
Under Secretary Building United States Public Diplomacy Team

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United States Under Secretary of Defense for Policy Michele Flournoy is creating a small team that will coordinate and improve how the Pentagon and other federal entities explain Washington's national security policies, sources tell *The Defense News*. The move, part of a broader shake-up of the Pentagon's top policy-making office, is meant to craft communications strategies that "are a little more attuned to our international partners' concerns," one source said.

It is intended to help bring about the Obama Administration's goal of reaching out to and winning over populations in nation's key to America's ongoing conflicts, such as Afghanistan and Pakistan, sources said. Its focus will not be solely on how U.S. policies are received overseas. Sources say the team also will be tasked with reaching out to key members of Congress on specific issues. The team will lead internal Pentagon coordination of public diplomacy and strategic communications efforts, and it will collaborate with similar offices across Washington's national security apparatus, sources said.

The Obama Administration officials came into the Pentagon believing this had to be done better and these plans needed to be much more thought through . . . across the government, the source said.

The Pentagon on July 15, 2009 confirmed plans to create the team. Flournoy is "establishing a small team with responsibility for global strategic engagement issues," said Army Lieutenant Colonel Jonathan Withington, a Pentagon spokesman. "This team will assist policy offices and senior leaders with the development of outreach and engagement plans and will help coordinate DoD-wide engagement efforts."

Withington said the team will be composed of about five existing policy shop employees and will be headed by Rosa Brooks, a principal adviser to Flournoy and a former *Los Angeles Times* columnist. The goal is to "improve overall coordination of Department of Defense public diplomacy and strategic communication efforts," the spokesman said.

One former Army Commander, Douglas Macgregor, who now writes on military reform for the Center for Defense Information, said the team will have little impact.

We are deluding ourselves. Its American hubris unchained. Maybe Karen Hughes should be brought back to DoD . . . she performed the tasks in the Department of State under former President George W. Bush, MacGregor said.

Then, perhaps Petraeus and Odierno can jointly drive in open cars through the streets of Baghdad to accept the gratitude of the Iraqi Arabs for their liberation, he said in jest.

He was referring to Army General David Petraeus, the Chief of U.S. Central Command, and Army General Raymond Odierno, Commander of American forces in Iraq.

The public policy team's primary charge "will be heavy on coordination," Withington said, calling its focus an "agglomeration of outreach and engagement efforts abroad and in Washington." At home, the team will work closely with the Pentagon's legislation affairs shop "on issues where we need to improve key relationships on the Hill," Withington said.

Its work on how U.S. policies are perceived abroad, he said, will be conducted in close coordination with the policy shop's regional offices for international security affairs, Asian and Pacific Affairs, and homeland defense and America's security affairs, as well as with other federal agencies. As part of the Obama Administration's policy shop reorganization, most functions once carried out by the now-former Office of Support to Public Diplomacy were transferred to those regional directorates, each headed by an Assistant Secretary of Defense.

DoD has a statutory obligation to support public diplomacy, Withington said, and policy's regional offices now have primary responsibility for defense support to public diplomacy, in coordination with appropriate functional policy offices.

Further, the Brooks-led team will work to find ways the Pentagon can work with think tanks, universities, and non-governmental organizations on how to craft better strategic communications and public diplomacy efforts. The team will operate within the policy shop's existing annual budget, Withington said.