DEEP DIVE TRANSCRIPT

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DCGS-A media roundtable
Fort Belvoir, Va., U.S. Army Intelligence and Security Command
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Transcript >>

Moderator: Once I bring them in here, Gen. Legere will go ahead, and she'll probably start with a small opening statement. Then we'll go ahead and open it up to questions. Again, I will pick on you for questions….

(panelists enter)

Moderator: AT this time, we've already gone over ground rules. At this point, we'll go ahead and start with Lt. Gen. Mary Legere, the Army's G-2, assistant chief of staff of intelligence…

Army Lt. Gen. Mary Legere: Good afternoon and thank you all for coming. I really appreciate it. The past two days we've been conducting a demonstration of DCGS-A with congressional leaders and their respective staff to ensure they understand the system, to educate them on the program, explain how it supports our soldiers around the world, and where we're going in terms of initiatives. During the visit, as you saw, we demonstrated our global enterprise…as you can see, and as Gen. Palumbo clearly stated, the DGGS-A program is part of the Department of Defense's larger family of

DCGS systems and it is required and compliant, to be compliant with, the intelligence community's standards. It supports every one of our soldiers, as Col. Wells has explained. It supports, connects all of our soldiers and commanders to their ISR systems. It connects all of our soldiers and commanders to the intelligence of our joint partners and the intelligence community. It connects them to one and other at echelon. And it connects them to one and other. It is globally deployed. This is not a system that is in the lab. This is a system that is supporting and has supported 9 corps, 38 divisions, a hundred and thirty eight brigades. So it has been, since its inception, fielding and supporting both of the wars, as well as spreading out to other global theaters. It supports today our operations in Afghanistan, the greater Middle East, Africa and Korea, and anywhere you have soldiers who are deployed. As we explained, it's a family of

capabilities that includes sensor controls and downlinks, which is often overlooked. The data that connect our soldiers to the joint intelligence platforms. It's a common enterprise that ensures all the data that they see is viewable, is accessible so the soldiers can can collect, analyze, collaborate, retask and distribute intelligence. It works with over 40 industry partners, small and large, across our country. And it works within intelligence community standards. I think we've explained the importance of those standards post 9/11. The army has the most enormous footprint, and so we have responsibilities to establish DCGS (pronounced DEE-SIGS) in every theater, and to provide a global backbone that supports not only our ground forces in the Army, but all the other services, including SOF and our allies. So we take joint and IC interoperability very seriously. And we work with the other DCGS programs so that nothing comes into our hardware or software

that would impede our ability to share or interact with our partners, their data or our sensors. Other services count on the Army for this disciplined support. And our industry **partners who work with us understand that we do not want to compromise interoperability in order to use their products**. As you've seen today, we're also paying attention to the idea of improving ease of use and providing the best of industry products to our soldiers, and we're spending a lot of time on their requests to provide more intuitive tools as well as planning for that access to the cloud-based analytics as the IC cloud matures. We have a number of exciting initiatives. We have a number of great industry partners who are working to implement solutions. While we remain fully adherent to the current IC standards to ensure we have full--our soldiers have full access to all their data, and so that we are prepared for the migration into the IC cloud standards. Ultimately,

every decision we make about our programs is about our soldiers and their commanders. **And so sometimes we have to explain that that IC standard, and that data access may be more important than the thing that quite frankly seems easier but creates issues**. The panel that we've assembled today will be able to attest to the fact that DCGS-A is indeed the key enabler for intelligence corps. It provides the underlying intelligence for every decision that our commanders and soldiers make in the field, and it saves lives. With that—are we going to quickly introduce panel members? Okay. So Patricia Frost, Col. Patricia Frost, the G-3 of INSCOM can really address the global network that we have for DCGS. Col. Tom Miller, you've all met, the man of few words, the USSOC G-2 can talk to you about his experiences in bringing in our special operations forces in the Army into the full DCGS Army profile. You've all met Charlie. Christiane Ploch our returned G-2,

who has a lot of experience, she's coming back from Afghanistan, and she can really explain kind of the things that they, they worked with. The parts of the program that worked well for them. The areas that she sees now that they'll contribute to improving. And then Dr. Russ Richardson, the G-2 and INSCOM senior scientist. I think he would be the guy, and I would you beg you to do this, who can talk you through the arcane data pieces for the differences in data tagging, or proprietary or open standards. We have one other individual who we've asked to sit in. (Marine Corps) Lt. Col. Yost, who is the program manager, and the person who is in charge of Marine Corps modernization. He's Charlie's partner. And he can address both their experiences with DCGS-A and also their experiences with other systems.

Moderator: Okay at this time, we'll open it up to questions.

Q: At the risk of being known as the Palantir guy, I had a question…can you just give us a brief update on the status of the discussions you are having with the company. And also as a follow-up, I understand congressman Hunter is coming out tomorrow. Can you talk a little bit about the message or what you're really hoping to show him? It seems here today, pretty clear, that the issue he's most concerned with seems a very small piece of what the overall system actually does.

Legere: So, Charlie, I'll take the second one. You take the first one.

Lt. Col. Charlie Wells: So, as I mentioned, we've got a cooperative research and development agreement with Palantir. And I would emphasize that the way that CRADAs work is that they come through our research lab. So, Mr. (phonetic: Alan Hansen) is here

from I2WD. He actually runs our laboratory effort up at Aberdeen Proving Ground. So technically that lab is managed I2WD and Army Research and development command. Our role in that CRADA, that cooperative research and development agreement, is from the technical side, as technical partners with the Palantir engineers. And I'll provide you a couple of talking points on the CRADA. So the CRADA was based on a positive response. We have industry days twice per year. Our 2012 industry day, Palantir submitted a proposal and they were selected as one of the companies to pursue a CRADA to look at some of their technologies. So, phase 1 of the CRADA took place in the fourth quarter of FY12, and that consisted of preliminary experimentation on how could we exchange **limited types between DCGS-A and Palantir**. That was actually demonstrated to G-2 leadership. Gen. Legere was there on the 26th of August, 2012. Phase 2 took on

the first and second quarters of fiscal year 2013, and that consisted of expanding the data types, so different data types between DCGS-A-Palantir. We provided a demonstration of that capability to on the 14th of February 2012. Now phase 3 is currently in the planning stages. In phase 3 what we'd like to do is expanding the existing work to date, and successes to date, in investigating ways to improve user collaboration between DCGS-A and Palantir, so where you could actually take a Palantir product into DCGS-A and vice versa. You could enrich that product and pass it back to the other system, essentially closing an intelligence system between the two systems. An initial planning manning meeting was held on the 8th of May 2013, and work is planned to be executed in third to fourth quarter of this fiscal year. Now my lead for the CRADA effort is my technical director Mr. (phonetic: Mark Kitts) and we

can follow any additional request on any details you might want.

Q: Just generally though, because this issue has so much interest on the Hill, has there been a reluctance from the company to adhere to the standards you've all talked about? You've talked about vendors willing to come in and do what you've asked them to do as part of the competition. Is there some kind of reluctance.

Legere: (addresses Wells) I think you can address that. If Russ could provide the technical background.

Wells: Sure, I can address. In the lab, the partnership between the government and Palantir has been nothing but positive. The engineers have a great teaming relationship. The **politics or anything is left at the door, and they really focus on the engineering problems**. Bu it's essentially a difficult

problem because Palantir uses a different anthology and data structure than we do on the DCGS-A side and the IC side, and so it's not a trivial change, or trivial problem that we're trying to work through. It actually requires some fundamental adjustments to the data structure. So (phonetic:Mark), I mean, I don't know if you want to add anything to that, but—

(Phonetic: Mark Kitts): I would add that a lot of it gets down to where do you think your secret sauce is. And where our users see the ease of use of Palantir, and they see that secret sauce in that visualization. But in reality the secret sauce is really much more holistic than that. It's how the entire system, from the data all the way to the visualizations, is all integrated very, very tightly, and the problem with that is, that's what causes the difficultness for them to take their system and adhere to our standards. **It's kind of like breaking up**

their secret sauce. And so, but, this is kind of the cost of entry. So what we've challenged them to do is, you **know, maintain your secret sauce but work within our architecture**.

Legere: Maybe a thought is, this is a company that has a strong business client base, and that integrated framework from data to tool is welcome, because they're not trying to connect a joint and interagency intelligence community, which you've seen is difficult for us. But, you know, could they separate and produce a business line, or a warfighter line, that connected, disconnected, their data and their oncology. **And the reality is, because of what we've described on the IC ITE, it's gonna go that way. So we're going to be out of the middle of the quagmire, we think, because the reality is,** the Army has never, ever dictated the standards for IC interoperability, but as you can understand, as the force that

provides the global backbone for combatant commanders around the world, **we really cannot the inefficiency of the one offs**. That's what we did from 2005 to 2007. With great help from the industry who've sacrificed profit and developed new models. Now, we're going to be where we are unitl we make that hard migration**. The hard migration handwriting is on the wall for every company that have that same approach.** Our eexperience with these engineers in these companies is they're brilliant engineers, and they wanna, like all our partners, work with our soldiers who are great to work with, but at the end of the day, this is not a discussion with the United States Army's inflexibility on standards. This is the IC standard. And so we will continue to deal with it for the systems in Afghanistan and other places where we're still managing this very awkward, clumsy data process that we move products back and forth. **But when it comes to the IC**

cloud, that's an issue that frankly any industry partner that comes in with that approach will have difficulty. And believe that they're a really smart company. They're going to make those adjustments, and we wish they'd make them now.

Q: What's the message for tomorrow…?

I think we're going to have a broad discussion, because I think there's genuine interest in learning about the Army's DCGS program. Wev'e tried as you've seen to do this fairly holistically, and I'm not going to presume that Representative Hunter, who actually has some pretty wide interest in ease of use and other tools, I think he's going to be interested in it. I had, we had a chance to talk to one and other, and frankly we responded quite strongly last summer to his challenge to make things easier for our soldiers. **Representative Hunter has three tours as a Marine soldier. He has a clear**

understanding of the tension at that forward edge, and he wants that to be easy. And I think he understands from his perspective, I understand that need. And you can see we've got a lot of ease of use options. Now, what I've asked him to appreciate is the need for us to **marry the two concepts** of ease of use. Ease of use of access to data, and central control, 16:55 ease of use front end **GUI**. If we can get that together, and there are industry partners who can deliver that, we have nirvana. And I think you've seen. I **told him in a way that in a way the DCGS Hunte effort, which we accelerated, was in response to the criticism to our program**. And it's moving fast. And it's a soldier built set of standards. This is what comes first. The DCGS SOF LITE, which had a different going in, but has some really nice analytics, as you've seen. That's going to inform Charlie's future decisions. And what I like about what I'm seeing is those all come with the

interoperability of our front ends. So, industry's listening to the congressman and to us. He's not prescribing the solution to us. And we're going to show him what we're doing, and get his input and his thoughts on this.

Q: Just to jump off on the congressman Hunter issue. I understand that he's planning on drafting some legislation to for NDAA regarding take a look at DCGS, every single module, assessing where you are, and if there's something that isn't working, recompeting different modules. I don't know if he's shared this with you yet, but if you have heard anything like this, what kind of snags would it (inaudible) having to take a look at everything again and recompete things.

Wells: We haven't seen the draft legislation, and so I wouldn't feel comfortable commenting on it. But I would tell you, the

efficiencies that we've gained in DCGS-A by collapsing separate stovepipes, and having a commonality of software and hardware from the lowest level of the Army all the way Army, all the way up to echelon and above corps and our research back centers. That's a tremendous savings for the Army. We've already realized 300 million in real procurement dollar savings in the program because of that model. We've got a cost benefit analysis that proves that we've got 1.2 billion in cost avoidance by using that model. And **anything that takes us back to separate intelligence stovepipes would not support that strategy that's been so efficient to this point**. But behind that I couldn't comment on the specific legislation because I haven't seen it.

Legere: I think one of the things, unrelated to your question, but sort of related is, Charlie is, or the DCGS-A program **manager, is planning a link analysis or**

visualization competition in the fall. We're at a point of maturity. We've seen a number of really good industry products out there. Soldiers are interested in sort of enterprise access to those. There's going to be a great opporitunty….and we'll look forward to seeing all competitors there. There's going to be some tension, I think, for us because we're going to have to manage, at least until there is a hard turn into the cloud, 20:27 the current systems that are around the world that are supporting our soldiers in combat. And then there's going to be that Apollo 13 link up, and we're going to potentially have to look at link analysis solutions in both areas. So, but, as we discuss the cloud we're really sort of excited. Each of the services is going to bring some -- and agencies – is going to bring some nice solutions to us, and we look forward to being able to access each other's stuff. A lot of what you saw today, the sigint tools, geoint tools, those came out of NGA and NSA and were modified for us.

Q: Just to stick with cloud actually, maybe I'm understanding this improperly, but it basically seems like you're moving from one rigorously enforced standards based architecture to another rigorously enforced standards based architecture, why is that as hard as you're saying it's going to be?

Legere: Well, it's evolving, and it's not our standard. So, I think Russ, if you could talk about sort of the journey. The IC's had several iterations. If you're the Army, which is a subordinate engineering effort to that, we have our, a base line based on current IC standards, so does everyone else, and this IC effort is not – it doesn't come out of the box as a design. They are discovering things. So we have already made one hard turn in our program to kind of say, where we were going isn't going to be really where they're going to go. They're taking another hard turn. So Russ—

Russell Richardson: First of all, I don't think anybody has said it's that hard. But it is different. Where you impose those standards today, it's more interoperability. So making sure that one system can communicate with another. So it's more like on the boundaries of the system. The ICITE, and why we're so excited about it, quite honestly, is that it imposes a much deeper level of interoperability, of standards, it's down in the data itself, of how the data is represented, how the data is tagged, all the way up through how data is accesses and secured. And by doing that you not only gain the efficiencies, because only one organization has to do the security model, only one organization has to the web tier – the web access model. So you gain a tremendous amount of efficiencies, but it also naturally gives you better capability from an intel value point of view. Very simple things. I'll take a very simple tagging

of a geo location. Here's a village called Fara. What we do now is we rely on (23:22 phonetic: gadgeteers? Gazetteers?), and then every system will look, okay, when I see Fara, I'm going to give it this geo-location. And that's because we have interoperability kind of like outside of the system level. I the new system, now we're just going to have the word Fara, and here's all the instances of it. We make one change – say Fara now is at this location, and every system on the entire enterprise automatically knows automatically that geolocation is there, because it's done at the data, it's done at the actual data level. By imposing a standard much deeper into the system, the efficiencies that you gain, it's an order of magnitude more than the standard at the interoperability level.

Q: If I could follow real quickly on the security piece you just mentioned. We heard a lot today about once a piece of

intelligence is in DCGS A it's available to the entire intelligence community. Is that literally true, because I thought we were moving toward more attribute access?

L: Well, it's people that are cleared for it. Every time I heard it, because I was watching to be honest with you, I was watching when the NCO brought up the 'And anyone can access these tools.' And I'm thinking it's not going to be available on your desktop at work, because you've got to be inside the SIPRNET, and there'll be more –

Russ Richardson: That's why I mentioned on my side, when I said authorities and policy. Data's available but you've got to have the authorities and the policies.

Q: But it's tagged down to the data level so that, it's not just if you're a DCGS-A user you can get access--.

Richardson: Think of an Excel diagram. Every cell has a classification, a mission authority, and a legal authority. And so, all those matter. And then who you are, you know what you're doing, that's the other side. The human to the data. They're separated, completely managed by separate systems. The database manages that cell tagging. And the authentication system, which is another part of ICITE actually, manages what you as an individual has access to.

Q: When we were talking about the switch to kind of an app based system, and what's the difference in terms of for a company that might hold the data as being proprietary. What's the difference on the acquisition side for some of the companies. The way they're doing business.

Wells: It's actually exciting for me, as someone who's done software inside the Army for a while, because it's a chance to have a lot more efficiency. So the way we typically do software in the Army is we'll get an enterprise license. And so for X million dollars, every analyst in the Army now has the full access to that intelligence tool, or that COTS tool, but that's not efficient because maybe only 80 percent of your soldiers really need that tool, and the rest of them might use a more lightweight client, or not even need that at all. So we can effectively shift to a demand based model where I can have you know applications, and as the soldiers are preparing for a mission, they say I need these three applications because I'm ready to go into Horn of Africa, and those are the tools I really need. With the cloud model, I can then meter those applications, and I can say, okay, I've got a pool of resources here. As those analysts tap into those applications

and load those onto the thin client, my pool of resources go down, but it's strictly based on demand. And I'm not back to the one size fits all. I'm going to do an enterprise license and field this to the whole Army. I'm truly delivering software where it's needed, when it's needed, very efficiently. So, as somebody that's done this for a while, I'm really excited about going to that model.

Legere: This is really exciting to Charlie.

Q: Don't those efficiencies maybe pose a down side for companies that have been making money a different way?

Wells: It does. And there is some angst in industry, you know this is kind of a game changer for them. But I go back to the model of the iPhone and the Android Marketplace, and that was a game changer too, but it's still a place where software is being distributed and software is being made.

Same thing with the record industry changed from selling vinyl to going to digital distribution of MP3s. And so, now we're seeing this in software distribution, and we're seeing it in the government side. I see it as a good thing in a way that we're going to have a win-win for everybody, but it does change the traditional model.

Moderator: Any more questions?

Q: One last one. Just to be clear, you mentioned there's more than 40 some vendors. There is no prime contractor? (inaudible) I thought somebody said Northrop.

Wells: So there are some prime contractors. When you saw the major systems. When you walked down sensor alley and saw those major systems each one of those has a prime integrator that builds those systems for the government. So for example, the TGS. The

Tactical Ground Station that pulls in all those UAV feeds. The prime for that is General Dynamics in Scottsdale, Ariz., and each of .those has a prime. Now when you look at the software side, though, we're looking at having the government be the integrator and we're having companies come into the Tactical Cloud Integration Lab at Aberdeen, work in our environment, and we integrate those in a major build of software. The first one is Griffin. The next one that we're starting field is Hunte. So it depends on which piece of the portfolio for DCGS-A that you're looking at when you're talking about a prime integrator versus separate providers.

Q: The primes are usually associated with the hardware platforms, the vehicle based platforms, and you guys are doing the software throughout.

Wells: That's been the model, because when you want a turnkey hardware system, you want it all integrated and tested, and I have to take it through a test. That's where industry has stepped up and provided that capability. When we're looking at a software build – the warfighter requirements for Griffin and Hunte, that's where the government has served as integrator for those.

Q: (Deep Dive's Ben Iannotta) First, because I might be the source of confusion on this, I want to fall on my sword a bit, a couple years ago, I made an error in print and said Northrop was the prime for DCGS Army. And at that time, I thought the answer I got back was that the Army is acting as system integrator with a number of different companies.

Wells: So the answer is, you don't need to fall on your sword because you were right.

We were going to build and field a system called Mobile Basic. It was a seven Humvee configuration. Northrop (30:16 inaudible) was the integrator for that. So that was a set that would go to every BCT, you know, for the next 10 years. And when I took command of DCGS-A, we took a step back and we said, 'You know what? It's really not about a standard hardware configuration. It's really about the software. So we did an acquisition strategy change that was approved all the way up the OSD level and we said, let's look at COTS hardware. Let's look at cutting edge software applications and let's integrate those, and let's do that iteratively every 12 to 18 months and so the essence of that acquisition change kind of brought us away from the standard seven Humvee configuration where Northrop was the prime to the model that we just discussed.

Q: When was that?

Wells: So we upgraded our acquisition strategy in 2010. It was actually approved late 2010. And that went up to Secretary Kendall, the defense acquisition executive.

Q: (Deep Dive's Iannotta) Actually, the question I was going to ask was -- this is a detail question and I don't want to get it wrong; I know we were just in there – but does Hunte use Analyst Notebook?

Wells: Yes, Analyst Notebook was a component in both in Griffin and in Hunte. And so, that was an example of a COTS product. It does link analysis. And so when you look at link analysis tools inside DCGS-A, we've got AxisPro from Overwatch Systems in Austin, Texas, and we've got Analyst Notebook from i2, which has since been acquired by IBM. So those are both in the program of record. In addition, you know, Palantir has been providing some of

that link analyis and visualization capability, but that's not a part of the program of record. **That's more of a QRC, quick reaction capability to some of our brigades in Afghanistan**.

Q: And it still could be, right? I mean you're not ruling anyone out. It's just a matter that they--

As a PM, I don't want to rule anybody out. I want to get the best from industry across the board. But again, back to the statements you've heard, it has to integrate seamlessly with the standard and all the other products that we've got.

Moderator: We have time for one last question.

Q: I'm just wondering what the timeline looks like for transitioning to the cloud. And

I know you said there's a pilot program, but what's your timeline for that?

Legere: You want to lay out the IC cloud and then—

Russ Richardson: As a pilot, we're going to initially provide it to users at the end of this calendar year to start to get feedback. We'll do that through our theater intel brigades. So that, what those are our regionally focused organizations. So that'll happen end of 13, and the very beginning of 14. At that point, we're just going to gain a lot of user feedback. So we'll, that will feed back into some iterative changes in the cloud, throughout fiscal year 14, throughout that time through the end of 14. At that point, we'll start looking at what capabilities get voted into the program in a more formal fashion as a part of rel 3. And I think that rel three, I'd have to let Col. Wells answer. But

I believe it's in mid 15 when rel 3 goes into test.

Wells: Exactly. We've got three releases of DCGS-A in our current acquisition strategy. Release 1 supported our full deployment decision, which we achieved in December of 2012, and that was Griffin. That's what you saw the analysts using today. It's fielded around the world. Release 2 of DCGS-A is Hunte. And that's the one that we're just starting to field to next deployers. That's the one that you saw the demonstration with ease of use enhancements. And then release 3 is where we really focus on cloud and how we transition to the cloud. And just as Dr. Richardson said, that'll go to operational test in 2015 for fielding late 2015, early 2016. So that's kind of a high level timeline of how we plan to bring that into the program of record.

Moderator: Okay ladies and gentleman. Thank you. This concludes the media roundtable. If you guys could just hold your seats, and panel if you could go ahead and start your way out.