans and activities.

DoD also has had direct input into the National Strategy on PD and SC through the SCIG process, and has provided military manpower and expertise to the Interagency Counter Terrorism Communication Center established recently by the State Department.

In addition to communication integration efforts and the development of capabilities, the Department has also undertaken multiple strategic communication education and training initiatives over the past year to help institutionalize the SC process.

We have conducted SC workshops and seminars to educate and inform leadership on the SC process. Strategic communication and public affairs blocks of instruction have been developed and are being incorporated into Joint Professional Military Education, working closely with the various academic institutions and the military war colleges.

Advanced and expeditionary Joint Public Affairs training courses are being developed as part of SC Roadmap tasks and incorporated into the Defense Information School curriculum at Fort Meade.

The Defense Information School (DINFOS) conducts 32 separate joint courses in nine separate career fields. Thirty-two-hundred students complete these courses each year, and twenty-five percent of those are Reservists and Guardsmen.

In April 2007 a curriculum for more advanced training was introduced at DINFOS with the first Senior Public Affairs Seminar for our more senior public affairs officers. The second iteration of that course is scheduled for the spring of 2008. For our mid-grade officers and senior enlisted, the first Joint Expeditionary Public Affairs Course is scheduled to be taught in January at the school's field exercise facility, and the first Joint Intermediate Public Affairs Course is scheduled in 2008.

Development and delivery of all these courses will provide increased public affairs capability across the Joint Force while fulfilling several Roadmap tasks on education.

Last year DINFOS ventured into the field of Advanced Distance Learning - or Internet classes, and that effort has led to including distance learning as part of DINFOS basic courses -- thus expanding the school's capacity, particularly in the training of Reservists and National Guardsmen.

Simultaneously, DoD and State are exploring ways to leverage training resources across the interagency. Interagency participants attended the first-ever DoD Strategic Communication Worldwide Seminar in July 2007, and a State Department representative attended the DoD Strategic Communication Seminar held two weeks ago at Naval Postgraduate School.

In summary, we've come a long way in the past four years and particularly in the two years since the DASD (JC) was established, but the Department has a way to go yet in realizing our long term goal of institutionalizing strategic communication.

The United States will not win the war on terrorism or achieve other crucial national security objectives by military means alone. Instead, the application of unified statecraft, at the Federal level and in concert with allies and international partners, is critical. In addition to coalition- and partner supported combat and preventive operations, simultaneous effective interaction with civilian populations will be essential to achieve

success. Victory in the long war ultimately depends on strategic communication by the United States and its international partners.

We most certainly appreciate your support of our efforts, and the interest you show by conducting this hearing.

We will look forward to responding to any questions you may have at this time.