The Honorable Dana Deasy
Chief Information Officer
Department of Defense

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DWG: If I may, I'm going to bring this session to order and thank the Honorable Dana Deasy for being our guest today. Chief Information Officer of the Department of Defense. Sir, you were with us 16 months ago last time. I'm very grateful to you, we all are, for finding a little time for us.

I'm sure there are going to be questions on cybersecurity, artificial intelligence, the cloud, CCC, all kinds of things. But why don't I start, since I have the first question, with a broader question. Sixteen months ago you talked to us about your digital modernization strategy and the program that you were implementing. Clearly it's a major undertaking. How's it going? In what areas are you pleased? Where is it going well? And where are your areas of greatest concern?

Mr. Deasy: First of all, thank you everybody. I saw the names that are attending and I've been here long enough now that I'm starting to recognize many of the names on this list.

I'll start off by just saying it is a big heavy lift program. I mean if we did just nothing but cloud or nothing but AI or cyber those would be big programs in themselves, but as I've always said, what makes digital modernization so important is the integration of all those various parts and how it supports the warfighter.

If you said to me what have I always worried about on this

program? What I've been challenged about is because it's so big and it's so many moving pieces, how do you keep the hearts, the minds, the energy across the Department of Defense to stay focused on this? Given all the other competing priorities. So there's been a lot of time and effort put into how do we keep the momentum moving on this? You have setbacks along the way. And then COVID hit. Boy, that was a classic moment of uh-oh, is this going to be the thing that I always worried about is going to take the air out of our sails, so to speak, and our forward momentum.

Interestingly enough it started to dawn on me about 30 days into our COVID Task Force that you could see emerging just the opposite. That between what was starting to happen with the collaboration and steadily moving tens of thousands of people on the cloud, it was clearly a moment for people across the department to say you're right. Commercial clouds do give you the ability to highly accelerate and pivot quickly when you need to. So it actually helped the cloud agenda, the momentum.

AI, the Project Salus work that we had done that we've talked about previously in other interviews where the combination of Northern Command and National Guard came to us and said hey, we need your help in looking at supply chain issues and hot cities. It was a moment of truth for Jake and the AI team. Could they step up? Could they deliver something at scale in a rapid prototyped way? And that has really helped Jake's capability.

Look at cyber, and you look at all the things that we've had to put in place --

[Interruption]

Anyway, continuing.

The AI, the Jake team suddenly found themselves having to stand up in a highly accelerated agile way. Then you had this whole new zero trust concept that we had been working with on our

cyber agenda. And as we were now moving to this collaboration tool environment on Microsoft Teams, that accelerated quite significantly the work on zero trust.

So the bottom line is, I continue to worry about acceleration, focus, keeping energy on this and I never would have liked to have used COVID as the basis for acceleration, but given that it did occur, it did demonstrate that the things that we were focused on really do matter for the department so I feel very good about how we delivered using digital modernization.

DWG: That's so interesting. I'm hoping that everything will work from here on. I'm going to go down the list of people who signed up and ask if they have a question one after another and we'll trust that we get to as many questions as we can.

Let me start by asking, Is Scott Maucione of Federal News Network, are you on the line and do you have a question?

How about Yasmin of National Defense Magazine? Are you on the line?

DWG: Yes, thank you. Thank you so much for being on the line. I appreciate it.

I wanted to ask about China. I know that many people have said that China might be ahead of us and I believe you contradicted that a bit, we are the leader. But I was wondering if there are areas within China's development of AI where they are ahead of the United States where we need to catch up. So nothing generally, but I'm thinking in particular areas.

Mr. Deasy: I don't have specific intel on a characteristic of AI that they're doing where I step back and say we need to accelerate because they're accelerated. I Think they continue to get a lot of attention and press because they are throwing a lot of people at this and throwing a lot of dollars at that and that tends to capture people's attention when they see the scale

of their activity.

But when I look under the covers as far as what they're doing I haven't personally come across anything where I go wow, we really have to double down, become more focused because of their acceleration in one area that I don't see us accelerating in.

The one thing I will tell you I continue to see, and you talk to allies and partners about this all over the world, the U.S. still is the go-to place when it comes to thought leadership, intellectual capital, startups, and just technical savviness and ability to lead in AI. We are still doing that in this country.

So the question then becomes, so how well are you then, DoD, tapping into all of that? So if that's all true, then how well are we tapping into that, and that's the area where I'd say we've come a heck of a long way in the last year. You just take this AI Symposium that we ran a week ago. 2500 plus individual companies, thought tanks, signed up to participate and be in this. There is a huge amount of thought leadership, startup companies out there that want to work with the DoD on AI. That to me is our greatest asset that we have in the DoD that I don't believe China has is just the sheer scale of thought leadership we can tap into here.

DWG: Is Michael Gordon of the Wall Street Journal on? Michael, if you are, do you have a question?

How about Sydney Freedberg of Breaking Defense?

DWG: Hi. Thank you for doing this.

Let me ask, there's been a huge move to cloud for the COVID era of telework. A big interest in cloud by the warfighting side of DoD, [Oreo], JADC2 with things like Cloud One and so forth. Where does JEDI, the much-delayed JEDI fit? The skeptic could say it's great that you reiterated the aware to Microsoft and hopefully can proceed on this, but after all this delay with

various organizations saying we've got to have cloud now, we're going to go for a solution that's available now, is JEDI late to need at this point? Or even irrelevant on arrival? How do you keep that program relevant and contributing with the DoD moving so much more rapidly in the cloud on both the enterprise side and the warfighting side?

Mr. Deasy: As I've said, cloud for me has always been first and foremost about supporting the warfighter. When we got put on hold with JEDI that didn't mean we were going to stop working on figuring out ways to support the warfighter. So what you hear about when you hear about the One Cloud, et cetera, is initiatives that allow us to move forward.

With that said, JEDI still id going to fulfill a hole in the overall need across the Department of Defense and that is it has always been first and foremost a tactical edge cloud. We still do not have an enterprise tactical edge cloud. We have clouds that are in place for helping us do many aspects of JADC2, but there's aspects of JADC2 where we're still going to need that tactical cloud out at the tactical edge. That's number one.

Number two, JADC2 is going to point out time and time again about the need of being able to swiftly bring data together. And guess what? That data is going to be of different classifications. And bringing that together in a cross-domain way, in a very quick to need is something that is still a need that we have across the Department of Defense that JEDI was specifically designed to solve for.

So yes, we are moving forward where we can because we've got to move forward to support the warfighter, but that should not be confused with that JEDI is now late to need. It is still very much going to fill some very big holes that we have in our strategy.

DWG: And do you have a timeline or a sense of how fast we're able to get JEDI moving now with the latest decision? Obviously

the court battles continue to grind on. That's never fast and that's never entirely under your control, but what are you actually able to get going now on JEDI? And what do you think you might have for a timeline to deliver something?

Mr. Deasy: Sydney, one thing you've probably figured out about me now in the last two-plus years, I'm terrible at predictions. So I'm kind of learning I just need to stop predicting because you know and I know that the court process is one we don't control. So I'm not going to tell you right now when I think that's going to come to an end. Do I think we've done all the right things now? Have we submitted all the right documentation back that allows us to move this on? Yes. But I won't speculate beyond that. It wouldn't be appropriate.

DWG: But Microsoft can't get to work building this until the court makes a final determination.

Mr. Deasy: That is correct. So we continue to work on I will always call the prerequisites for using the cloud for what it was really about. I know that everybody continues to be fixated on this contract and getting the cloud provider under a contract and getting us to go. For me, I've stated this and I'm seeing more and more evidence. The cloud is nothing more than a facilitated environment that allows us to do what really matters and that's going to be the DevOps. Agile development. And what you're seeing when you're reading about Air Force Initiative with their One Cloud, they are learning to build software in very different ways that the cloud very much enables you to do.

So what are we doing right now? We're doing a lot of work with the services on getting them prepared to move their development processes in cycles to DevOps so when the JEDI cloud finally does get awarded we're not starting at day one. There's tools that have to be identified, there's integration environments to be identified, there's directories that have to be set up that allow people to connect into these worlds. That's all work that we can continue to do because it sits inside of our ownership

already.

DWG: Travis Tritten of Bloomberg Government. Travis, are you on and do you have a question?

DWG: I'm here. Thank you for doing this.

Back in June you had said that there were over a million department personnel who were working remotely. I was just wondering if you could give us an update on those numbers, and I'm wondering if you're seeing a downward trend that shows people are returning to the office, and if not, what type of trends are you seeing in those telework numbers?

Mr. Deasy: I have some data here. I can tell you that the number of users that we now have in our what we're calling our CBR for Microsoft Teams environment is now just about 1,134,000 to be exact.

Now that does not translate, though, to where I think you're trying to go with your question, people working from home. Because that is now a tool that I will tell you all of us here that come to the office every day are using. So it's not a proxy to give you a good sense of home working.

A better proxy is the number of connections we see occurring outside of the network where they're coming into the network through VPN connections. We see those continuing to decrease, so we are down from our peak that we saw 30-60 days into the COVID Telework Task Force. So we do see a continuing trend of those VPN connections decreasing.

It's not a great proxy for home working versus working in the office, but it's the best I can give you.

DWG: Can you give us some numbers on that? What the numbers were for these outside connections and where they're at today?

Mr. Deasy: The best I can do there is we can go off -- I don't have those here with me, I just have number of connections. But that's not going to help you translate back into the peak number, so we'd have to go get that for you.

DWG: Billy Mitchell of FedScoop, are you on and do you have a question?

DWG: I am, thank you. And thank you, Mr. Deasy for having us today.

I'm curious on that same tangent of telework and working virtually. You spoke in the past about moving more sustainably in the long term to launch something similar to CBR but maybe moving away from Microsoft. I'd love to hear if there's an update on what this might look like in the long term, and then particularly around more sensitive workloads and potentially even classified workloads if that's something that's possible in the distant future.

Mr. Deasy: I do remember that conversation previously. I think what I was trying to state was right now the environment we have set up is a commercial environment that's meant for just unclassified work. WE all know that the Department of Defense is going to need collaboration capabilities that go all the way up the classification levels. So what we're working on right now, and we literally have a team that meets every week, actually more than once a week, a couple of times a week that are chartered specifically to say what is it going to take to move this from what we kind of call an IL-2 environment, and unclassified environment, into an IL-5? In doing that, we move up to our ability to do Secret work, and there's a bunch of things that we have to work through right now because remember, when we sent people home we allowed them to come in across the public internet. They were suddenly using their own personal devices. And we were bringing folks like we're doing with you all here today into this environment.

To lift that and make that work in an IL-5 environment is a pretty heavy lift. So I've tasked the team right now to come back before the end of this year with the design and the architecture of what we need to go put in place to then start the migration off of the IL-2 environment into the IL-5 environment.

So kind of hold in your mind a piece of work right now to architect that, put that in place before the end of this year. And then next year we would move into a schedule on how we roll people into that environment.

Does that help?

DWG: Yeah. And in that tangent, is that something you would launch as a new contract? Is it something that would evolve off of Microsoft? Is it too soon to say?

Mr. Deasy: All we're doing is we're just taking the licenses we already have and we're now looking at how do we make that work in a different classified environment. No, this is not a new contract.

DWG: Gotcha. Thank you.

DWG: Justin Doubleday, I see you there. Do you have a question?

DWG: I do. Thanks for doing this.

I just wanted to ask about Spectrum. DoD put out an RFI on spectrum sharing earlier this month and the first question I think that was asked was about whether DoD could own and operate its own independent 5G networks. I just wanted to ask, I'm sure the wireless industry is a little bit tepid about that prospect. What's your vision there though? I know you're just asking the questions at this point, but what's the vision for DoD doing that?

Mr. Deasy: It is not our intent to go off and run and operate an independent 5G network inside the DoD. As you know, spectrum is managed and allocated on the commercial side via the FCC and on the federal government side via NGIA. So we actually get our allocation spectrum from NGIA.

What is happening, Justin, and I've been watching this now for the two and a half years that I've been here is there is going to be this ongoing insatiable appetite on the commercial side for more spectrum. So for the U.S. to truly grow out a true 5G nationwide capability there is Spectrum in the mid-band that we recently announced, you might remember where we announced this thing called AMBIT which was releasing a 100 megahertz of spectrum that could be shared. The whole purpose of the RFI was we stepped back and we said okay, it's very evident that we're going to continue to have to figure out how to share spectrum given the trend towards the commercial industry wanting to utilize and leverage spectrum that sits inside of our world.

So the RFI is nothing more than trying to understand what I've kind of referred to it when we wrote it, I told my team, I said I want you to write the RFI in a way that says we want to get after the art of the possible. We want to get any and all ideas on how are we as a nation going to solve for this issue of commercial wanting more spectrum, DoD using spectrum. We need to protect that spectrum from a national defense standpoint but we also want to step up and help the country from a 5G commercial standpoint.

So I am very eager to see what this RFI brings back in terms of ideas. But the RFI was never written in a way where it suggests we're trying to go out and build and operate our own separate network.

DWG: Just following up on the spectrum issue really quick, I know DoD has been pressing to have the FCC overturn its Ligado decision. We haven't heard a whole lot about that lately. Can

you say whether you've had any more conversations about that with the FCC? And is there resolution coming here?

Mr. Deasy: You haven't heard a lot about it because we haven't heard a lot about it. We put in two requests, a stay, and the other one's called a request for reconsideration. We provided all the necessary documentation back to the FCC, all the engineering data. We met individually with each commissioner of the FCC and walked through any questions they had. And we have simply not heard anything back from the FCC regarding the stay nor the request for reconsideration.

DWG: Thank you.

DWG: Kim Underwood of Signal Magazine. I see you there. Do you have a question?

DWG: Yes. Thanks Mr. Deasy for your time today.

I wanted to ask you about Zero Test Architecture. I know DISA is preparing an architecture that's due out this December. Could you speak a little bit about your office's role in shaping that architecture? And then kind of how either the CIO's office or DISA will support kind of a bigger rollout of ZTA next year. Thank you.

Mr. Deasy: We actually started working on Zero Trust through a cross-functional team of folks from the services, U.S. Cyber Command, DISA. As you know, DISA falls under my purview of responsibility. I have people from my office, DDS. Just real thought leaders we brought together along with various companies in industry. They started meeting a year ago. We actually set up a lab environment to start looking at zero trust concepts and then we took some small networks inside the DoD and actually put it into a production environment to learn.

When you talk about zero trust I always like to say it's kind of like getting yourself in a 5G conversation. It depends on what

part of the conversation you're talking about.

So one of the things that we've been trying to learn is what does it take to actually manage these environments? So there's an architecture stand-up side, but as I always like to tell people, we can put a brilliant architecture together but if it's not viable from a management operations standpoint, that's where this stuff gets really hard is how do you then choose to operate it?

One of the things that the acceleration of our collaboration environment has shown us is where we need to maybe repivot some of the things about zero trust that need to be higher on the priority list. For example, when -- I mentioned this earlier -- when we went to a telework environment and you suddenly had people working outside of the network, that brought into play a whole bunch of new things you needed to accelerate thinking about. Personal devices, people working from their home environment.

So what we're trying to do right now is take all the lessons learned from those pilots we ran, take the actual things we're seeing out of teleworking. And you are correct, DISA has the responsibility to come up with that architecture. And then where we're going to have really hard conversations is, so where do we go next? Where do we first try to now roll this out at scale beyond the work we're already doing in the Microsoft Teams environment I talked about earlier. And we're still in the early days of discussion as far as where the natural next rollouts would go.

DWG: What sort of challenges do you see in that conversation? What are the touch points under consideration?

Mr. Deasy: The biggest one, of course, wouldn't surprise you, and that is when vendors have ideas on how they can help us on zero trust. The things that's always a challenge for them is how can they demonstrate to us the sheer scale, the sheer

geography? I mean we are dealing with environments that are highly unusual and because of that there's a ton of work that has to go into validating each of the vendors' part. There's a bunch of vendors that play in this space and there's not going to be any one vendor you're going to get it all from. So you're trying to piece together or bolt together different solutions. You're then trying to figure out how they're going to work at scale. And then you're trying to figure out if you can get them to work at scale, how do you operationalize them?

So the biggest challenge is going to be bolting them together, getting it at scale and then how do you operationalize it.

DWG: Thank you.

DWG: -- Jane's, are you on the line and would you like to ask a question.

DWG: I am here. Mr. Deasy, thanks for taking the time.

I have a question on data management, sort of a two-part question.

The first part is, I wanted to get a gauge on where things stand right now with the data management strategy your office is putting together. And two, what is your response or reaction to some of the comments made by General Hyten and senior officials at the JAIC saying that the Defense Department leaves a lot of data on the ground, that's a quote from Colonel Boyd over at the JAIC. And that a lot of this data is generated but there's no real place to put it or sort of curate it so it can be used for future development.

Mr. Deasy: First of all, General Hyten's comments are spot on. Shortly after we set up JAIC, and I think I've even said this publicly before, I've been asked multiple times by senior leaders inside the department, what do you see to be the biggest challenge to get the flywheel of AI really going across the

department? And I've always been very quick to say data. People then come back and say to me, well Department of Defense has lots of data. I say yes, but just having lots of data doesn't mean it's accessible, how do you secure it the right way, what are the policies, the different classifications of it, how do you ingest it?

One of the things we all need to keep in mind is what we're really talking about with AI here is how do you bring in the right type of data, train against it and prove the algorithm. And then the success comes in making sure you're bringing the right type of data in. And in bringing the right type of data in that come from different sources and different formats, and what that data was originally created for maybe have slightly different purposes. So it's curating that data in a way that it's then usable for the algorithms to learn from and that is a really tough nut to crack. There's a lot of work that goes into that. Which was why I was very excited when I saw that Congress said we really want to see Chief Data Officers established across government

I really felt we needed to do that inside the Department of Defense because the whole purpose of a Chief Data Officer is to step back and say okay, given that this is our historical past, what do we want to start doing differently with data going forward? What is it we want to ask of the defense industrial base in terms of assets that they're designing and building in the future? How do you want to think about things like next generation sensors? And how do you want to pull data from those that you're going to be bringing in and using into algorithms?

So the Chief Data Office has got a strategy done. It's going to be released soon here -- I'll go ahead and tell you, I'm going to make a prediction. I'll probably get it wrong. But it could be done in the next 30 days. And in there it starts to get at the very things I think you're asking. What are our guiding principles? What are the goals when we say the words like we want to become a data centric organization? How do you do that?

The strategy document outlines our thinking and approaches around that.

So more to come in this space but I'm pleased to say we've got finally the CDO stood up, we've got the strategy ready to come out. The Data Council is now meeting, and one of their early objectives is supporting the JADC2 work of General Hyten and the Joint Staff.

DWG: Thank you, sir.

DWG: Sandra Irwin of Space News. I see you're on, do you have a question?

DWG: Yes. Thank you very much.

Mr. Deasy, I wanted to follow up on Justin's question on the FCC. You said you had meetings and you've had discussions but you haven't heard back. So what's next? What recourse do you have? What if potentially they don't get back to you? Can you go to an appeals body or is there any kind of process that you have in mind as a Plan B right now to get this resolved? Thanks.

Mr. Deasy: I'm probably not equipped to give you the answer as to legal recourse. I'm simply not the right expert in that space so I'm not going to try to venture or speculate as to what potential next steps could look like.

DWG: What did you hear back from the FCC when you had your meetings? Did you sense that they were sympathetic to DoD's concerns? I mean publicly they've said that these concerns are not valid.

Mr. Deasy: I'm not going to get into the conversations that occurred between us and the commissioners. I will tell you our whole focus and what I have said from day one is we are focused on the technical testing results, what the technical data

suggests, and that is what we continue to request that the FCC go back and look at as we believe it's very compelling technical information in what we provided to the FCC that suggests that they decision them taking was not the correct decision.

DWG: Andrew Everson of C4ISRNET, are you on and do you have a question?

DWG: Yes. I'm here. Thank you very much. Thank you for doing this, Mr. Deasy.

I know the CDO office just officially stood up a few months ago and Mr. Spirk went on a listening tour with the services and is now, that data strategy is complete and soon to be released. What did you learn on that listening tour and what are some of your big priorities for his office in the next 12-18 months?

Mr. Deasy: It's a great question because I said to David when he went out to start the listening tour, I said you should use that listening tour to help inform the work that had already been drafted for the data strategy to see if we were getting it right. If the things that we believe needed to go into the data strategy were the right things we were actually offering into the data strategy based on that listening tour.

And what was clear to him was everybody constantly talked about we've got to have these goals around how do you ensure all data's visible? How do you make sure it's accessible to everybody to get to at obviously the right classifications and authority levels? How do you make sure it's more understandable, meaning it's in formats that you can ingest and do things with. How do you make sure that data is better linked so data that's created for a purpose, let's say on a sensor, and then you're going to eventually want to link it to some sort of a weapon system, how do we better create those linkages and integrations? How do you make sure data is trustworthy? This is the same conversation we've had previously about AI ethics, there's almost a data ethics question that says how do you make

sure the data you're working with is the right source? And then finally, how do you make sure that data is interoperable and secure?

So the listening tour validated in talking to all the people who are wrestling with data problems every day, they said those are the things we've got to solver for across the Department of Defense.

DWG: Thanks. Jen DiMascio of Aviation Week. I see you're on. Do you have a question?

DWG: Thank you. And thank you very much, Mr. Deasy.

I wanted to just check in on JADC2 and ask how you're working with the services as they build up their own systems like the Army's Project Convergence, the Air Force's Advanced Battle Management System?

And then separately, how do you deal with some of the low tech threats against our network? The Navy, for example, recently talked about a rat chewing through network lines in Guam.

Mr. Deasy: I'll start on that first one. In my 38, 39 years now of working in the IT space I've seen every conceivable way a network can come down physically, from rats chewing wires to backhoes, et cetera. What you do when you get into a discussion of how do you make sure your network is physically secure, the number one thing you do is you have to solve for diversification. Diverse routing. Making sure that in the event that you do have a physical outage that's caused by some physical event that enabled a network to go down, that you have an alternative way of getting in.

To your bigger question about JADC2, JADC2 right now has probably been the most confirming thing for me that the Digital Modernization Strategy that we put out over two years is absolutely the right five things.

There are five areas that we are supporting JADC2 on right now. One is if you think about allies and partners and how we're going to fight in a near peer theater, massive amounts of data have got to come together and it just screams out of this constant conversation I keep having about the tactical cloud, the tactical edge. So we're working with them to say what does that tactical cloud look like?

Two is the data. Right now when I sit down with General Hyten and folks in the Joint Staff inevitably -- and actually it's just not them, it's all the services. Inevitably one of the most, the conversations that tend to get the largest amount of energy is data.

Three is AI. Everybody's talking about how are we going to use machine learning to help inform the commander out in the theater where all this data -- let's say you've got all this data coming in and you've got to secure it in the right way, you've got to format it, and you've got it linked on the right C3 to the point that I think we made earlier in this conversation. That's a lot of data. And machine learning is a perfect application to take massive amounts of data and start to put intelligence behind it to say what if all that data that's coming in is going to matter the most to the commander in the field?

C3. I've said you can have a great cloud, you can have the right data strategy. We could have it secured properly. But we're going to be in a highly contested environment where things like electromagnetic are going to come into play, electronic warfare is going to come into play. So the C3 strategy is all about how do you build the next generation of coms to ensure that those algorithms coming off of those clouds are going to be able to get out to the tactical edge.

So those are all the things that we're doing.

So what I tell people is, digital modernization equals JADC2 in

terms of the things that at least my organization has to do to support that effort.

DWG: Thanks. Matthew Beinart of Defense Daily. Are you on and do you have a question?

Mr. Deasy: Yes, I'm on.

I have a quick JEDI question and then a separate follow-up on 5G.

So first on JEDI, I believe around December last year, I believe you said there were around 14 early adopters for JEDI and around 60-70 services deemed essential for initial migration. So I was just wondering, over these last nine months or so, how has that number grown, and how has it kind of been affected with pauses for the legal considerations? Have some of the services either been hesitant to maybe identify more projects because they're unsure about when that work will begin? Thanks.

Mr. Deasy: First of all, day one philosophy when we were told by the court we need to stand down moving forward with Microsoft was cause no harm, cause no disruption to the warfighter. So we quickly took a portion of the JEDI engineering team and pivoted them to work with the services, the combatant commands, those early adopters that you referenced and said how can we help find homes where you can go and we can at least get energy and effort started? That's exactly what we did.

To your part two about new activity, if I stick with my original philosophy which is cause no harm, do not disrupt the warfighter, we are telling people right now you need to continue, if you have an urgent warfighting need that needs to be met in the short term we continue to find homes on other platforms for them to work. That is obviously okay in the short term, but over time that starts to become problematic because now you're starting to set up a lot of different solutions in different environments where you're going to have to go back and

sort it out in an enterprise way.

So all this to say we're not going to just stop, we're not going to disrupt the warfighter, but we do know we are going to have to go back and sort out some of these solutions down the road once we get JEDI in place.

DWG: Thanks, and then a separate 5G question. I believe late this summer you mentioned that a handful of awards for these first 5G pilot programs were scheduled for some time soon, so I was wondering when were those likely to be awarded? And then also a request for solicitation for the second group was also planned for some time soon. So I was wondering when that was scheduled as well. Thanks.

Mr. Deasy: I figured one of you were going to ask me today a question about the pilots here.

First of all, as you know, the pilot work is actually being led out of R&E. A gentleman by the name of Dr. Evans is doing a terrific job in how they have organized and brought that program together. I just spoke with him recently. The kind of first round of awards are literally coming out now, so you should start to hear about them through the end of this year.

I would be speaking on his behalf as far as when does the next round occur? I simply don't happen to have those dates so I can't tell you. But I can tell you in the first early rounds it's going to include Hill Air Force Base, Joint Base Lewis-McChord, Naval Base San Diego, Marine Corps Logistics Base Albany, Georgia, and Nellis Air Force Base, Nevada. So those are the ones that will be kind of in the earlier round. But as far as future rounds and dates, I simply don't have that data.

DWG: Thank you. Dmitry Kirsanov of TASS. Are you on? I think you are.

DWG: Hi. Thank you very much for doing the call, sir.

I wanted to ask how long might it take the United States to transition to mostly AI based, unmanned system based armed forces? We tend to think about these things as something very remote, but on the other hand, speed of developments in this sphere was just breathtaking. So is it really something very far off in the very far future? Or something around the corner?

Mr. Deasy: I'm going to break your question down to a couple of parts because there's a part that I'm probably not the right person to ask and that is there is -- A, what I can talk about is the availability of technology and how fast that's moving. How fast we're embracing technology, studying it, bringing it into JAIC, et cetera. And then there is how fast does the department then take that technology and adopt it and you get into a variety of questions there about unmanned versus manned. I'm not going to try to speculate or suggest that I'm the right person who can answer for Navy, Army, Air Force. That's not my area of expertise in terms of readiness of AI.

But I can tell you, if you look at where we were a year plus ago when we stood up JAIC, our ability to tap into the private sector and make sure were taking advantage of it was limited. You now go to where we are today with 2,000-plus vendors that we've now connected into, we now have an entire machine that can quickly start to assess technology. I feel very confident about our ability to make sure we are scanning and starting to look at technology, to your point, that will accelerate the services' ability to use it. But I'm not the right person who can talk to you about the timeline of how the services will use it.

DWG: Thank you.

DWG: At this stage we've got just a few more minutes and a number of you are on telephone lines. Those who are, I don't know who you are and I cannot tell who --

DWG: May I introduce myself? Elaine Grossman, freelance

reporter.

DWG: Go ahead, Elaine.

DWG: Thank you so much. Thanks for holding this, and thank you to Mr. Deasy for spending so much time with us. I very much appreciate it.

I wanted to raise something that I think hasn't come up in the hour yet and that is if you believe there is any useful role throughout, across the Department of Defense for photo realistic human avatars in either training or perhaps even in conflict deterrence, in warfighting, or perhaps in post-war civil affairs missions.

Mr. Deasy: There's always that one question that makes me think okay, I've got to go and put a think on that one.

I think I understand what you're asking. I've got to tell you it hasn't been on my priority list of things that I've spent time talking to people about, so I'm not even going to go any further and try to even put a comment in the room on that one because I'll probably regret it later that I didn't get it right.

DWG: Do you have any thoughts just about the technology? Any concerns about even if there is nothing operationalized at this point, do you have any concerns about benefits of drawbacks of the use of photo realistic human avatars in the context of the Department of Defense?

Mr. Deasy: Not one that right now I'm going to come up with that I'm going to probably feel good about later on after I -- I'd be speculating my concerns right now and I typically don't like to do that so I'm going to probably pass on this question.

DWG: No worries. Thank you very much for understanding it.

DWG: This is Zach Biggs with the Center for Public Integrity, also on the phone.

I wanted to ask specifically about AI ethics. Back during the [inaudible] you sat with General Shanahan when [inaudible] ethics were approved by the Secretary and at that press conference the discussion was that the principles were broad but that there was going to need to be this implementation guidance so that something could happen. That apparently is under way.

I wanted to ask you two parts of that. A, what is that implementation guidance going to look like? Is it going to be firm rules so that acquisition officials and other policy officials will know what they can and can't do when it comes to AI? And then the secondary part of that is, while we're waiting for that implementation to be put into place, what are existing professionals doing? What are the sort of restrictions or how are they approaching the ethics problem? And has there been a 3000.09 review yet for some acquisition?

Mr. Deasy: I can't speak to the last part of the 3000.09. What I can tell you is how I think this will actually happen is a couple of things. Where there will be some very binary policies on do's and don'ts, there could be. I couldn't share with you what one of them looks like right now.

I think I said before on interviews I've done, and I saw this practiced throughout my career when I've been involved with AI, you have to experience AI. You have to start working with it. You've got to start bringing data in. You've got to start training the data. You've got to start to see what the machine is telling you. You've got to see what that human interface looks like. And then you start to step back and say okay, wow, were there any unintended outcomes there? And what caused those unintended outcomes? And could those then turn into a problem?

Until you start to experience it, it is pure speculation right now as to what would be quote, a policy, versus what would be a

practice. In other words, a best practice might be when you go to bring in sensor data you need to ask yourself these three questions to help you decide whether or not that sensor data is going to be trainable and is going to give the right outcome. There might be other things where you see through multiple iterations you get to the wrong outcome and you may be able to define specifically why that keeps occurring and that could be a policy.

I can tell you the only way you're going to get to those answers is we've got to start experiencing it and through those experimentations and use we will start to identify what those points or problems are going to be for us.

DWG: The quick follow-on that would be especially with AI where you do not have a static product, there isn't a situation where you can do a quick test and eval and then know that it's going to always respond in a similar fashion moving forward. As more data comes in on the battlefield, the systems change, hopefully, if they're taking advantage of the new data.

So when it comes to that sort of you've got to see it, that could yield a situation in which you never define anything because it's always changing.

Do you anticipate it's always going to be this give and take? Or do you think that there will be sort of a point at which you come to greater realizations or ability to define specific rules?

Mr. Deasy: I'm a big believer in the department has got to continue to migrate its way of operating, its way of building, its way of readiness, much more agile. In the development world we call it through a series of sprints. We're starting to see evidence where the department is getting the value of that.

So I'm not worried that we find ourselves in this constant [do] loop. I do believe that through these agile sprint approaches

we'll actually get to deployment. But in the deployment one of the things that you'll do is you will have those operational checks in place that will allow you to validate whether or not you're getting the intended results, and that's what we've got to become smarter at is how do you go about doing that process.

DWG: Mr. Deasy, we lost a little time near the top of the event, so if I may I'll ask one or maybe two more questions.

Mr. Deasy: Okay.

DWG: -- Federal News Network, do you have any questions?

DWG: Thank you. Thanks for doing this, Mr. Deasy.

I wanted to go all the way back to the comment you made on JEDI and about JEDI being primarily a tactical capability. And I just wonder if that reflects an evolution in thinking over the past 18 months or so. Because in the cloud strategy way back in February of '19, you guys described JEDI as the general purpose cloud and you basically said that things will go through other fit for purpose clouds only by exceptions to policy essentially.

So really the question is, are you seeing JEDI as more of a specialized capability than maybe you did 18 months ago?

Mr. Deasy: I think that's a fair question. When we created the strategy we tried to give things labels like general purpose, special purpose because we were trying to actually help people to understand how clouds work and that different clouds can serve different purposes.

Even though I have been focused here in our conversation today about the tactical edge, the warfighter, that is not to suggest that is the only thing that JEDI will be able to take care of and serve. There is still a broad number across our defense field agencies and other activities that don't deal with the tactical edge where a JEDI cloud will be well suited for. I'm

just trying to make the point in this conversation that if you said where my energy and effort and concerns are placed, it's around taking care of the warfighter side of this first. But we have a lot of activity. Some of those early startups we were going to do that we had to put on hold were general purpose, meaning they were going to be inside of field agencies, logistics side of things, et cetera.

DWG: Are you relatively satisfied that that work that you've done in the interim is at least interoperable with JEDI when JEDI comes on-line? Or could be lifted and shifted all the way over?

Mr. Deasy: Yeah, a really good question and something that -- I remember when we all got together after it was all put on hold and we sat down with the team and said okay, what are some of the principles we want to live by? We said do no harm to the warfighter. Find them homes. And in finding homes, I use this expression, we need to help them find their way back home. Meaning that we needed to make sure that however we, whatever platforms we were putting them on, whatever technologies, tools they were going to use, we need to do our darndest to try to make sure that pivoting them back, if bringing them back to JEDI was the right thing it would not be a Herculean task.

So that was where the engineers had to put their heads together was what were other platforms you could move to? Let's not create challenges for ourselves where it's so problematic to bring them back because we just architected these so different.

So those were some of the principles early on we put in place.

DWG: Thank you.

DWG: Is there perhaps one last question from someone who's on the telephone?

DWG: This is Amanda with CNBC.

I just had a quick question about the possible blacklisting of China's SMIC. I understand the security concerns about SMIC's relationship with the PLA, but because the semiconductor sector is so massive and those supply chains span all over the world, I'm wondering if you plan, in your purview if you've thought about how do you mitigate second and third order effects when you start thinking about your tech vendors for the department.

Mr. Deasy: I'm going to tell you that's -- I get the nature of the question. I've always learned never to try to be an expert in things that I'm not. R&E is spending a heck of a lot of time in this space right now on supply chain; semiconductors; first, second, third order effects. I'm sensitized. I'm aware. Am I concerned about how do we make sure that general purpose computing equipment we're bringing to the Department of Defense is properly secured. Yes. But the expertise, the thought leadership on how we're thinking through those problems is really being led out of R&E and I would say we need to probably have a conversation with them.

DWG: Thank you.

DWG: Thank you very much, once again, for a very rich and interesting conversation. I hope we can do this again in the future if it makes sense, and I'm really grateful to you.

Mr. Deasy: Thank you. I appreciate you all spending some time with us, and maybe next year we'll be doing it over a real breakfast again. We shall see.

DWG: Who knows. Thank you, sir.

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