

Understanding the Disruptive Potential of a National 5G Network

By NSR Team | November 10, 2020

In 2018, a National Security Council memo proposed that the government use up to 500MHz of spectrum to build a 5G network that would compete against those of the national carriers. The proposal was quickly shelved following strong opposition; however, some of the ideas contained in the memo have resurfaced recently.

A government funded network with 500MHz of spectrum would pose a profound threat to the fortunes of the national carriers. Such a network could create capacity at *literally a fraction of the cost* of the national carriers. Sold on the wholesale market, this cheap capacity could collapse pricing, while unlocking a wave of innovation similar to what happened when WiFi arrived on the scene.

We have always argued that the prospect of a government funded network competing against networks funded with private capital is low; however, if it came to pass, the threat posed to wireless and broadband providers is tremendous. As such, it warrants a close examination.

At our [**5G Conference on November 17th**](#), we have a number of people who are well positioned to comment on this theme, including:

- Airforce Brigadier General (Retired) **Robert Spalding**, who will be discussing the importance of a national 5G network in securing communications infrastructure that is competitive with China for both national security and commercial purposes (see recent [WSJ article](#) on China's lead). General Spalding authored the [NSC memo](#) and has been an advocate for its contents.
- Declan Ganley, the CEO of **Rivada**, will be discussing the role that his company [proposes](#) playing in the deployment and commercialization of the government network.
- **Dish** has proposed an [alternative strategy](#) whereby the DoD gets access to a private network on

infrastructure deployed and managed by Dish. This would allow for further scale economies, while at the same time giving the national security apparatus access to spectrum frequencies other than the C-Band frequencies the DoD controls today. Stephen Bye, Dish's Chief Commercial Officer will be presenting at the conference.

- **AT&T, Verizon and T-Mobile** have all opposed a federally funded 5G network; however, if a carrier were going to get a mandate to build a network for the DoD, they would likely compete against Dish for that mandate. This will no doubt come up in discussion with Andre Fuetsch, the CTO of AT&T, and Neville Ray, the CTO of T-Mobile.

This issue could have a material impact on the **C-Band** auction, which is set to start on December 8th.

To register for the conference and for 1x1s, please click [here](#).

For the list of speakers, please click [here](#).

For the agenda, please click [here](#).

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