

**Prepared Remarks for the Hon. Michael Lumpkin, ASD (SO/LIC)**  
**Countering Adversarial Propaganda Hearing for Members of the House**  
**Armed Services Committee, Subcommittee on Emerging Threats and**  
**Capabilities**

**Thursday, October 22, 2:00 PM**

**Rayburn House Office Building, Room RHOB 2212**

**Introduction and the Oversight Role of ASD (SO/LIC)**

Chairman Wilson, Ranking Member Langevin, and distinguished Members of the committee—I appreciate this opportunity today to discuss the Department of Defense’s important supporting role to our government’s efforts led by the Department of State in today’s contested information environment. In advance I would like to thank you for this committee’s support in this critical field. I will focus my remarks on the Department’s supporting role in the U.S. Government effort and on the need to maintain agile authorities. I am very pleased to be joined today by the Brigadier General Moore, the Deputy Director for Global Operations in the Joint Staff operations directorate, to provide an operational perspective, and Major General Haas from U.S. Special Operations Command (USSOCOM), to discuss that command’s role in ensuring the readiness of the Military Information Support Operations (MISO) force. I am here to discuss an aspect of our information operations capabilities that has received special attention from your

committee and the other defense committees over the last few years: our military information support operations force, which provides a critical influence capability to meet the tactical and operational needs of military commands and provide support to the overall strategic effort led by the State Department. As we begin this hearing, I think it is important to note that I am not discussing the Department's Public Affairs capabilities. Public affairs is a fully separate activity from MISO and is directed at engaging the media and informing U.S. and other audiences.

As the principal civilian advisor to the Secretary of Defense on special operations and low-intensity conflict matters, I directly support the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy in her role as the Principal Staff Advisor for Information Operations (IO). Additionally, in my role as the principal special operations official within the senior management of the Department of Defense, I oversee USSOCOM in its role as the joint proponent for military information support operations. I am committed to ensuring that we develop, maintain, and employ the proper IO capabilities to meet the tactical and operational requirements of military commands and provide support to the strategic effort led by the Department of State.

## **The Department's Supporting Role in the U.S. Government Effort.**

Our MISO capabilities are unlike most capability sets in the Department of Defense, and MISO requires additional oversight and coordination that is not typically required of other Departmental activities. Whereas lethal and destructive combat capabilities tend to belong exclusively to the Department, other U.S. Government departments and agencies, such as the Broadcasting Board of Governors and the Department of State, have capabilities, roles, and missions as part of our Government's strategic communications efforts. This substantial overlap in roles and capabilities leads leads to a need for close interagency coordination and clear delineation of the appropriate roles for each organization. This coordination is conducted within an overall U.S. Government communications and engagement framework with global audiences. Within this greater framework, the Department's MISO forces provide support to military plans and operations, unique influence planning expertise, regional knowledge, and the ability to advise, assist, and develop similar partner nation forces and organizations.

The Department fully recognizes the overarching need for a strategic, whole-of-government effort in communications efforts. The Department of State generally leads U.S. Government communications and engagement efforts focused on foreign audiences. For example, the Department of State is home to the Center for Strategic Counterterrorism Communications (CSCC), which has the mission to “coordinate, orient, and inform government-wide strategic communications focused on violent extremists and terrorist organizations.” The Department of Defense’s efforts alone will not solve the challenge of this contested information environment and adversary propaganda. Instead the Department of Defense plays a critical role as a contributor and partner to the whole-of-government effort led by the State Department.

The Department also recognizes the military necessity of operating in the information environment. Our combatant commanders have clear military objectives to maintain the stability and security of their regions, in concert with other U.S. Government efforts, and this involves operating in the information environment. Additionally, the Department can offer unique military capabilities that can play a critical role in achieving overall communications objectives. These types of actions are not done, or conceived, in competition with other U.S. departments and agencies but in coordination with them.

As we employ our MISO forces in environments outside areas of military hostilities, we will always maintain military command and control of our forces and operate in a manner that achieves mutual support between U.S. departments and agencies. At the national level, we will partner with the lead agency, usually the Department of State, and provide unique Defense capabilities to support the coordination and synchronization of a whole-of-government effort that combines public diplomacy, public affairs, U.S. international media, information operations, and other capabilities. At the request of the State Department, the Department has provided five military IO and MISO planners to the cell within CSCC that coordinates our national efforts against the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), and we currently maintain an additional MISO planner within the State Department to support planning in other geographic areas.

Overseas, we fully acknowledge the role of Chiefs of Mission and ensure that our military operations are fully coordinated. We always ensure we provide a complementary capability, and a capability that is not duplicative with those of other departments and agencies..

The Department also builds partnerships with other U.S. Government organizations. A key initiative that has emerged over the last year has been the Department's partnership with various entities of the Broadcasting Board of Governors (BBG). Spearheaded by a pilot project at U.S. Pacific Command, our relationship with BBG exemplifies the necessary whole-of-government approach to key challenges such as countering violent extremist ideology and exposing hostile propaganda.

### **Tailoring an appropriate menu of Policy Authorities**

There are nuanced distinctions between informing, educating, persuading, and influencing audiences using information. The Department's efforts span all of these activities depending on the specific military mission. The key question relates to the boundaries and limitations on each department or agency's role in this space. The Department needs flexibility to be able to keep up with the nature of today's transnational threats and evolving technology. This flexibility, however, will not diminish the Department's oversight of MISO. We will make certain that our operations are tied to clear military objectives contained in theater campaign or other operational plans, that all actions are fully consistent with applicable law,

including the covert action statute, and that we have achieved the necessary coordination with interagency partners.

The requirements for MISO capabilities are increasingly pressing, as our adversaries and competitors, both State and non-State actors, rely heavily on propaganda to achieve their aims. This is most evident with the sophisticated and well-resourced propaganda campaigns being waged by ISIL and by the Russian Federation becoming more and more aggressive in Eastern Europe. ISIL uses information on a global scale to recruit, facilitate foreign fighter flow, finance, and gain tacit support for their violent agenda. Similarly, Russian propaganda seeks to intimidate or undermine our allies and partners outside of areas of hostilities. Many of these activities are happening online and over social media.

These trends highlight a critical role for MISO in places outside areas of hostilities, with clear military missions supporting broader, non-military U.S. Government efforts. The Department cannot address these challenges effectively by itself; instead, in a supporting role, we will partner with our interagency colleagues and provide our unique MISO capabilities as part of a whole-of-government solution. Additionally, the Department's MISO capabilities and authorities must remain

agile enough to reach our target audiences through whatever their preferred form of communication; whether it is radio, television, internet, or whatever technologies emerge in the future.

As you are aware, our Military Information Support Operations programs have been an item of special congressional interest since 2010. In the past, the MISO communities saw their budgets and authorities grow in support of Operations IRAQI and ENDURING FREEDOM. These growing budgets and their associated activities resulted in increasing concerns over their scope, effectiveness, command and control, and integration with other U.S. efforts. The Department has a clear role for MISO to change the behavior of appropriate foreign target audiences through dissemination of information tailored to influence in support of military objectives. We have endeavored to ensure we stay within this role, and we appreciate the Committee's support.

Over the past five years, the Department has worked closely with the Congress to improve and institutionalize appropriate oversight of this mission area. We have endeavored to address congressional concerns fully in this area while improving our capabilities to meet current challenges. My Information Operations



Directorate, which enables our effective oversight, is one of the largest directorates in my organization. Over the last five years, we have emplaced improved fiscal controls and scoped our budget requests to ensure a clear and direct linkage from strategy to task to resource. We have made positive strides in the area of oversight, and we appreciate the increasingly positive language and support over the last year from this Committee and others that reflects increased confidence in our oversight.

We also understand the concerns that have arisen in the past regarding the scope and effectiveness of some programs that we have since terminated. We appreciate the Committee's support in this effort. I would ask your continued support for the Department's role in this critical space, especially as we craft new programs that are threat-based, scoped to critical audiences, and developed with clear measures of effectiveness that reflect their support of military objectives and the overall State Department's-led strategic effort.

### **Building the future force**

The imperative to stay abreast of increasing technological change and our adversaries' rapid adaptation of technology demands that the Department use a thoughtful, strategic approach to achieve success against a mix of adversaries. Simply trying to match our adversaries "tweet" for "tweet" or matching website for website would be both fiscally irresponsible and operationally ineffective. Instead, the Department must rely on the skills of its human capital to develop thoughtful, well-constructed plans and partnerships with other U.S. Government departments and agencies and with foreign partners, and to leverage a variety of means to disrupt the adversary's narrative, expose its contradictions and falsehoods, and ultimately bring credible, persuasive, and truthful information to audiences who often have significantly differing perceptions and cultural norms than our own. The Department is currently evaluating whether we are appropriately leveraging a range of emerging technologies to the maximum extent possible to gain an advantage over our adversaries.

As the Office of the Secretary of Defense exercises our oversight role, we will develop the future MISO force using the following general guidance:

First and foremost, we will continue to ensure the proper military command and control and effective organizations for our operations. Having clear military command and control linkages helps ensure synchronization and mutual support

between the range of activities by each combatant command and its subordinate components. The continual evolution of communications technology will likely require additional organizational innovation as we seek to maintain our capability to influence in an “always-on,” dynamic, and interactive social media environment.

Second, we will ensure that the Department’s operations in this arena are focused on designated threat groups and adversaries or support military-to-military engagement. Information activities broadly directed at large global or regional audiences are more appropriately conducted by Public Diplomacy, Public Affairs, and the BBG’s media activities.

Third, we will seek the right balance between military, government civilian, and contracted capabilities. We know most of our information activities will require long-term effort. As technology and the way society utilizes the emerging communications means continue to evolve, we foresee the continual need to bring new skill sets into our MISO force.

Fourth, we will continue to maintain and build upon the partnerships we have created with our interagency partners. We will sustain the high level of trust and cooperation we already have built in support of Department of State-led efforts.

Fifth, we will seek to apply greater interagency support to our operations to ensure our operations are focused and to provide better assessment of their effectiveness.

Finally, we will continue to demonstrate the strength of our oversight and the transparency in our reporting to the congressional defense committees. We will develop and apply the right metrics and continue to bring our candid assessment back to you as to what has worked and what lessons we have learned.

Ultimately, the concepts we bring forward to you will be clearly linked with intelligence analysis and demonstrate how we will respond and defeat threats in the information environment, using greater precision and rigor in our planning. In this sense, our future planning should be similar in scope and detail to what our other special operations forces do in their counterterrorism missions.

## **Conclusion**

In response to congressional concerns over the last six years, we have emplaced the right team and processes to provide oversight of the Department's MISO force. We recognize that even in support to military operations in areas of hostilities, the

Department's capabilities and activities must be coordinated with a strategic U.S. Government effort that is led by the Department of State. Within this role, the Department will seek to maintain agile authorities as technologies evolve and our adversaries adapt. Furthermore, we will continue to develop our forces to be proficient in the current and projected communication environment. Thank you for your support, and I pledge to ensure our MISO capabilities will be ready to play their vital role in support of commanders and their operations and as an integral part of our Nation's comprehensive efforts to counter adversary propaganda.