

Remarks by Rep. Joseph R. Pitts
Acceptance of AOC Gold Medal
November 29, 2016
Washington, DC

Good Morning. It is a pleasure to be with you this morning and an honor to accept the AOC Gold Medal Award.

Taking a look at previous Gold Medal recipients, I am impressed by the collection of leaders throughout government, the Department of Defense, and the military services dedicated to advancing electronic warfare (EW) and EMS Operations. It is a compliment to the work of the AOC over the past 50 years.

I thank you for the opportunity to join them and I urge you, the AOC, to continue your hard work because there is so much yet to do.

I also appreciate the introduction by your President, Dave Hime. When the 114th Congress adjourns in the coming weeks, I will be officially retiring from the US House of Representatives after serving the 16th District of Pennsylvania for the past 20 years.

During my time in office, I've had the opportunity pursue policy development on a range of issues. For everyone here today, my most relevant work is on the EW Working Group, which I founded in 1999 and is still going strong today with 33 members under the leadership of Representatives Rick Larsen and Jackie Walorski. I greatly appreciate their hard work to keep the EWWG strong now in its 17th year.

I started the EW Working Group while I served on the House Armed Services Committee during the 106th Congress. We were holding hearings on the air campaign over Kosovo. A chief topic of discussion was the critical role that EW was playing in operations, yet in the years leading up to that campaign, our EW assets and capabilities were overlooked and underfunded.

As an EW Officer onboard B-52s in Vietnam, my first thought was, "Why are we making the same mistakes in 1999 that we were making during the Vietnam War? Why haven't we learned our lessons?" This needed to change, but first, we needed our leaders in government - DoD, the military services and Congress — to better understand EW and the critical role it does and most assuredly will continue to play in 21st Century combat.

Very early on we turned to the AOC for guidance and education. We needed to build an education and advocacy initiative that networked itself through Congress, DoD, and the defense industry. While the EWWG has been successful over the years, its mission is not complete. Just like EW itself, the EWWG's mission is expanding. I would argue that the need for education and advocacy - for EW and related disciplines, such as Directed Energy and offensive Cyber operations - is stronger today than ever before. And for everyone here this morning, the need for the AOC is greater than ever before. Our

community needs informed leaders, creative ideas, and persistent engagement at every level of government and industry to shape the right policies, develop the right capabilities and support our men and women in uniform.

That said, I leave you with three challenges that I believe are important for the AOC and in its collaboration with the EWWG.

First, the electromagnetic spectrum domain - the strategic maneuver space that our armed forces must access and control from Day 1 in every military contest - is not a US-only challenge. It is global - just like every other physical warfighting Domain. Therefore, our education, advocacy, and networking must also be global. The EWWG used to convene an international forum. I understand that the AOC Capitol Club chapter is trying to reinvigorate this idea with a new International EWWG Network to focus on interoperability, information sharing and assurance, and spectrum management. This type of initiative is important and I hope will be successful. We need more initiatives like this and we need to invest in ideas and programs that capitalize on the talent and experience in this hall this morning.

Second, we need to continue to push for structural reforms to the way we organize, train, equip, and fight. An early obstacle the EWWG faced was identifying who was in charge of EW in OSD and the Services when we needed to engage on major issues.

For a long time, this “belly button” did not exist. The services understandably have their own plans and program priorities. But there wasn’t real leadership from OSD or an “enterprise” vision for EW across the DOD. There wasn’t enough collaboration to break down the stovepipes. Everything was slow and uncertain. I was excited to hear about the emergence of the “Third Offset Strategy” and the establishment of the EW Executive Committee. This is a very important initiative and it needs to succeed. We need a clear and comprehensive EMS Strategy and Roadmap. We need to know what threats we face and the capabilities we need to counter those threats to keep our technological advantage.

We also need not only to know what to buy, but how to buy it. We need to invest in the leap-ahead technologies, develop the right capabilities, and get these into the hands of our warfighters so that they can train with these, develop new tactics and know how they want to use them before they are deployed overseas. These reforms require coordination between DoD and Congress. We must build a bridge across the Potomac and meet in the middle - but we need to each start at the right place. This is where the AOC comes in. Your role as the leading association on Electromagnetic Spectrum Operations is to bring the right leaders together so everyone can read off the same page.

Finally, while I was an EW Officer in the US Air Force and I served 20 years in Congress, I was also a high school math and science teacher. When you step back from the focus on a specific capability, like EW, I believe the strength of our armed forces, the growth of our economy, and the opportunities afforded to future generations

of young people will depend on education, especially in STEM. EW technology and the EW profession itself has changed dramatically since my days in a "buff," (a B-52 for you Army folks) and will continue to change. In my day, flying combat missions over Vietnam, the EW technicians in the maintenance shed would tinker with our EW systems in the field, working on solving problems and sometimes making small modifications and tweaking the system's performance in ways that could end up saving me and my fellow crewmembers from SA-2s and other SAM threats. Today, EW systems are far more complex and require more advanced skills. In my day, EWOs like me were operating the EW system. Today's EWO is becoming an EW battle manager who needs a different set of skills and tools. All of these changes show why STEM is so important.

The AOC needs to invest in STEM education to (1) **convey** the value and opportunities of STEM professions to the next generation; (2) **capture** the ideas that will drive future technology; and (3) **collaborate** with both the public and private sector, especially with STEM-related nonprofits, to mobilize ideas and talent. STEM education and the ideas and careers that grow from this initiative will strengthen our economy and the defense-industrial base for years to come.

In closing, the pace of technology, the change sweeping through the EW and SIGINT professions represented in the room today, and the uncertainty of the world outside require organizations like the AOC to step up to lead our leaders. Status quo is not an option. The AOC has long been important to the EWWG, and I hope that my work with the EWWG over the years has made AOC stronger. I hope that partnership continues.

We need each other to make sure our warfighters have tools they need to be successful in every mission be return home safely.

Thank you again for the honor of receiving the AOC Gold Medal. It is a pleasure to be with you this morning.

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