

**David Spirk - Chief Data Officer  
Department of Defense**

**Cyber Media Forum  
Defense Writers Group  
Project for Media and National Security  
George Washington School of Media and Public Affairs**

**5 January 2022**

**Moderator:** Good morning. I'm Thom Shanker, Director of the Project for Media and National Security. I'm happy to welcome all of you to this Cyber Media Forum discussion.

These focused cyber discussions within the Defense Writers Group format are conducted in partnership with the Howard Baker Forum and I want to thank them for their continued support.

Our guest day is David Spirk, Chief Data Officer of the Department of Defense who has a wide and critically important portfolio.

We have a very large terrific turnout today and I'm only sorry that the current pandemic protocols prevent us from meeting in person and offering Mr. Spirk our famous bacon and eggs hotel breakfast.

As always, this discussion is on the record. Once again, thank you, Mr. Spirk, for joining us today.

**Mr. Spirk:** Thanks for having me, and thanks to everybody for taking the time.

**Moderator:** I know we have a hard stop at 9 a.m. so we will get underway with my first question which is really about China and the concept of data dominance.

China's on everyone's mind. It's described today as the nation's pacing threat to the United States. And with so much reporting recently on the advances that China is making in cyber and AI and their ability to process data rapidly, can you give us an update on how the Department of Defense is doing in this effort, and also, how can DoD stay ahead of adversaries in the future in this important data domain?

**Mr. Spirk:** There's a lot to unpack on that one. I'll do it

**Professional Word Processing & Transcribing  
(801) 556-7255**

David Spirk - 1/5/2022

rather quickly so we can get around the virtual room here.

I actually think the department's doing well. It was approximately two years ago when Secretary Norquist and Dana Deasy asked me to come in and establish the CDO, move it out of the CMO and make it a joint warfighting focused activity. Through tremendous partnership with the MilDeps and the component data leaders, we were able to get a new data strategy. The first data strategy, really, ever for the department out so that we could have that vision of where we want to go to and then begin to align our efforts and move towards that place.

Since then we've built a vibrant data community of interest. We had the first ever data decrees for the Department of Defense signed out by Secretary Hicks herself, doubling down on the direction we're going to go, launched the AI and Data Accelerator Initiative in partnership with our great friends in the Joint Artificial Intelligence Center, and the Deputy Secretary of Defense has even now decided that she's going to establish a new PSA, that we are going to create a Chief Digital and Artificial Intelligence Office where we'll bring together at a minimum the components of the Defense Digital Service, the Joint Artificial Intelligence Center and the Chief Data Office so that we can move even more aggressively and faster into this data centric future for the department.

I think where we're going and what we've been up to, we're showing a lot of promise. All of those initiatives have kicked off and are beginning to show what that data-driven future looks like, and I'm excited to partner again with those teammates I just discussed with the entire data community of interest that is very active and very demanding of the office and that's a good thing. And our combatant commands through the AIDA Initiative to really start showing what true data-driven mission command can be.

**Moderator:** Can you unpack that a little bit? I'm not a data expert, and nowhere near the category of some of you on the call. But what does sort of the data competition look like with an adversary like China?

**Mr. Spirk:** I think it's just the way that all operations and warfighting concepts in the future are going to be driven. It's about speed. And if you don't organize your data, if you can't create repeatable, testable and trusted data work flows from the

David Spirk - 1/5/2022

tactical edge all the way up to your senior-most decision-making boardroom activities, then you will just lag behind. We've seen this in industry. It's really no different in the strategic competition with other nation states who have an ability to harness their data and can access the compute required to actually do something with it.

When I look at our adversaries, they now have the same ability the commercial sector has to harness massive amounts of data and generate decision advantage with them. If we don't conduct that same activity, and we have been for some time, then we will lag behind, and just like industry we'll see ourselves being eclipsed from a capability standpoint because others do create that decision advantage. That's really what it's about. It's about speed and accuracy of decisions. If we continue and accelerate on this data journey, I don't see any reason that we won't stay the pacing threat for the rest of the world.

**Moderator:** Thanks so much.

Our first question goes to Yasmin Tadjdeh of National Defense Magazine.

**DWG:** Thank you so much, appreciate it.

Mr. Spirk, with the creation of the CDAO office are you at all worried that it could create bureaucratic red tape or take any kind of authorities away from you? Or do you see it as more of a positive thing?

**Mr. Spirk:** Thanks, Yasmin, and I assumed I was probably going to get a few CDAO questions today.

I truly do view this as a positive thing. When we worked with the Deputy Secretary of Defense to sign out the Creating Data Advantage memo, the first task in the Creating Data Advantage memo was to evaluate an independent CDO, a peer of the CIO, and a consolidation of data and data-driven offices that have emerged in the department, in OSD in particular, over the past several years.

We wrote that assessment, the DepSecDef took it in, we briefed her about it. She did her own homework. Went out to a few well-known vendors and had them actually do an assessment of the assessment and draft what they thought right looked like. After

David Spirk - 1/5/2022

a few months the DepSecDef actually called each of us individually - Lieutenant General [Groehn], myself and the Director of DDS, Katie Olson, and told us that she decided she did think the right thing for the department was to create the CDAO office because what it's going to allow is that stronger alignment to really accelerate into the future in a more formal manner.

I don't view it as a bureaucracy. If anything, I think the establishment of this activity knocks down some bureaucratic walls because it puts all of us under one vision that a CDAO can come in and lead.

I think this is a good thing. As I told the data community of interest and I'm telling you the exact same thing right now, what I think this means is the DepSecDef is doubling down again on data-driven future for the department and ensuring this isn't a passing fad. She's creating a PSA, a peer of the other PSAs, to make sure that data has its place and really has a lead role across the department.

**Moderator:** Next is Jim Garamone of DoD News.

**DWG:** Thanks a lot for doing this, sir.

The U.S. military doesn't do anything without allies. I'm just wondering how you were working with allies. And do you have a counterpart in these countries?

**Mr. Spirk:** One of the things that I'm most excited about is the fact that we established a Five Eye CDO Council. It was just over a year ago today that we conducted the first ever Five Eye CDO Council gathering. I do have peers in our Five Eye partners and others. But the Five Eyes is really where we put a lot of emphasis in this first year of trying to build those formal structures and engagements.

It's funny you asked me that question because literally the email that was reading before I came online here was one of our Five Eyes counterparts who's building a data management platform and asking if anybody had experience with a certain vendor that I won't name because they were looking at that vendor as a potential and wanted to know the positives and negatives associated with them and their ability to scale. So even just this morning we were interacting and comparing notes as a team,

David Spirk - 1/5/2022

looking for things.

The one area that I do get excited about as far as the Five Eye CDO Council goes is watching all of them begin to mature their data organizations, whether it's with resources, whether it's with strategies and policies. Caroline Bellamy, as an example, the UK MOD CDO, just about three months ago, maybe it was six months ago now, was able to get the UK's first Data Strategy signed out. She even participated in our CDO Council later that month and briefed the collective DoD CDO community of interest on that.

To that point, we do invite the Five Eyes CDOs to all of our DoD CDO Councils and where we have 300-plus data leaders across the department on there. They regularly attend and we regularly ask them to actively participate and present at those.

So yeah, it is vibrant. It continues to grow and it continues to be one of those things that we're excited about.

If we can get through this current COVID time and everybody can travel, we were also looking to host the first-ever in-person Five Eyes CDO Council at Indo-PACOM Headquarters the end of February.

**DWG:** Could you perhaps tell me what other countries outside of the Five Eyes - I know Estonia has a very vibrant data management system. What other countries are you working with?

**Mr. Spirk:** All across NATO, really. We've had a lot of conversations about what right looks like. In fact I was able to brief the NATO C3I Council, the gathering of all the CIOs. I spent about an hour with them. I was supposed to go to NATO Headquarters in the December timeframe. Unfortunately with the lockdowns and changing guidance associated with travel we thought it best to go ahead and schedule that virtually this January. But NATO is beginning to explore establishing their own formal CDO. They've had the activity being conducted from portions of the CIO before but they're starting to look at what does that formal organization look like? How does it interact with the other counterparts? And I think in establishing that what you'll see across the NATO partners is everybody getting in line and understanding how they're going to go ahead and formalize what we have in the U.S. and across some of our partners.

David Spirk - 1/5/2022

**Moderator:** Next question is from Jory Heckman of Federal News Network.

**DWG:** Thanks for taking my question.

I know there's been some talk of this and I wanted to get an update on it. How far along is DoD and VA in developing a Joint Data and Analytic Strategy? And could you perhaps maybe give us a better timeline of when we might see that roll out?

**Mr. Spirk:** [Keschmender Paul] at the VA is a good friend and close colleague. If I don't speak with him every other week I'm wondering what's going on and I'm checking in on him, just in my personal time, seeing how everything's going. We have a lot of work left to do in finalizing the strategy, but I know it's established. I don't want to get ahead of the DepSecDef and others on giving a date on when it will be released. But it's ready. We're just doing the final vetting up through both organizations to ensure that our senior leaders understand what that is. That doesn't inhibit us from getting after kind of the implementation plan associated with that strategy already. Having conversations about how we can do bi-directional data sharing.

One of the things that [Keschmender] and I have talked in detail about is as we all move to the same electronic health record system and we start to think about that soldier to veteran journey, that service member to veteran journey, what that looks like, how it really applies from the time we have somebody recruited into the military until they exit, whether that exist is after one enlistment and one tour, or whether that exist is after a life-long journey and retirement.

I think we owe it to our service members to get this right. [Keschmender] and I again are really on the same page collaborating regularly about data management and analytics platforms used and interoperability of those. And the good thing is as we move into a place where we do execute the Deputy's Open Data Standard Architecture and we start leveraging modern data management platforms, the ability to share data responsibly and securely amongst our organizations just exists organically.

So I'd say we're going to get the strategy out but it has not precluded us from already starting to lay some of the groundwork and start to prepare some of the policies that will allow us to

David Spirk - 1/5/2022

begin sharing data a little more regularly and just as a fact, not as a one-off program.

**Moderator:** The next question goes to Matthew Beinart of Defense Daily.

**DWG:** A bit of a specific question, but this past fall the Army released its new Digital Transformation Strategy. Obviously a big component of that is the way they're planning to manage data in the future. So I was just wondering, you taking a look at that, what's your perspective on the approach that they're taking. In 2022 they cited a big push to close data centers as they move more things to the cloud. So just in terms of those initiatives, what are your thoughts in terms of the direction they're taking and the new approach?

**Mr. Spirk:** I think the Army is doing a tremendous job and they're really in the midst of a pretty profound transformation into a digital and data-driven future. Dr. Dave Markowitz is the Army CDO. Again, a lot like [Keschmender], I spend a lot of time talking to the data leaders across the department, across the U.S. government and as I previously said, across the Five Eyes partners. One of my best team mates is Dr. Markowitz who just really understands how to do this, has served at a number of different echelons prior to becoming the Army CDO. And when you start to see some of the things that the Army's doing, whether it's leveraging Vantage for senior leader decision support - again, senior leader decisions at echelon can be corporals like I was one day. Or it can be the Chief of Staff of the Army.

I think when you start to think through how they've organized themselves, the data stewards and custodians that they're placing across the echelon, the training that they're giving their uniformed soldiers to become more data fluent and thereby ore data demanding. I think you're starting to see people realize exactly what they can do.

When I look at what Lieutenant General Kurilla is doing is doing at the 18<sup>th</sup> Airborne Corps, and you can see some of that through his exercises Scarlet Dragon, how he's bringing in a lot of the Joint Force and their data work flows to expedite targeting, leveraging some of the Project Maven technologies. I think you start to see what the edge and the art of the possible is and there's a lot of leaders who have a few data integration reps under their belt now. Data driven technology integration reps

David Spirk - 1/5/2022

under their belt now that have emerged from Major General Donahue and his efforts at the 82<sup>nd</sup>, that you really can start to see a Center of Excellence of what future warfighting could look like emerging from that Fort Bragg location.

So I'm all in on the Army. I think their trajectory's great, but it is a big turn and I think we need to be patient and understand that taking concepts to change doctrine is a long process. Doctrine exists for a reason. New data driven warfighting concepts will begin influencing that doctrine and I think we'll start to see that change in '22 and '23 as we realize some of those opportunities.

**DWG:** Just a follow-up in a more kind of broad perspective, what are the pitfalls you would maybe advise them to avoid as they try and take on such a strategy and reform the way they manage data?

**Mr. Spirk:** I wouldn't say pitfalls, but one of the areas that I would absolutely keep my eye on is ensuring we talk about data talent, not tools. We have a lot of vendors who spend a ;lot of time bringing us fantastic things. But if all we do is chase tools and chase software but we don't spend the requisite amount of resources and time and attention on increasing data influencing now, we won't have people who really truly understand the opportunity that's in front of them to creatively use these to change, as I said, future doctrine but warfighting concepts now.

**Moderator:** Next question goes to Mariam Baksh of Nextgov.

**DWG:** I'm a cyber reporter, but I'm trying to figure out what some of the kinds of data we're talking about here. Can you talk more about your data collection efforts. Where you're getting it from, what kinds of data. You mentioned just now tools and vendors. Maybe you can give us an example of some of those tools and vendors that DoD is currently utilizing.

**Mr. Spirk:** When we talk about what types of data, I would say it's warfighting data, the traditional, whether we're talking about GEOINT, whether we're talking about SIGINT, whether we're talking about OZINT - publicly available information, commercially available information, or whether we're talking about ordering data, just how we run the department. Readiness data for our aircraft or our people. It's a very wide area. I tell people this job has been fascinating. One day I'm talking



David Spirk - 1/5/2022

to the data lead at the Defense Exchange and Commissary Agency about how they can use data to better price milk on a shelf. Like a commercial vendor would or a grocer. Then the next minute I'm talking to the Chief of Staff of the Air Force about the Air Force's data management platform and how General Vanherck is showing us what the future looks like through his Global Information Dominance Experiment, series of exercises that he's leading from NORTHCOM.

So you can definitely find your head on a swivel and be exhausted at the end of the day because all of it's about leveraging the data that you have for your unique mission and the department is so big with so many unique missions around the globe that we do have to account for that I think specifying a specific type of data is challenging.

What I can say, and I'll say on vendors. There's different vendor strategies and different types of vendors in this space. There's the government ability, like the Advancing Analytics Platform program where we go to the defense industrial base and we leverage them to aggregate a large number of different commercial off the shelf tools to build the data management and analytics platform that we need that allows us to change parts out regularly when a new capability or a new idea or requirement emerges. Then there's the other where you go to some of the different vendors in the space who offer kind of all-in services for you that you just work with their teams of engineers to continue tailoring the product in real time in a CICD-like pipeline.

So I think there are those two strategies. We have those in the department. The exciting thing about those that we have that I think are leading is that they do comport to that open data standard architecture. They do publish APIs. We can go bi-directional between them. And that's really where we want to go. We want to go to that place where we kind of, as I talk about the data decrees, I talk about snapping the chalk line on no new [bad] because we do have systems that were developed that were proprietary, that are closed, that don't have publicly available APIs that we can hit.

So we need to start working those out of the system and the future is if you don't comport to that standard you're not going to have a place in government.

David Spirk - 1/5/2022

**DWG:** You mentioned some of the costs that you're using and stuff. The other question is about how generally the department is seeking to incorporate AI at Cyber Command, for example, but in offensive and defensive cyber missions. What's the latest on that, for example?

**Mr. Spirk:** We do talk to the CYBERCOM Chief Data Officer regularly. They're a regular participant in both the CDO Council and a separate engagement and forum that we created about a year and a half ago which is our Joint Warfighting Forum where we do just gather for an hour every month the data leaders or CDOs that are at the combatant commands

Cyber is one of the most important because it's one of the areas that obviously leverages data organically. So the opportunity to partner there is huge.

Steve Fogarty down at Army Cyber Command, Lieutenant General Fogarty, is a very good friend. I know he's on his way out, but a person that we partnered with early on as we were looking at what a data management platform that does aggregate a variety of commercial off-the-shelf tools could look like.

I think we've learned a lot from that experience with him, from our discussions with Cyber Command. And when I talk about Cyber Command I'm really talking about one of the combatant commands who was the earliest for formally establish a Chief Data Officer. I think SOCOM was the first. I was actually reading an article from Tony Thomas that I had tucked away as I was cleaning out my office from May 25, 2016 where he says the new Special Operations Commander wants to predict the future and he talks about data driven decision-making. He actually brought me in to be the first CDO at SOCOM and I'm glad that I had this note to reflect on.

But quickly after General Thomas did that you did see CYBERCOM establish their CDO as well. And those combatant commands who have joined the informally established CDOs and CDO offices I think are naturally showing more data maturity than the others that are, in an exciting way also, deciding who their first CDO is, what the reporting chain is, how it's going to be empowered the resources, so I think CYBERCOM is a leader in this space.

**Moderator:** The next question goes to Julian Barnes of the New York Times.

David Spirk - 1/5/2022

**DWG:** I wanted to follow up a little bit in some of your answers to the other questions and get you to drill down a little bit more on how data is improving decision advantage now, give us some examples. Is this just about speeding intel distribution? How is it improving intel analysis or consumption?

**Mr. Spirk:** I appreciate the question. I think it is important to recognize that this isn't about creating a data religion. This is about generating outcomes.

When I first came on board one of the things that I told the small team that has now grown through great support of the DepSecDef and actually the CIO's office in helping us gather the resources to start doing the data governance and affecting the data management that allows us to speed those decisions and outcomes was just that. We're not just going to build a data governance mechanism, we're going to focus on outcomes, we're going to focus on things we can achieve.

Leveraging two capabilities of platforms in particular to focus our time and attention on, we took the Advancing Analytics platform that the CFO, the Comptroller's office established and we began an effort which is really the largest data call in the history of the department to begin bringing all the data required together so that our principal staff assistants, whether it's the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness; or the Under Secretary of Defense for Intelligence and Security, you know, have an ability to begin leveraging their data for executive analytics and strategic priorities.

We've moved to a place now where regularly in the senior-most decision-making forums led by the DepSecDef, what we call our DMAGs, we are regularly now bringing up lag data instead of PowerPoint slides to drive the conversation and drill down into decisions, P&R in particular that need to be made, whether it's with the Defense Workforce Council, what any of those things are. We're leveraging live data now in those senior-most decision-making forums where the Deputy, the Vice Chairman, and all of our senior-most leaders gather to run the department, what I call the board room.

At the same time, that's allowed us to begin identifying things that are in the way - blocker, policy blockers, and all of those bits that challenge our ability to actually go and ingest that

David Spirk - 1/5/2022

data and continue on that movement. As we identify them through that campaign of learning, that gives me an opportunity to leverage the power of the pen and to work with the CDO Council and my counterparts in the MilDeps and components to start policymaking over some of those things that are getting in the way of us accelerating and more broadly leveraging our data in the board room.

Now break/break. I have a corollary where we're leveraging the Project Maven, you know, data management analytics platforms, in our live formation like we did at NSOC Alpha over in Afghanistan with them Major General Donahue leading the charge to begin using these new capabilities to create a single payment [flash] for both our intel and our ops and planning activity.

As we started understanding how the operators wanted to do that, how the senior leaders in an operation center wanted to do that, we began having an opportunity to work with vendors to tailor the technology and also understand the constraints that we have in our system through a campaign of learning on the warfighting side that have allowed us to take those same data management analytics platforms developed by Project Maven and the Under Secretary of Defense for Intelligence and Security, to begin leveraging them, as I said, with General Vanherck and his - [no sound] - series at NORTHCOM, and we're also seeing 18<sup>th</sup> Airborne Corps leveraging that same technology and that same foundational data management platform and analytics capability to speed their ability to both sense in the environment and also make targeting decisions that will translate naturally to the real world.

I think we're seeing that decision advantage across the establishment. In that echelon it's different just based on their unique requirements. If I go back to some of the stuff that we did with the 160<sup>th</sup> and the Night Stalkers, leveraging data management platforms. We found the ability to save \$50 million and improve our readiness just by using live engine data to begin understanding when parts needed changed instead of flight hours that were manually inputted in a disconnected system.

I think the transformation is broad and we are focusing on generating real --

**DWG:** I wanted to follow up quickly on Thom's original question about China. I had heard the argument that China is going to win any sort of data competition long-term because of the size of

David Spirk - 1/5/2022

their population generating more data, the ability of their government to compel their private industry to provide data. Though when I hear you talk today, I sort of get the sense it's not necessarily about the sheer scale of what you're collecting and analyzing, but it is about getting the right data to the right place at the right speed.

Does China have an advantage given their size and the sort of control over their private industry? Or is that not as much of an advantage as it might be?

**Mr. Spirk:** I actually, one of our DMAGs about six months ago when we were giving the Deputy an update on our data ingest in both the Advancing Analytics Platform and the Project Maven capability, I actually made the statement in response to a question from the Vice about data quantity and said I think at the department we're righteously making a transition to a conversation about data quality and our ability to deliver that data to the warfighter decision-maker or platform at echelon in a repeatable, testable manner. And that's exciting because I think that puts us on the right trajectory to be able to partner with the Joint Artificial Intelligence Center and many of our components, AI and [METL] leads to truly develop some algorithmic models that will allow us to start leveraging the real promise of good data management. We talk about data management inside my team. As you know, machine learning isn't magic. With the subset of that being it's good data management, it's our ability to develop those testable, repeatable and trustable data work flows so we'll know when our models can be leveraged, when they can't, when they're becoming non-performing.

AS that applies to a conversation about a pacing challenge, not the pacing challenge, we'll say across the competition continuum with China, I think China has an ability to collect data on their citizenry, on their people that allows them to leverage that data in an autocratic state, that we will always guard against because that's not our American values nor should it be. As the national security establishment begins evaluating what we do, how we do that, and the requirements that we have so that we can prioritize where we're putting our investment and the use cases that we want to get to. I don't necessarily see China having an advantage over us, but I do understand that if we don't continue to partner with our commercial sector, with some of what I view our lead cloud vendors, and see them as national security treasures in addition to some of our just academic powerhouses. If we don't

David Spirk - 1/5/2022

continue to grow those partnerships and leverage those capabilities, then I think we'll find ourselves falling off pace, but I don't necessarily think that we're doing that now.

A corollary I'd have is looking at, I just finished reading Freedom's Forge where it talks about how the commercial sector and some of the titans in that really led our ability to out-produce and out-deliver capability on the battlefield over the Axis partners. I think there's absolutely a corollary there and I don't think we're losing, but I think we need to absolutely understand that you can never not be accelerated.

**Moderator:** Next question is Shaun Waterman.

**DWG:** My question is about JADC2. What's your role in creating this data layer, this data fabric that is so important to realize the vision of a network force? What work are you doing on that and how is it going?

**Mr. Spirk:** We've been doing a lot of work on that in very close partnership with the Joint Staff and the Joint Staff J6 and his team in particular. Lieutenant General Crall has been a friend for many years. We served at U.S. Central Command together sometime ago when we were both in different roles.

One of the first things that he did when he arrived on the Joint Staff was ask us to partner with him and have a JADC2 Data Summit. From that Data Summit we co-signed a couple of commitments and directives for the department, all of which show an adherence to the data decrees and the data strategy as the underpinning for the data fabric that we'll need for JADC2.

I just pulled up the list of policy guidance and compliance, that we're right now, that we'll be releasing in the FY22, every one of these we prioritized and we've got working across the departments, data leaders with all the components as a result of our prioritization to align and make sure that we're facilitating JADC2 where data is the line of effort number one.

As we turn to a future where we'll have the implementation plan published, and I don't want to get ahead of the department to say when that will exactly be, what I can tell you is that we're already working that implementation plan and have been using that as our prioritization for some of the efforts that we're taking on right now.

David Spirk - 1/5/2022

So yes, we are integral; yes it is absolutely the most important part to get right, to set the foundation for JADC2 and I couldn't have a better partner than Lieutenant General Crall and his team to get after that.

**DWG:** That's very helpful. Is there anything in particular, anything concrete you can talk about that you're involved with or that's going on? You talked about the NORTHCOM, the GIDE experiments. Is there anything that you could highlight, preferably that you're involved in but not necessarily, just concretely, that's working to make this vision of the data fabric a reality?

**Mr. Spirk:** Absolutely. On that one I think I'd go back to the Creating Data Advantage memo again that the Deputy signed out. I truly view that as a seminal moment for the department where she staked the ground and told us her very clear vision of where she wants to go.

Underneath the data decrees, there's a section on data management and she calls out the focus areas, the Secretary calls out the focus areas of data management that do align to the data strategy there, Shaun. I think as I look at those, I look at the Joint All Domain Operations as the first that she talked about, and in that section she said take data management platforms that comport to the open data standard architecture - earlier in the document she tells us - and begin partnering with the JADC2 CFT, the Joint Staff Algorithm Warfare Cross-Functional Team, Maven, the Joint Artificial Intelligence Center and others to begin employing those now, establish a campaign of learning, get those platforms into the system today.

When we talk JADC2, one of the things that she signed out, that Secretary Hicks signed out, some months after she signed out those data decrees - actually it was a month after she signed them out - was her backing of the Artificial Intelligence and Data Accelerator Initiative, AIDA as we call it. In that, what that has us doing is extending the Project Maven and the Advancing Analytics Data Management Platforms into all 11 combatant commands and into the Joint Staff in addition to sending 5 data professionals - a government civilian and 4 contractors - into those combatant commands to stay. To begin helping and being a part of the team at those combatant commands to unlock their data-driven futures via the platforms that she

David Spirk - 1/5/2022

specified are our leading capabilities right now, and are the platforms that we've seen performing in real world operations, exercises and demonstrations.

So what we're doing in establishing those and actually delivering those teams and that capability is unlocking each combatant command's unique requirements, whether it's based on geographic or functional missions. But then it's also taking those platforms and from that guide experience, and General Vanherck's lessons learned and lessons taught, beginning to do guide for real. So it's connecting all of those data leaders across the combatant commands in a fashion that allows them to all be in the same data management platform for the first time. So we're pretty excited. We're just six months into this. We've really only started fielding the teams in the last 60 days, but already beginning to generate some promise. And I don't want to get ahead and over-promise where that's going, but we're pretty excited about the trend.

**Moderator:** Next we'll go to Andrew Eversden of Breaking Defense, and after that we'll go to Jackson Barnett of FedScoop.

**DWG:** Mr. Spirk, can you just talk about what some of the milestones are for the AIDA Initiative this year? What does success look like this year in terms of setting up AIDA customers or for JADC2?

**Mr. Spirk:** I think what we'll look to do this year, and actually what we're doing is A, get all the teams fielded, get the leadership teams in place, begin helping the data leaders at the combatant commands understand their priority use cases and demonstrate capabilities that exist today that they can just begin using, that we've been using at OSD or another component's been using outside of combatant command.

So the first six months have absolutely been making the formal rounds in person, where we're at least the CDO making the big investment that my principal deputy, Dr. Clark Cully has been personally traveling with the team from the Joint Artificial Intelligence Center and from the CDO to each combatant command, spending two days discussing what decisions they want to make. Not the data management platform, not the tools, but really focusing on the decisions that each unique combatant command wants to make. So we've now made it to 8 of the 11. We plan on finishing the last three with in-person visits in the month of



David Spirk - 1/5/2022

January. Clark's going in fact to CYBERCOM reference a previous conversation, on Thursday of this week and we'll begin really assessing out what they're looking for.

What we've been able to do, though, along the way is to start laying flat what those use cases are and really generating kind of the brackets that they're in. We're not really finding any surprises. I think what we're getting is a lot of excitement and the excitement also isn't just about the data management platform, it goes back to a question I previously answered. It's about the talent. It's getting that data talent into the combatant command knowing that it's going to be there so that they can begin understanding what they have and what's within the art of the possible there.

So getting those teams installed, beginning to seat the leadership so that we can begin the governance and management bodies that will allow us to begin interconnecting concepts and capabilities. But I would tell you, it's live. Some of the things that we're doing in EUCOM right now in the response we're getting - it's something I can't talk about, but the response that we're getting from the Acting EUCOM CDO is, if I didn't have the leading edge of the ODT talent in, if I wasn't able to access these data management platforms and know that I had the CDO in JAIC in particular to reach back to, I wouldn't be able to set conditions before a potential crisis that I can do today now.

So I think we're seeing the promise of the future and really just maturing this capability is where we'll be in '22.

**Moderator:** Mr. Spirk, I'd love to hear more about that, but I know it's completely classified given the crisis in Ukraine, but you set my imagination spinning.

Our last question of the day before we turn the floor back to Mr. Spirk is Jackson Barnett of FedScoop.

**DWG:** We'd love to know more about Advana and how that is developing, how it's playing a role with back end office operation data projects and more forward leaning. If you maybe could just share what are some of the big wins you had with it, where is it in the development phase, and how many users are on it and what type of things is it actually generating?

**Mr. Spirk:** The Advancing Analytics Platform that emerged from

David Spirk - 1/5/2022

the CFO's office is really pretty spectacular. I know when I first arrived everybody assumed I would build a competitor to Advana or try and bring it into the CDO. I saw no need to. I saw a lot of promise in what they were doing and their ability to scale to other types of things that weren't just comptroller related. But it is important that it is in the comptroller at least today because the audit is important and leveraging data to manage the department just on the fiscal side alone and how we've been able to do that is pretty spectacular, and I commend their Director, Greg Little, and their senior-most leadership for making the investment and commitment that's allowed us to really begin using it in other ways.

The other ways that we're using it, I could go across the board. Every PSA is now in the executive analytics realm in leveraging data and establishing their goals and monitoring those based on live data in the system. I think the last count that I had there were 45,000 active users, not just visitors, who are leveraging Advana on a day in, day out basis across the department.

What I can tell you again, and it's almost as I finish up recognizing, Thom, I'll close out and go to you for one last question, again, I'll go back to the way that we've been able to understand how we can use it in combatant commands and exercises. I know I'm putting a lot of time and attention on the guide series, but it's really provided us an opportunity to understand the art of the possible, to understand that the magic happens when we bring the board room data and the battlespace data together in real time. Throughout the duration of one of the exercises we were able to leverage live readiness data that was available in Advana to make decisions for response options that typically would have taken hours if not days. We were able to do it in minutes leveraging live data that we were exercising in both platforms because the platforms both had bi-directional interoperability and we could go into that single pane of glass, understand availability of resources, where those resources were associated with threat indication and warning so we could conduct an interdiction, again notionally, before it became a problem.

I think looking at Advana not just as business analytics, but its opportunity to transform how the principal staff assistants can prioritize their data requirements and how we can go ahead and begin leveraging it to gain access to those data requirements as we build the first-ever federated data catalog with Advana's data catalog being the hub of that. So we don't have to have all the

David Spirk - 1/5/2022

data resident, we just need to understand what data we have, where it is, and some key features associated with it so in real time we can gain access to that data more rapidly.

It's a developing capability. We still have a ways to go, but I think a lot like what we've recognized with the Project Maven data management platform, partnering with industry to understand what we have today and how the largest business in the world, so to speak, needs to leverage that data in real time, we're able to really get some great capability at a pretty rapid clip.

**Moderator:** Mr. Spirk, before I give you the floor for a final comment, I want to thank all the correspondents who joined us today. It's been a very thought-provoking discussion with great questions.

We have very busy agenda at the project this winter and spring, but we will be very, very cognizant of COVID protocols to continue these discussions in a safe and healthy way. Again, our sincerest thanks to the Howard Baker Forum, for your continued support for these Cyber Media discussions.

Mr. Spirk, you haven't been here before, but the reason we don't do an opening statement, some of our past speakers - names won't be released here - have tended to grandstand, so that's why we jump into questions right away. But I always give our guests the final few minutes for a closing comment before I give you our final thanks.

**Mr. Spirk:** I want to say thanks to you and everyone that's on today. I know everyone's busy and just coordinating something like this so we can all get together and have a single conversation is helpful. It's also helpful to understand what you all are interested in hearing about so we can be a little more proactive in how we engage there as well.

I know this doesn't just happen without a lot of work, and I know Russ is on the line. Russ is a hero, somebody that has walked me through these dangerous waters with you all for the last couple of years.

I think in closing I would just say in addition to thanks, keep talking to us. We truly believe that transparency is important and where we are in the journey is important. But I can't say more about how the Deputy Secretary of Defense, whether it was

David Spirk - 1/5/2022

Norquist or now Hicks, have truly been key accelerants and leaders in this space. There's not a week that passes that we're not getting guidance, that we're not getting encouragement and that we're not getting support from them to make this some of the department's most important initiatives, and that really allows the department to see that it's that important and to model their activities across echelon at that.

As we start to look at what the future looks like, I think some of the steps that we're taking now, the CDAO in particular, really is one of those steps that we'll look back a decade from now and see was one of those moments where we staked the ground and said we are moving to a data-driven future. Much like some companies have begun to say we're not a car-making company, we're a data company, I think the Department of Defense is a data department. I know the team that's there, I know the team that's coming in now that we have additional billets and ability and resources to accelerate this movement are exceptional. And I'd only encourage you all to please. As you're looking and publishing, to think about how we can encourage our real talent, the young generation, to come in and take part in this movement because it is a competition of ideas. It's a competition across the continuum of competition with people who don't have the values of America in our partners and allies. And if we don't encourage that talent to come in, to be a part of this movement not just in the Department of Defense but in the U.S. government, serving wherever you can serve for however long you feel compelled to do that in America, then we will fall behind.

It's about talent not tools, and we have an exceptional crop of young people who are beginning to work their way into the job market. I only hope that we find then all still encouraged to join this movement that I think I've been in for about 27 years now, because there's no better mission to wake up and think about in the morning than knowing that you're helping the men and women out there in the trenches, on the lines, be more proficient and be more efficient and come home safely.

**Moderator:** Thank you for those comments. Thanks again to all of the correspondents who joined us and to the Howard Baker Forum. Have a safe day, everyone. See you soon.

# # # #

Professional Word Processing & Transcribing  
(801) 556-7255