

AOC Advances Proposal for a Joint EMSO Combat Support Agency



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The Association of Old Crows (AOC) is taking a major step toward reshaping how the Department of Defense organizes, manages, and executes electromagnetic spectrum operations (EMSO). Building on years of evidence pointing to persistent gaps in joint spectrum governance, AOC has formally proposed the creation of a Joint Electromagnetic Spectrum Operations (JEMSO) Combat Support Agency (CSA) for inclusion in the Fiscal Year 2027 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA).

Addressing Decades-Old EMSO Challenges

The challenges the proposal seeks to solve are far from new. For more than half a century, EMSO practitioners have highlighted fragmented authorities, duplicated efforts, inconsistent training standards, and slow responses to emerging electromagnetic threats. Current enterprise EMSO functions – such as software reprogramming, threat analysis, training, and requirements development – are carried out independently by each Service, leading to inefficiencies that hinder joint operations.

Recent operational assessments and five years of implementation under the 2020 DOD EMSO Strategy reinforced what many in the community already knew: Despite incremental improvements, root-cause governance issues remain.

Looking at the recent military operations around the world – for example the very successful operation to capture Venezuelan dictator Nicolás Maduro – our EMSO capabilities are on full display. While the Venezuelan mission was well-executed, it was against an adversary that does not pose a modern threat. We easily achieved Spectrum Superiority for the hours needed to complete the mission, but what happens in the next conflict when we don't have months to plan, and we must achieve and sustain superiority for months or years? Have we made enough progress to ensure mission success? The answer is "no." With the increasing complexity of cognitive EW and machine-driven algorithms, the status quo is no longer sustainable.

A Unified Joint Solution

AOC's proposal calls for establishing a dedicated JEMSO CSA under 10 U.S.C. §193 – modeled after proven agencies like DISA and DTRA. The new agency would serve as the DOD's principal joint combat support organization for the electromagnetic environment, consolidating disparate EMSO functions into a single, authoritative enterprise hub.

Key elements of the proposal include:

- **Centralized policy authority**, replacing the DOD CIO as the principal spectrum advisor.
- **Unified enterprise management**, integrating joint planning, budgeting, training, and readiness reporting.
- **Improved senior-level advocacy**, elevating EMSO needs within the DOD's requirements and resourcing cycles.
- **A supporting-commander role**, enabling the Director to directly assist combatant commands and deploy personnel

when appropriate.

The proposal also outlines tiered responsibilities across OSD, the services, the Joint Staff, and the combatant commands to ensure strong oversight and seamless integration. [You can read the full proposal here.](#)

Engagement on Capitol Hill

As the AOC's Director of Advocacy & Outreach, I have the opportunity to regularly engage members of Congress who serve on the House and Senate Armed Services Committees (HASC/SASC) and the congressional EW Working Group. Following a recent series of meetings in February, I was very encouraged by the depth of technical knowledge and operational experience within the US Congress. A key takeaway from these engagements, which will continue through March and April leading to a mark-up of the NDAA in early summer, is that any major bureaucratic restructuring brings challenges. Bureaucracies may be effective to address problems, but they too often fail to solve problems. An EMSO CSA must be charted to be the problem-owner with the authorities and resources necessary to close these persistent gaps.

A Long-Term Effort with Increasing Momentum

While passing such sweeping legislation in one year is an uphill fight; momentum is on our side and continues to build. There are still many questions to answer including cost, time, and personnel. Next steps include further Capitol Hill engagements, submission of formal NDAA language, and coordination ahead of upcoming defense posture hearings. I encourage EMSO professionals to become involved, share insights, and help raise awareness as the proposal advances.

It may be new, and maybe even a little scary for some, but the benefits far outweigh the drawbacks. The push for a JEMSO CSA marks a bold effort to finally close long-standing EMSO gaps – and to better prepare the joint force for the contested

electromagnetic environments of the future.