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SUBCOMMITTEE ON EMERGING THREATS AND CAPABILITIES

STATEMENT OF

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SUBCOMMITTEE ON EMERGING THREATS AND CAPABILITIES

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OPENING REMARKS

Mr. Chairman and distinguished Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to address you today, which is my first as the 10th Commander of United States Special Operations Command (USSOCOM). I am honored to be here to convey our appreciation for your indispensable support and to provide an update on our nation's special operations forces (SOF). During my remarks, I will describe USSOCOM's posture, purpose, and mission in the context of the emerging strategic environment. I will then share my priorities and concerns, and explain how we will accomplish our assigned missions and prepare for an uncertain future.

SOF ETHIC and CULTURE

I would like to begin by commending the extraordinary efforts made by our special operations forces to keep our nation safe. USSOCOM's highly specialized military and civilian personnel, our "quiet professionals," are asked to respond to our nation's most complex, demanding, and high-risk challenges. Building this skilled and specialized force is a demanding, time-intensive process. Every day, our forces put forth an extraordinary level of effort and personal sacrifice, while enduring grueling physical and mental demands to meet mission requirements. They deserve our admiration and gratitude, along with all of our Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, and Marines. They are all part of a team doing essential work on behalf of our nation.

The SOF commitment to excellence is imperative in accomplishing what our nation has asked of these dedicated men and women – I am proud to serve as their commander.

USSOCOM is a values-based organization – always mindful that our personal and professional conduct reflects not only on ourselves, but also on our nation. We will continue to earn the high level of trust that our leaders have placed in us by maintaining an open dialogue on the

challenges we face, providing our best military advice, and remaining responsible stewards of U.S. tax dollars.

USSOCOM's MISSION

As you know, Congress created USSOCOM in 1987 and gave it distinct Service-like responsibilities, which makes it unique among the nine Unified Combatant Commands. Under U.S. Code Title 10, Sections 164 and 167, it is my responsibility, as the Commander of USSOCOM, to organize, train, and equip SOF for current and future challenges. Our mission is to synchronize the planning of special operations and provide SOF to support persistent, networked, and distributed Geographic Combatant Command (GCC) operations to protect and advance our nation's interests.

As global security challenges become increasingly interconnected and interdependent, USSOCOM is investing in our own connections, deepening our relationships with the GCCs, our international partners, and with U.S. national security decision-makers at home. These relationships are helping us build common understandings of shared threats and facilitate cooperation.

In short, USSOCOM sees its role as an indispensable supporting command to our GCCs, working seamlessly with interagency and international partners to provide capabilities critical to addressing emerging problems and securing our nation's interests. Ultimately, the best indicator of our success will be the success of the GCCs.

TODAY'S US SPECIAL OPERATIONS FORCE

Since assuming command in August 2014, I have had the opportunity to travel to every GCC to consult with the commanders and visit with our forward deployed special operations units. I would like to give you a snapshot of U.S. SOF and the range of missions they are executing, and describe their experience as part of today's military.

Today, our United States Special Operations Forces are comprised of over 69,000 men and women serving as operators, enablers, and support personnel. The SOF community is made up of our nation's finest leaders and organizational teams. Within the force of "quiet professionals" are Army Special Forces, SEALs (Sea, Air, Land Teams), Air Commandos, Rangers, Night Stalker helicopter crews, Marine Raiders, civil affairs personnel, psychological operations personnel, acquisition experts, logisticians, administrators, analysts, planners, communicators, and other specialists who are instrumental in fulfilling our mission. We also rely heavily upon our Guard and Reserve units, as well as government civilians and contractors.

Our SOF are deployed to more than 80 countries worldwide, filling GCC requirements and supporting 10 named operations. In addition to the nearly 3,500 personnel we have stationed forward, we also have over 7,000 service members deployed in support of a variety of GCC requirements on any given day. These requirements span the range of our core activities as directed by the Secretary of Defense. From working with indigenous forces and local governments to improve local security, to high-risk counterterrorism operations – SOF are in vital roles performing essential tasks. They provide critical linkages to our security partners and must be prepared to handle a wide range of contingencies, despite a small footprint in their areas of responsibility. These missions are often complicated, demanding, and high-risk.

Because of the unique skill set SOF possess, we are seeing increasing demand for these units across the GCCs. The typical operator is older than counterparts in the conventional forces, has attended multiple advanced tactical schools, and has received specialized cultural and language training. This depth of experience and range of expertise has been in high demand since 9/11. Over the last 14 years, the average service member in SOF has deployed between 4 to 10 times –with most toward the higher end of that range – and has frequently had less than 12 months at home between deployments. About 50% of our force is married with children and have sacrificed a great deal of time with their families. High operational tempo has put a strain on both our operators and their families, and most, if not all, of our SOF operators have lost friends both overseas and at home. Our SOF warriors have performed their duties superbly, but not without stress or loss; we have sustained over 2,500 wounded and killed in action. We now have approximately 7,500 members in our SOF Wounded Warrior program, many of them due to the “invisible wounds” of traumatic stress. We have a great deal of work to do to ensure these men and women receive proper care.

On the positive side, the pressure exerted over this time has created a self-confident, mature, knowledgeable, and agile force that has a greater awareness of what is important to our nation. The range of experience and expertise in special operations forces make them uniquely suited to deal with many of the complex challenges we see emerging in the security environment.

THE STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENT

We are living in a hyper-connected world; the spread of technology into an increasing number of cultures and societies is driving change in the strategic environment. The Cold War suppressed political mobilization in a variety of ways. The removal of those constraints, coupled with technology, is creating both challenges and opportunities. Adversaries can now easily

access tools that range from advanced weapons systems and cyber capabilities to improvised explosive devices (IEDs), which are providing an expanding variety of coercive options. Yet we also see opportunities emerging as networked populations are seeking improvements in governance, security, and economic opportunity. Power and influence are now diffusing to a range of actors, both state and non-state, who have not traditionally wielded it. Many governments are struggling to adjust to the new realities. For the foreseeable future, instability will be driven by conflicts within and across state boundaries as much as it will be driven by conflicts between states themselves.

Within states, it is becoming much easier for aggrieved populations to network, organize, and demand change to the status quo; we have seen this in a number of locations across the world. Populations are increasingly challenging the legitimacy of their governments and demanding change on a range of issues. Governments unwilling or unable to accommodate change will face increasing pressure from dissatisfied segments of their populations. Traditional responses to control these situations may provide temporary respite, but too often fail to address the underlying grievances, which can lead to further instability.

Across state boundaries, violent non-state actors such as ISIL are exploiting local grievances among populations to advance their own horrific ends. Their methods routinely violate international norms and challenge regional governments' capabilities to respond. These groups rely upon their ability to build common identities with sub-sets of disaffected populations and magnify the potential for violence. Other non-state actors have more criminal inclinations and avoid law enforcement while building their power and influence.

Between states, technological advancement is providing rising powers more options to pursue their interests. In some cases, countries are seeking to expand their claims of sovereignty

outside of recognized borders. In other cases, they are sponsoring and relying upon non-state actors to act on their behalf abroad. Traditional approaches to deterrence are increasingly inadequate – particularly as some states are becoming adept at avoiding conventional military responses while advancing their interests through a combination of coercion, targeted violence, and exploitation of local issues. Russia is taking this approach and is systematically undermining neighboring governments and complicating international responses to its aggressive actions.

There are two clear implications of these environmental conditions. First, the diffusion of power is decreasing the ability of any state, acting alone, to control outcomes unilaterally. Globalization has created networked challenges on a massive scale. Only by working with a variety of security partners can we begin to address these issues.

Second, our success in this environment will be determined by our ability to adequately navigate conflicts that fall outside of the traditional peace-or-war construct. Actors taking a “gray zone” approach seek to secure their objectives while minimizing the scope and scale of actual fighting. In this “gray zone,” we are confronted with ambiguity on the nature of the conflict, the parties involved, and the validity of the legal and political claims at stake. These conflicts defy our traditional views of war and require us to invest time and effort in ensuring we prepare ourselves with the proper capabilities, capacities, and authorities to safeguard U.S. interests.

SOF’s ROLE in this ENVIRONMENT

If the environment is populated with potential adversaries who are adept at avoiding our conventional advantages, then we must be prepared to respond with appropriate tools. The traditional rules of conflict are changing – our ability to influence outcomes is not solely based on our aggregate military capability. Our success will increasingly be determined by our ability to respond with a range of capabilities while becoming more attuned to the intricacies involved in an evolving landscape of relationships.

U.S. Special Operations Forces provide a portfolio of options to deal with complex security challenges. We are uniquely able to operate in a variety of environments to support strategic progress in achieving national security objectives. Our comparative advantage in this environment is built upon three pillars: 1) persistent engagement, 2) enabling partners, and 3) discreet action.

First, we conduct persistent engagement in a variety of strategically important locations with a small-footprint approach that integrates a network of partners. This engagement allows us to nurture relationships prior to conflict. Our language and cultural expertise in these regions help us facilitate stability and counter malign influence with and through local security forces. Although SOF excel at short-notice missions under politically-sensitive conditions, we are most effective when we deliberately build inroads over time with partners who share our interests. This engagement allows SOF to buy time to prevent conflict in the first place.

Second, we integrate and enable both conventional forces and interagency capabilities. On a daily basis, SOF are assisting the GCCs across and between their areas of responsibility to address issues that are not constrained by borders. When crises escalate, SOF develop critical understanding, influence and relationships that aid conventional force entry into theater. The close working relationships we have built with GCCs are essential in ensuring we are able to

properly support and augment their operations. Today's crises will not be resolved by a military-only approach; instead, the nature of these challenges demands a whole-of-government response. SOF play an important supporting, but not decisive, role. We continue to explore how we can better augment the capabilities of the interagency to support the National Security Strategy.

Third, USSOCOM provides the ability to conduct discreet action against our most immediate threats. Regardless of our efforts to build stability and favorably shape outcomes, the need remains for an effective crisis response and a robust, proactive counterterrorism program. For these cases, we must maintain the ability to conduct operations under politically-sensitive conditions. This capability provides a tailored military response that reduces the associated strategic risks and the likelihood of conflict escalation. We are continuing to disrupt the violent actions of extremist organizations in conjunction with conventional forces, the interagency, and our international SOF partners. These three pillars help us provide lower-risk, timely, and tailored options to deal with the growing variety of security problems in today's world.

USSOCOM and its PARTNERS

As an organization that deals with crises that occur in the "gray zone," I believe USSOCOM has an important role to play in facilitating interagency discussion. For example, we hosted senior policymakers last year from across the interagency to discuss options to address transnational organized criminal networks. Just this past February, we hosted a similar event in Tampa on behalf of the National Counterterrorism Center to discuss the strategy to counter ISIL. Challenges such as these will continue to evolve – and so must our approach to dealing with them.

Unconventional strategies are increasingly becoming a feature of the security environment. I believe it is time for us to have an in-depth discussion on how we can best support our national interests in these situations. Adversaries employing these strategies attempt to maximize their coercive influence while limiting their risk of serious retribution. They are becoming adept at avoiding crossing thresholds that would clearly justify the use of conventional military force. Destabilizing a government is becoming easier through non-attributable methods that are relatively cheap and easy to employ. Our success will therefore depend upon our ability to act with and through regional partners, leveraging all instruments of national power, to counter destabilizing influences.

Cyber threats are an increasingly common component of unconventional strategies for which we must develop a more comprehensive approach. Our ever-growing reliance on information infrastructure makes us vulnerable to attacks; the same is true for many governments around the world, to include our potential adversaries. Simultaneously, there are a variety of areas in which we must become more proficient to fully realize the potential of cyber capabilities. I believe the interagency needs to maintain a continuing focus on this area.

Social media is another component of unconventional strategies, and the security environment in general, that is playing a central role in recruiting individuals to causes. We must therefore develop our ability to interact with key influencers through this medium, or else risk blinding ourselves to this important conduit of information and influence in unfolding crises. We all must view this space as a routine operational area; it is redefining how humans interact. Our success in leveraging these tools will be determined by how well we cultivate the networks in which we participate; it is important to note that these are not “our” networks – the very nature

of these relationship tools is decentralized and participatory, rather than centrally controlled. We require new thinking on this subject.

We stand ready to support interagency efforts to work through these challenges. Though there are military components to countering and deterring unconventional challenges, whole-of-government strategies are essential for building lasting stability and safeguarding U.S. interests.

DEVELOPING SOF for the SECURITY ENVIRONMENT

Through close collaboration with Congress, I hope to optimize the allocation of our resources to develop the capabilities, capacities, and authorities required by the GCCs. While this emerging security environment will increase the demand for SOF, we are most effective when we integrate our efforts with the GCCs, Services, and the interagency. In order to strengthen SOF posture and capabilities, I have established five priorities for USSOCOM. Focusing on these priorities will enhance our ability to address the range of conventional and unconventional challenges that are increasingly characterizing the security environment.

First, we must ensure SOF readiness by developing the right people, skills, and capabilities to meet current requirements as well as those that will emerge in the future. As we face both fiscal and security challenges, we must balance the readiness of the current force with investment in future capabilities. Critical to this balance is ensuring that we maintain superior selection, training, education, and talent management for our people. In turn, our people must be supported by timely development, acquisition, and sustainment of both Service-provided and special operations-peculiar equipment.

Recognizing that humans are more important than hardware – our first SOF Truth – we must invest wisely in our people to develop the right talents our force requires. Over the past 14

years we have evolved our approach to consistently produce operators who possess the attributes and competencies we require. Developing language and cultural expertise is essential to our ability to operate in complex situations to promote the security of the U.S. and its allies.

Operational success for SOF often depends on being able to establish relationships with key partners. The strength of these relationships is founded on culturally attuned, regionally trained operators interacting directly with foreign officials and security forces in their language.

USSOCOM and its Components continue to strengthen and rebalance regional capabilities to provide appropriate expertise.

We have a shared responsibility with the Services for developing our special operations forces and we are partnering with them on ways we can better assess and manage talent. USSOCOM has the responsibility for ensuring the combat readiness of its forces while the Services have broad authority for career development, so we are working on improving how we collaboratively prepare SOF for the challenges they face. Yet reliance on the Services is not limited to recruitment and development of our operators. The readiness of USSOCOM, the Services, and Functional Combatant Commands are inextricably linked as SOF relies heavily on Service training, logistics, facilities, and operational enablers such as cyber networks, global distribution, and global patient movement. Service and Functional Combatant Commanders' support will remain a critical requirement as USSOCOM continues to deploy SOF to meet increasing GCC demand.

In terms of funding, our readiness has remained relatively stable over the past four years through a combination of consistent base and Overseas Contingency Operations (OCO) funding, which has allowed USSOCOM to fulfill the most critical GCC demands. Although the majority of our efforts have focused on the CENTCOM AOR, our current budget shifts efforts to improve

support to all GCCs in accordance with strategic guidance. As we begin to focus more heavily on emerging networked threats around the world, we are aligning resources to maintain current readiness through joint training and exercises, operational unit readiness and training activities, and flying hours. Our training exercises include a strong focus on building Service, interagency, and international interoperability. We remain heavily reliant upon OCO funding, which has been essential for responding to today's threats, and appreciate the continued support of Congress in this matter.

Second, we must help our nation win in today's challenges and contribute to keeping the nation safe. The challenges faced by the United States and our allies require unprecedented agility and understanding. We must prioritize and synchronize SOF activities to protect our nation's interests as the challenges grow more numerous and complex. To accomplish this, we must continue to invest in a diverse portfolio of SOF capabilities that meet both the immediate and long-term needs of the GCCs and complements the capabilities of the Services, the interagency, and our international partners.

DoD guidance identifies USSOCOM as the synchronizer for the planning and provision of special operations capabilities in support of the GCC. To meet this guidance, we are in the process of coordinating with the Services, the Department, and the GCCs to collaboratively develop a campaign plan for global special operations. The plan is intended to help optimize and prioritize our support globally, promote ongoing efforts to strengthen international partnerships and will ultimately improve our ability to support the GCCs by providing coherent options and recommendations for SOF employment.

Authorities such as Section 1208 play a critical role in ensuring we can provide a more comprehensive set of options for security challenges by leveraging the capabilities of local

security partners. They also help ensure we retain access and influence in regions where we do not maintain a large military presence. We appreciate your continued support for this authority. Going forward, we will work with Congress to ensure we have the right authorities and programs in place to properly support the GCCs.

Third, we are continuing to build relationships with international and domestic partners through sustained security cooperation, expanded communication architectures, and liaison activities. These partnerships allow us to share the burden of managing conflicts and enhance regional capabilities that can respond to threats at their origin. Over the past few years, USSOCOM has prioritized strengthening the network of military, interagency, and international partners across the globe, through liaison exchange, and a multinational communications infrastructure. These relationships build common understandings of shared threats and facilitate cooperation.

Efforts such as our Special Operations Liaison Officers, or SOLOs, are helping us build this network of international partners. Now present in embassies in 15 nations and operating in every geographic combatant command area of responsibility, SOLOs help us facilitate coordination across GCC boundaries to address challenges that span the globe. We also have liaison officers from 13 partner nations that work with us at our Headquarters in Tampa. Similarly, our Special Operations Support Teams (SOSTs) help us interface more effectively with the interagency. By increasing transparency, communication, and collaboration with our partners, we maximize the effectiveness of our collective action against shared problem sets. USSOCOM will continue to invest in these relationships so that our network development outpaces that of threat networks.

The relationships USSOCOM has strengthened and the communications architecture we have put in place allow us to coordinate with coalition partners on matters such as hostage rescue, the movement of foreign fighters, international training, and developing the capabilities for responding to shared threats. In January of this year, USSOCOM organized a dialogue that brought together senior military representatives from 20 nations, as well as the Commanders of U.S. Central Command, U.S. European Command, and NATO Special Operations Headquarters, to discuss common security challenges and opportunities for collective action.

Our expanded support to the Theater Special Operations Commands (TSOCs) is another key effort that is helping us further develop our regional capabilities and expertise. This support includes extending the necessary communications infrastructure and providing key operations support capabilities such as Civil-Military Engagement, and ISR processing, exploitation, and dissemination. We are working closely with the GCCs to determine how we can best support their operational needs. We have realigned approximately 800 USSOCOM billets to push more capability forward to the TSOCs in areas such as planning, intelligence, analysis, and communications. We will continue to make the necessary investments to ensure that we maintain regional access and the ability to operate freely with our network of allies and partners, and to encourage constructive defense cooperation.

As we operate with and through a growing network of global partners, we will continually reassess relationships based on mission prioritization and ensure we maintain the proper security protocols. As an enterprise, USSOCOM understands the reality that what happens in Latin America affects Africa, which affects Europe, and so on. With a global approach – working with international partners to coordinate activities and share critical

information – we can more effectively deal with global challenges. In my opinion, this network is an essential capability in adapting to the emerging challenges to our interests.

Fourth, we must prepare for the future by investing in SOF that are able to win in an increasingly complex world. To do so, we must be innovators of strategic options. We will focus on developing the total Special Operations Force through concepts, training, doctrine, education, and research that are future-oriented and challenge our current operational constructs. These concepts, in concert with robust experimentation and a rigorous capability analysis and development process, will ensure we are prepared for an uncertain and dynamic future. Ultimately, preparing for the future is about ensuring that we match the right people and capabilities with the very best ideas to address our most pressing problems.

In today's environment, our effectiveness is directly tied to our ability to operate with domestic and international partners. We, as a joint force, must continue to institutionalize interoperability, integration, and interdependence between conventional forces and special operations forces through doctrine, training, and operational deployments. A key aspect of building interoperability is through USSOCOM's participation in Service Title 10 and Chairman of the Joint Staff sponsored war games and experiments. These events provide a critical venue for building partnerships with Service, interagency, and international partners to address some of the most pressing challenges facing our nation as we look to the future. We will also continue to use USSOCOM events to advance our efforts to institutionalize whole-of-government approaches.

Programmatic keys to preparing SOF for the future are a continued emphasis on enhancing the overall capabilities of the SOF operator; fielding new and recapitalized air, ground, and maritime platforms; enhancing our SOF-specific ISR capabilities; and continuing to

invest in new communications infrastructure and equipment technology that allow us to share information more effectively and integrate our activities. We will work to ensure we are developing the right technologies, equipment, and capabilities required for the future SOF operator.

USSOCOM's tailored and streamlined rapid acquisition processes, supported by Congress and enabled through the oversight of ASD(SO/LIC) and USD(AT&L), have delivered critical capabilities to the battlefield, in weeks and months, instead of years. For example, in 2014, conducting combat evaluations allowed us to develop and deliver advanced weapons and cutting-edge Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance (ISR) sensors for our SOF MQ-9 unmanned aircraft that had immediate impact on the battlefield. USSOCOM also successfully responded to an urgent operational requirement to increase ballistic protection on its fleet of CV-22 Osprey tilt-rotor aircraft. In less than six months, USSOCOM, working alongside the Army and Navy, acquired lightweight armored panels and modified its fleet of Ospreys.

USSOCOM is also focusing on improving acquisition processes to support an adaptable strategy by leveraging its network of partnerships with Services, the interagency, industry, academia, and international partners. The Tactical Assault Light Operator Suit (TALOS) is an example of our emphasis on acquisition process innovation. The effort is designed to deliver a test-ready combat suit prototype that protects our operators at their most vulnerable point. Through the use of a small joint acquisition task force and rapid prototyping events, TALOS is leveraging close relationships between operators, acquirers, and technologists to achieve greater results than could be accomplished through traditional acquisition processes. This approach is also helping us "spin off" technologies from the larger TALOS effort that are improving our capabilities at an accelerated rate. Continued Congressional support of USSOCOM's acquisition

of SOF-peculiar capability and our commitment to innovative process improvement is imperative to our continued ability to meet the needs of the warfighter.

As we prepare for the future, we remain very concerned about the detrimental effects of sequestration; drastic cuts to the Services will have severe impacts on our own ability to support the GCCs. A great deal of USSOCOM's procurement is focused on SOF-specific enhancements to Service-managed programs. Therefore, SOF buying power is directly connected to Service investments. Even with a steady base budget for USSOCOM, our capabilities can still be reduced through cuts to programs that we depend upon. A major reprioritization of these programs will require us to reassess our own investments. Increased demand for SOF across the GCCs combined with increased pressure on Service budgets may compromise our capabilities. Internally, we are working hard to refine our programmatic decisions to build our buying power and prepare for the future.

Another important area of future development for SOF is emerging from the Women in Service Review. Women have served in SOF for years in Intelligence, Military Information Support and Civil Affairs units, female engagement teams, cultural support teams, and Air Force Special Operations aviation roles. Approximately two-thirds of our positions are currently integrated. USSOCOM is sponsoring several research efforts to assess possible impacts on unit performance to facilitate further successful integrations. We are also working in close coordination with the Services to develop recommendations for further integration.

Fifth, we must preserve our force and families, providing for their short- and long-term well-being. People – military, civilian, and families – are our most important asset. We always take care of our people, but after 13 years of war, their resiliency and readiness is a primary concern. We must leverage every resource available – SOF, Service, and community resources –

to ensure our people are prepared for the demanding tasks we ask them to execute. At the same time, we must pay particular attention to the often invisible challenges that our people and their families face, and ensure that the SOF culture is one that fosters understanding and support.

In order to preserve our special operations force and families, we are focusing on four areas: human, psychological, spiritual, and family/social performance. In each area, we are taking steps to improve the long-term health of our force. These initiatives are not intended to supplant the Services' efforts in providing for the welfare of military members and their families; but rather to provide SOF and their families with access to services that meet their unique needs and complement Service-provided programs. Given the high frequency of combat deployments, high-stake missions, and extraordinarily demanding environments in which the force operates, SOF and their families have been under unprecedented levels of stress; it is imperative to address the effects of more than 13 years of combat operations.

There are two specific areas that fall under preserving our force and families that I would like to discuss in more detail: suicides and personnel tempo, or PERSTEMPO. On the first subject, our goal is to do everything possible to eliminate the incidence of suicide in the forces and in our families. We have indications that our efforts in the four areas I mentioned are making a difference by alleviating conditions that contribute to suicide. There are now higher self-referral rates and our leadership is improving its ability to recognize important warning signs and provide tools to intervene more effectively. We are moving in the right direction in changing our culture when it comes to seeking psychological help, but still have work to do. This effort will continue until seeking help is considered normal and expected by everyone. We are grateful for the support Congress has provided to address this challenge.

The second area I would like to mention is PERSTEMPO, which is the rate at which we deploy our forces. Our policy is aimed at ensuring the physical, mental and operational readiness and resiliency of assigned forces. In 2010 a study was commissioned to examine the effects of a decade of continuous combat operations on the SOF community. The study identified one primary source of ongoing stress: the lack of predictability resulting from a demanding operational tempo exacerbated by significant time spent away from home for training. Predictability is a key component of building resilience. USSOCOM's PERSTEMPO policy is designed to improve operational readiness and retention by allowing commanders to evaluate and balance mission requirements with the needs of our service members. The intent is to enable the Commanders at the lowest level to better monitor the use of assigned forces and make informed risk decisions that help protect them from overuse, which will also improve mission success. Ultimately, managing PERSTEMPO is about ensuring the long-term health of the force and mission readiness while continuing to meet our global mission requirements.

The preservation of our force and families is vitally important in the preservation of capabilities that the nation depends upon to respond to crises in an unpredictable environment. Ensuring we properly care for those from whom we expect so much will allow us to meet important requirements from the GCCs. As our people keep faith with our nation, we will keep faith with them, now and in the future.

WORKING with CONGRESS

I look forward to working with Congress to explore how we can best enable our SOF operators to prepare for the complex situations we ask them to deal with on a daily basis. Your oversight, support, and partnership will ultimately help us provide better service to our nation.

The fiscal situation requires the Department to make hard choices about the allocation of our resources. It is imperative that this process occurs with a clear understanding of impacts. We depend upon the Services and Functional Combatant Commands to provide us with key capabilities; most SOF operations require non-SOF support. As we adjust to the changing demands in the operating environment, we must work to ensure we are building the broadest possible portfolio of options for our national security decision-makers through the innovation of low-cost, small-footprint, and highly flexible SOF capabilities.

CLOSING

In closing, I thank you for providing me with this opportunity to discuss these issues that are critical to the health of our Special Operations Forces and our ability to support the National Security Strategy. I also thank you for your continued support of our SOF personnel and their families; the tremendous demands we have placed upon them requires a continued commitment to provide for their well-being and support their mission success.