

PREPARED STATEMENT
OF
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DIRECTOR, DIRECTORATE OF FORCE MANAGEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT
BEFORE THE
HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE
EMERGING THREATS AND CAPABILITIES SUBCOMMITTEE
OCTOBER 22, 2015

INTRODUCTION

Mr. Chairman, and distinguished Members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to come before you today to discuss US Special Operations Command's (USSOCOM) manning, training, and equipping of the Military Information Support Operations (MISO) force. While I will cover the broader aspects of each of those responsibilities, I will comment from a perspective of countering our adversaries' influence efforts. Preparing our MISO forces for current and future conflict is a critical role for USSOCOM. The USSOCOM Commander places a great deal of emphasis on operating in the human domain, which is particularly important in our current conflicts and is the focus of our MISO forces. As Assistant Secretary of Defense Lumpkin previously mentioned, the extensive propaganda efforts employed by both the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) and the Russian Federation make USSOCOM's role in manning, training and equipping the MISO force even more critical. We have made significant improvements in all three areas over the last decade, but there is considerable work remaining—particularly in improving our MISO force's capability through training to counter our adversaries' influence on the world-wide web which they currently extensively exploit.

MANNING THE MISO FORCE TO OPTIMIZE ITS IMPACT

The first of USSOCOM's roles is to adequately man the MISO force. Without the right number of skilled people in the right positions, the MISO force cannot accomplish its mission. Overall end strength of the two active duty groups is 1051 officers and enlisted MISO Soldiers. The active MISO officer corps is 224 assigned against 204 billets and is appropriately manned at the Captain, Lieutenant Colonel and Colonel levels. The aggregate strength of the active duty

officer force is 112 percent, which is comparable to other branches. This end strength will be adjusted by management tools such as selected early retirement, and promotion reductions. The majorities of officers are serving at the operational level (55%) and at Special Operations Forces commands (16%). Our noncommissioned officers are also appropriately manned at the Staff Sergeant or E-6 levels and above; however, the inventory of Sergeants (E-5) is below authorized levels. The strength of our active duty groups' enlisted force is 872 assigned against 1295 billets, a shortage of 423 Soldiers.

The total active duty officer and enlisted strength is 70 percent, with more than 88 percent serving at the operational level. While this is not an ideal situation at the enlisted level, our projections indicate the training pipeline should have active duty MISO groups fully manned by FY 2019. Also, our FY2015 retention statistics indicate that retention efforts for the two active duty groups are retaining enough quality personnel to avoid any degradation to their current capabilities. The United States Army John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School is exploring additional opportunities through the Army Special Operations Forces Recruiting Battalion to recruit more Officer and NCO candidates. These opportunities include possible retention incentives targeting enlisted Soldiers in the ranks of sergeant to sergeant first class with qualifying language scores. Additionally, the active duty groups are participating in recruiting events with the Army Special Operations Recruiting Battalion that are specifically targeted to increase the number of officer and enlisted candidates for MISO selection and assessment.

An additional aspect of manning the force is placing personnel in an optimum force structure. In 2014, the United States Army Special Operations Command re-organized the United States Special Forces Command from exclusively manning, training and equipping Special Forces units

to now include Civil Affairs and the two active duty MISO Groups. This streamlining of effort, now represents the largest, newest and most adaptive Army Division providing the Geographic Combatant Commanders and Theater Special Operations Commanders the forces necessary to accomplish their assigned missions. This command relationship has already provided synergy to operations in AFRICOM, CENTCOM and EUCOM areas of responsibility, such as with operations against Joseph Kony and the Lord's Resistance Army in Central Africa where MISO, Special Forces and Civil Affairs elements have enabled partner nation efforts resulting in dramatic gains in combating this adversary.

TRAINING THE MISO FORCE – ADAPTING TO THE MISSION

The complexity of mission and the expertise required to carry out MISO missions has shaped and extended the training program for MISO soldiers. Prior to any formal training, service members seeking to enter the MISO force undergo an extensive selection process—a process designed to identify those able to function under physical and mental stress. Assessment and selection is a ten-day process with eight selection cycles per year. All candidates are assessed against the core SOF attributes—integrity, courage, perseverance, personal responsibility, professionalism, adaptability, teamwork, and capability, as well as validated physical and mental occupational performance standards. All events are designed to measure specific attributes required to posture a candidate for success in the MISO field. Candidates are isolated and undergo both physical and mental stressors to measure problem solving abilities, resilience and stamina.

Following selection into the MISO career field, our Soldiers attend a 5-phase, 42-week training program. This training includes extensive studies in MISO planning, linguistics, and cultural knowledge, interagency support, media development and dissemination, effective

analysis and assessments and translator/interpreter management. The end state of the training pipeline is to produce a skilled MISO soldier capable of planning, executing and measuring MISO across the full spectrum of operations in all environments in support of joint, interagency, multinational or coalition operations. These soldiers are capable of operating in both technologically superior and austere environments. They are responsive and adaptive to asymmetrical challenges; adaptive and comfortable with ambiguity. They are culturally aware, regionally focused and language-capable. Two areas of this MISO training that differentiate them from other US Government capabilities are the focus on language and culture as well as a focus on influence principles. I'd like to highlight these two unique characteristics. The language and cultural priorities are based upon MISO force demand and are oriented on critical regions of the world. While it can be challenging to produce fluent language speakers in many of the more challenging languages, the benefits of understanding language and culture are critical in determining how a culture communicates or the value a culture places on relationships. These shared assumptions drive meaning within any group. Linguistic and cultural knowledge provide an insight which is critical to conducting effective influence operations. The extensive training that our Soldiers receive enables them to leverage the cultural nuances of influence. They learn when it is most appropriate to use an emotional appeal or a rational argument, what the best mix of media is to convey a certain type of argument, and what symbols are relevant in conveying the specific message. This training, combined with linguistic and cultural understanding, makes MISO a true SOF capability and a distinct asset within the Department of Defense. In regards to training volume, in FY14 and FY15, our training base has maintained an 80 percent graduation rate.

As you well know, our adversaries use the Internet to contact and recruit followers, gain financial support and to spread propaganda and misinformation. As I mentioned in my introduction, we continue to adapt to emerging requirements. The current conflicts have identified that we have a need to continue expanding our MISO training, primarily with regards to the Web. Through the Joint requirements process, USCentral, USPacific, USAfrican, and USEuropean Commands all identified gaps in regard to MISO use of the Web. SOCOM is in the process of developing a comprehensive plan capturing all aspects of this requirement; a key aspect of the requirement being training. This training will incorporate social media use, online advertising, web metrics, and web design, among many other topics. Such a training solution will also enable us to stop being so dependent upon a contracted solution. In the interest of managing expectations however, such training cannot happen overnight and we may always need some level of contracted support in translation and IT expertise. We will be dependent upon contractors in the short term as we train the force. While this occurs we will seek to accomplish significant on the job training and learning from the contracted expertise to augment our training efforts. Ultimately, we will find the right balance between what tasks the MISO force can execute and those requiring contracted expertise to accomplish.

EQUIPPING THE MISO FORCE – STAYING CURRENT

Maintaining a current MISO equipment capability to meet operational requirements is an ongoing effort, but one USSOCOM is well positioned to meet. We have been upgrading our MISO production and dissemination capability continuously to meet the force's requirements. We have a state-of-the-art Media Production Center at Fort Bragg, with the capability to provide for print, audio, and video product development. The Center also includes redundant archival features to preserve all past and current MISO planning and production efforts. Some of the

current deployable equipment includes: the flyaway broadcast system, a radio, TV, and cellular broadcast capability, next generation loudspeaker systems, and an interoperable responsive short or long term mass printing capability. These systems are fielded and in operation by our MISO forces supporting commands around the world.

We are also constantly exploring and developing future MISO capabilities to ensure we meet the emerging needs of the Geographic Combatant Commands and Theater Special Operations Commands. This process involves researching emerging technologies, assessing the needs of the MISO force, and MISO systems development, with integrated testing and evaluation. All equipment decisions are made in accordance with the USSOCOM Commander's prioritized resourcing guidance, developed from an objective mission and gap analysis of USSOCOM mission sets. Some of the future capabilities we are in the process of developing are the distributable audio media system, a leaflet-like system with embedded pre-recorded audio and/or audio-visual messages, an upgraded version of the flyaway broadcast system mentioned earlier with a 97% size/weight reduction, and the long range broadcast system; a pod-mounted radio, TV, and cellular broadcast system on manned and unmanned aircraft allowing MISO message broadcast out to 100 miles. We are also in the process of testing an Internet Production Capability (IPC), which will be a fully integrated suite of work stations designed to perform web research, data capture, message product development, and web-based message delivery. The IPC will provide a secure means of navigating the Web, a means to conduct social media analysis, provide multiple methods to deliver online messages, and provide the ability to monitor real-time measures of effectiveness and adjust MISO programs/campaigns shortly after launching on social media.

USSOCOM welcomes the committee's support regarding technology demonstrations to assess innovative, new technologies for MISO. This is timely in light of the previously mentioned comprehensive plan USSOCOM is developing to address the Geographic Combatant Command gaps regarding MISO use of the Web. This plan will include a detailed analysis of the equipment component as part of the solution. Such analysis will address what equipment is needed in various locations to support operations. Congressional support will greatly assist in jump-starting that aspect of the plan and will ensure our force remains current and is able to accomplish assigned missions in support of our National Security objectives. While we will develop detailed plans, the web-based technologies we are exploring are less reliant on home station basing and more flexible in nature to provide support on-site to the Geographic Combatant Commands and Theater Special Operations Commands and reflect our commitment to providing MISO support to the Geographic Combatant Commands.

CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, once again I would like to thank the committee members for the opportunity to provide information in regard to USSOCOM's role in manning, training and equipping its MISO force. USSOCOM stands ready to counter our adversaries in any environment, including the information environment. All shortfalls are being addressed and mitigated through the creative and adaptive use of current personnel and equipment, leveraging contracted services and personnel where appropriate. Our MISO forces monitor, assess and evaluate media trends in the information environment. We recognize the importance of operating in this space and believe we clearly have a role of engaging on the worldwide web focused specifically on the threat in support of military objectives as part of the whole-of-government approach. The mission is challenging – the information environment moves faster than ever before and supporting

technology evolves at an even faster pace. Our adversaries are currently using propaganda and misinformation to great effect, often with a mix of sophisticated technology and overt brutality. This trend will not be deterred, and will only accelerate if not contested. It is a safe assumption that future adversaries will observe, learn, and adapt new strategies. We must move forward with clarity of purpose and focus our uniquely qualified non-kinetic resources to combat our nation's enemies.

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.