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ROBERT S. RANGEL, STAFF DIRECTOR

February 10, 2005

General Richard B. Myers
Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff
The Pentagon
Washington, D.C. 20310

Dear General Myers:

I am concerned about the credibility of the United States Armed Forces. Specifically, I am worried that the blending of the realms of Public Affairs (PA) and Information Operations (IO) will have long lasting negative effects on our military, and ultimately our nation. I have read your memo of September 27, 2004 to the service chiefs and commandant commanders on the same subject and I know you share my concern.

As you know, the mission of PA is to reliably present official military information to the American public and international audiences. In so doing, it protects the honor, integrity and credibility of our military, which in turn protects the honor, integrity and credibility of the country. IO, on the other hand, is a tool to influence the perceptions of foreign adversaries in such a manner that benefits our commanders in the accomplishment of their assigned missions.

In the past, IO executed in foreign media markets were unlikely to migrate to markets designed for domestic consumption. Today, with global communications capability in the form of 24 hours news networks and the internet available in nearly every American household, that is no longer the case. Your memorandum rightly stresses that while both PA and IO play an important part in supporting a commander's needs, they differ in role and intended audiences and should remain separate and distinct entities. It is my understanding, however, that in General Casey's command in Iraq they are combined in one organization. Is that true? If so, are you satisfied that a firewall exists between the two functions so that disinformation and misinformation does not bleed from IO, where they are legitimate techniques, to PA, where they would represent the abdication of the Armed Forces' responsibility to present truthful information (when no longer sensitive) to the American people about the nature and scope of their operations?

I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

Ike Skelton

Ike Skelton
Ranking Member