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Statement for the Record
of
LTG Michele Bredenkamp
Director
National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency
before the
House Permanent Select Committee on
Intelligence
Subcommittee on Open-Source Intelligence
Hearing on
Commercial Data and Open-Source Intelligence

Thursday, December 18, 2025



NGA
NATIONAL GEOSPATIAL-INTELLIGENCE AGENCY



Chairman Crawford, Ranking Member Himes, and distinguished members of the committee, thank you for this opportunity to discuss the National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency's use of commercial imagery, data, and analytics. NGA is an enthusiastic partner in this committee's effort to reform and professionalize the use of Open-Source Intelligence, and we share your commitment to building a more agile and accountable Intelligence Community.

NGA leverages all types of geospatially-enabled content to deliver world-class geospatial intelligence to support our warfighters, national policy makers, U.S. federal and civil organizations, and our allies and partners. Commercially available information has been a foundational element of NGA's mission for decades. Commercial imagery, data, and analytics complement classified geospatial intelligence collection and strengthens our collective intelligence posture, enhancing our ability to perform our GEOINT mission.

As the quality and variety of commercially available information has improved and increased over the past decade, it has become increasingly valuable for NGA's mission. In 2024 alone, NGA delivered more than 325 million unclassified images to our customers to meet mission needs – a 33 percent increase since FY2022.

Today, more than 90% of NGA's foundation products, which include the maps and charts our warfighters use daily to navigate on land, sea, and in the air, rely upon unclassified commercial data sources. Foundation data helps NGA measure environmental changes in topography, shorelines and glacier flows that may affect how U.S. personnel operate around the world. Additionally, this same data enables the development of scientific models critical in affecting how major weapons systems operate and in informing precision targeting analysis for the Department of War's readiness and to deterring our adversaries.

Commercially available information is also a growing source of intelligence production for NGA. In the past two years, NGA published more than 43,000 intelligence products that leveraged commercially available information, an increase from only about 400 intelligence products in 2012. Leveraging commercial imagery and analytics also allows NGA to share intelligence products with our allies, civil authorities, and other organizations more easily.

Commercial information is also essential in NGA's support to disaster response activities. When requested by a lead federal agency, NGA can provide support to federal and state partners for crisis and recovery efforts. In recent years, commercial imagery has been vital to our support in numerous life-saving activities, such as the search and rescue operations following the Maui wildfires in 2023.

Recognizing the value of commercial capabilities and publicly available information, NGA established several initiatives to integrate content and facilitate information sharing. One such initiative, the Open-Source Situational Alert Team is tasked with verifying and mapping data gathered from open-sources, such as social media photos of global crisis events to provide ground truth and initiate further analysis or tip collection. By rapidly acquiring and integrating specialized commercially available geospatial information, NGA is better able to respond to time-sensitive requirements that support the U.S. military, safety of navigation, disaster response, and intelligence operations.

NGA also sponsors a publication platform, called tearline.mil, that features unclassified geospatial intelligence from academic and non-profit contributors using open research and commercial imagery. These partners develop and publish critical authoritative information to complement NGA's traditional intelligence sources and provide insights on important global topics, such as Chinese critical mineral mining.

NGA fully supports the committee's goal to ensure the intelligence community leverages commercially available information in a manner that is transparent, efficient, cost effective, and has the proper oversight. Commercial data is valuable because of the powerful insights it can provide. For that reason, we also take seriously our obligation to safeguard that information and ensure that we comply with all applicable laws and policies protecting privacy and civil liberties. Existing law and policy provide appropriate oversight and compliance mechanisms to ensure NGA and other intelligence community and Department of War components acquire and use commercial information responsibly while not restricting our ability to innovate in this space.

In my role as GEOINT Functional Manager, I am accountable for working in close partnership with all elements of the Intelligence Community, Department of War, and other federal agencies, to ensure the GEOINT enterprise operates in compliance with all laws and policy requirements, and takes active measures to prevent duplication, achieve cost savings, and ensure that in using this data we protect the rights and civil liberties of all Americans.

Commercial data is integral to NGA and the broader GEOINT Community, and its importance to supporting our national security will only continue to grow. I am committed to ensuring NGA will continue to leverage commercial capabilities to enhance our mission and to ensuring we are keeping Congress fully informed of our activities in the process.

I appreciate the opportunity to appear before you today and look forward to your questions. Thank you.