



DEFENSE INFORMATION SYSTEMS AGENCY
The IT Combat Support Agency

HF 30 MHz VHF 300 MHz UHF 3,000 MHz SHF 30 GHz EHF

Spectrum Enterprise Services & Capabilities

COVID-19 Support to Warfighter

July 2020

DISA, DoD, National Telecommunications and Information Administration collaborate to expand Commercial Broadband Services in support of COVID-19 pandemic

DISA's Defense Spectrum Organization team collaborated with the military services, DoD Chief Information Officer, and the NTIA to assess and approve over 400 licenses to wireless carriers in response to network capacity constraints caused by the national response to COVID-19.

"As a result of the COVID-19 crisis, citizens, businesses and local, state and federal government agencies made adjustments to maintain physical distancing, significantly increasing the nation's reliance on wireline and wireless broadband services."

- Howard McDonald, DSO project lead.

As a part of the national response to COVID-19, the Federal Communications Commission, NTIA and DoD took steps to expand commercial broadband services. Notably, the FCC granted mobile broadband service providers (i.e., the wireless carriers) immediate urgent temporary access to the 1755-1780 MHz band currently used for DoD operations.

"This 60-day access enables greater mobile broadband capacity nation-wide."

- Howard McDonald

"Normally, the DoD would have 70 days to process coordination requests for the licenses contained in the Emergency-Special Temporary Authorities grants. The DSO team of Josephine Cantalupo, Chris Johnson and Howard McDonald developed a streamlined workflow to process the E-STAs, and coordinated that workflow with the carriers, the military services, and the NTIA. They made it happen in just 14 days."

- Mike Williams, acting DSO director

The DSO team refined the standard technical approach for evaluating Coordination Requests that triaged the assessment of the licenses, and worked with the military services and DoD CIO to identify an initial set of 276 licenses approved in a matter of days.

“We all worked together to identify critical DoD operations that required access to the 1755-1780 MHz band and need to be protected from harmful interference. Using this information, we worked with the military services to approve the deployment of Long Term Evolution networks on the remaining licenses within two weeks of the carriers being granted the E-STAs by FCC.” – Howard McDonald

The efforts of DSO were integral to the national response to the COVID-19. The directorate worked across DoD, the federal government, and the commercial carriers to increase the capacity of mobile broadband wireless networks to overcome network congestion due to adjustments made across the nation to maintain physical distancing.

Since granting the initial E-STAs, the carriers requested an additional 90 days for 270 licenses. The DSO team worked with the military services to understand the potential impacts to DoD operations, ultimately leading to the approval for the extension in a matter of days.



*“The spirit of collaboration built across the DoD to meet the immediate national need for broadband services positions the DoD to effectively respond to future requirements as the COVID crisis evolves.”
- Howard McDonald*

DSO Current Strategic Efforts

- Initiate efforts to improve EMS Situational Awareness and develop electromagnetic battle management (EMBM) capabilities to enable all domain command and control.
- Continue supporting DoD Electromagnetic Battle Management initiatives to deliver dynamic electromagnetic spectrum command and control capabilities to the warfighter.
- Initiate World Radiocommunication Conference 2023 (WRC-23) agenda item assessments. The agency’s support is essential to ensuring DoD electromagnetic spectrum equities are considered through each WRC cycle.
- Support development of the EMS Superiority Strategy Implementation Plan.
- Continue improving direct support to DoD components to enable effective spectrum operations.
- Advocate for a robust DoD EMS Enterprise Governance Structure and Policy to address policy and operational requirements definitions.