



PUBLIC AFFAIRS

ASSISTANT TO THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE  
1400 DEFENSE PENTAGON  
WASHINGTON, DC 20301-1400

JUL 26 2019

MEMORANDUM FOR SENIOR MILITARY AND CIVILIAN DEPARTMENT OF  
DEFENSE PERSONNEL

SUBJECT: Further Public Engagement

The Department of Defense has a long history of openness and transparency as it executes its core missions of defending our Nation, allies, and interests around the globe. We also have a tradition of being apolitical in the conduct of our duties. By nature of the trust placed in the Department by the American people, we have an obligation to engage with the public through a variety of channels to talk about our successes, challenges, and the remarkable men and women of the DoD.

Simply put, the Department benefits when we thoughtfully engage with the American public, Congressional leaders, international community, and the media. Of great importance is the need to clearly articulate department strategy and goals as we continue to implement the National Defense Strategy in these times of great power competition.

Based on direction from Secretary of Defense Mark T. Esper for departmental leaders to more actively engage with the public, I strongly encourage you, as the foremost experts in your areas of responsibility, to seek out engagement on policies and operations in your domains through formal and informal channels.

Secretary Esper has shared with me three simple guidelines he asks that all follow as we plan and execute increased media and public engagement:

- First, always seek the appropriate balance between transparency and operational security. As senior leaders you are closer to pertinent issues. Therefore, you are often best suited to make determinations on what should or should not be released within classification guidelines and have the responsibility to protect even unclassified non-public information.
- Second, focus on discussing your roles and responsibilities within the department – the areas where you are the Department’s subject matter expert or operational leader. While there may be opportunities and pressure from outside parties to get pulled into discussions or debates about policies being developed or implemented at higher headquarters or in other DoD entities, it is a better practice to stay within your area of expertise.





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- And finally, ensure that your message is well coordinated within the Department so that we can present a clear voice. As new policies and guidance come from the Administration and Secretary Esper, we will provide the Department's official position and clarify any questions you have prior to your engaging with the media. To help achieve this goal, I encourage your Public Affairs representatives to coordinate closely with my office – we want to provide as much information and assistance as necessary to ensure your outreach is successful.

There is no better story to be told than that of our Service members defending freedom around the globe. The Secretary looks forward to hearing you tell more of those stories soon.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "JRH".

Jonathan Rath Hoffman  
Assistant to the Secretary of Defense  
for Public Affairs

