

STATEMENT OF

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BEFORE THE

HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON EMERGING THREATS AND CAPABILITIES  
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## **Opening Remarks**

Chairwoman Stefanik and distinguished Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to address you today as the 11<sup>th</sup> Commander of United States Special Operations Command (USSOCOM). This is my first address on the posture of US Special Operations Forces (SOF). Even in the short span of my first year in command we've seen the world evolve in complexity and the desire for SOF continue to increase. While challenges endure, and new ones emerge our force continues to evolve in the attempt to present options and decision space for our national leadership. During my remarks, I would like to highlight the breadth of missions where SOF is integral to the support of the current National Military Strategy (NMS), as well as how we are adapting to future challenges and transforming our capabilities. It goes without saying that NONE of this is possible without the professionalism, talent, and innovative problem solving capabilities of our most precious asset, our people, the decisive edge, who constitute the greatest Special Operations Force in history.

## **The Formative Evolution of SOF**

Last month we celebrated the 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the creation of USSOCOM as a result of The Goldwater-Nichols Act and the Nunn-Cohen Amendment -- prescient pieces of legislation that created US Special Operations Command from an ad hoc, individual service-based confederation of capability to become both a highly effective Service-like entity and an extraordinarily collaborative and effectively networked global functional Combatant Command. USSOCOM's service-like responsibilities continue to be the command's primary focus providing the world's best SOF to the Geographic Combatant Commanders. We look forward to working closely with the Assistant Secretary of Defense/Special Operations and Low Intensity Conflict's (ASD/SOLIC) assigned role in our chain of command in the Title 10 role of manning, training, and equipping the force.

USSOCOM has evolved enormously since its inception. Rather than a mere “break-glass-in-case-of-war” force, we are now proactively engaged across the “battle space” of the Geographic Combatant Commands (GCCs), providing key integrating and enabling capabilities to support their campaigns and operations. We operate and fight in every corner of the world as an integrated joint, combined and interagency force. Today, there are approximately 56,000 active duty, 7,400 reserve, guard, and 6,600 civilian personnel across the SOF enterprise. On a daily basis, we sustain a deployed or forward stationed force of approximately 8,000 across 80-plus countries. They are conducting the entire range of SOF missions in both combat and non-combat situations with a wide variety of Joint, Interagency, International, and Multi-national partners.

We have recently taken on a number of new roles intended to leverage our global perspective on problems, and focus our unique capabilities in support of not only the GCCs, but also the Department of Defense (the Department) as a whole. First, we are the designated coordinating authority for trans-regional terrorist organizations and other threat networks. Acting in support of the Chairman and the Secretary of Defense, our responsibility in this role is to provide a coherent global framework for action and synthesize the perspectives and inputs of the Geographic Combatant Commanders into a single comprehensive military assessment of DoD’s global counter-terrorism efforts. This assists the combatant commands, the Chairman, and the Secretary in understanding and prioritizing efforts to counter violent extremist networks that operate across GCC boundaries in pursuit of a coherent and effective campaign.

To date, our team’s combined quarterly assessments, supported by productive dialogue with our mission partners and the integration of dozens of other assessments conducted by combatant commands, combat support agencies, and specialized task forces, have led to specific

recommendations for the conduct of the Counter-Violent Extremist Organization effort. Specifically, we have identified the necessity to understand and address the underlying infrastructure that terrorist organizations use to generate and sustain their “combat power,” especially their enablers which include foreign fighters, financing and strategic communications. We have galvanized international and interagency focus on the effort in the form of Operation GALLANT PHOENIX, a SOF-led activity, designed to empower, support and integrate the efforts of our international (currently 19 foreign members with several others in the queue), interagency, and Joint Force partners to disrupt trans-regional terrorist networks and their ability to develop and field foreign fighters. Through information sharing, our partners support security and law enforcement actions against these networks, and inform decision makers on border security, identification of legal remedies and tools, and the structuring of counter-messaging campaigns.

Our second new responsibility is the assumption of the Countering Weapons of Mass Destruction (CWMD) synchronization mission for the Department of Defense, recently transferred from USSTRATCOM. In this role, we are responsible for maintaining the DoD CWMD Campaign, establishing intelligence priorities, monitoring global operations and conducting assessments. We are publishing a new Global Campaign Plan to provide a comprehensive, trans-regional approach which integrates ongoing regional and interagency efforts. We have also established a CWMD Coordination Center to design, execute and assess this new trans-regional approach and connect to other USG Departments and Agencies, as well as international partners. The Center leverages the resources and skills of multiple agencies that will result in a multi-layered comprehensive approach to address the CWMD problem set. In coordination with the Geographic Combatant Commands, we will conduct this campaign

attempting to focus more intently on the transregional nature of identified portions of the CWMD challenge and assess effectiveness towards national objectives, while providing resourcing and strategic recommendations to the Chairman and Secretary.

While the Department is addressing our stated requirements, USSOCOM has already implemented temporary manning strategies to mitigate risk as we transfer funding and manpower, hire new personnel, and build a network of partners. We have an established counter-terrorism (CT) network and a committed partner in the Defense Threat Reduction Agency to assist us as we move into this mission space. We are no stranger to adapting and building our network, and we have embraced this mission as we do all others – bringing focus and energy to some of the nation’s most complex challenges.

While we have evolved and now field an unmatched capability to conduct counter-terrorism operations with our partners and execute a select set of niche missions in support of the Joint Force, this expertise is not necessarily tailored to compete with near-peer competitors. We are focused on transformation as rapidly as possible across a broad range of mission capabilities.

**SOF in Today’s Competitions and Conflicts.**

The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff identified five current and enduring threats in the new National Military Strategy (NMS): Violent Extremist Organizations (VEOs), Russia, Iran, North Korea, and China. Although constituting only 2% of the Department’s budget and about 2% of its manpower, as a Combatant Command with global responsibilities, USSOCOM plays a critical role in the campaigns against each of these. While not a panacea nor a stand-alone solution, SOF produces substantive results at low cost, and with a potentially low profile / signature. However, none of the challenges can be effectively dealt with in isolation as they are

interrelated and cut across GCC boundaries. USSOCOM is striving to be part of our whole of government efforts to face these threats.

*Violent Extremist Organizations.* The threat posed by VEOs remains the highest priority for USSOCOM in both focus and effort. Special Operations Forces are the main effort, or major supporting effort for US VEO-focused operations in Afghanistan, Syria, Iraq, Yemen, Somalia, Libya, across the Sahel of Africa, the Philippines, and Central/South America – essentially, everywhere Al Qaeda (AQ) and the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) are to be found. Our priorities are disrupting external attack capability, destroying/neutralizing AQ and ISIS, developing a long-term approach to defeat and/or counter VEOs, and building partner capacity – helping our partners stabilize their environment and secure gains. SOF are also engaged in countering aggressive Iranian behavior that not only destabilizes the Middle East, but also, stokes sectarianism. SOF activities are in support of the GCCs’ efforts toward a strengthened deterrence posture, targeted counter-messaging activities, and building partner nations’ capacity.

This methodology is more comprehensive than simple counter-terrorism, and is an important part of an overarching whole-of-government approach to advance broader national security objectives. Organizations such as ISIS and AQ are trans-regional threats that require the Joint Force to work with partners across the US government as well as coalition partners. It requires focused effort to secure and hold our gains by empowering local entities within and among the populations that terrorists exploit. As we move forward in our coordinating authority role within DoD, we are committed to further developing this comprehensive approach to support the US military’s integration across the range of activities that like-minded organizations are pursuing. In this vein, we appreciate the NDAA mandate to expand the role of the State

Department's Global Engagement Center, with whom we work, which provides critical counter messaging against state and non-state actors – a key to ultimately defeating organizations such as ISIS.

*Russia.* Our second priority in terms of resources and impact is supporting United States European Command (USEUCOM) in countering Russian aggression in Europe. As Secretary Mattis pointed out, Russia is seeking control over the economic, diplomatic, and security decisions of its neighbors. Further, Russia has reemerged as a strategic competitor of the US around the globe. This trend is most pronounced in the post-Soviet space, where Russia has shown itself as willing to act aggressively to limit US and Western institutions there. They are particularly adept at leveraging unconventional approaches to advancing their interests and it is clear they are pursuing a wide range of audacious approaches to competition – SOF often present a very natural unconventional response. USEUCOM is responding by using European Reassurance Initiative funding to deter Russia and reassure Allies, including by working with NATO to build more effective defense institutions in partner nations. In support of this, we have had persistent SOF presence for over 2 years in nearly every European country on Russia's western border (Baltics, Poland, Romania, Ukraine, Georgia) – assuring our allies and partners while building host nation and NATO capabilities to compete short of conflict in a hybrid environment. Our current focus consists of assuring our allies through building partner capacity efforts to counter and resist various types of Russian aggression, as well as enhance their resilience. We are working relentlessly with our partners and the Department of State to build potency in eastern and northern Europe to counter Russia's approach to unconventional warfare, including developing mature and sustainable Special Operations capabilities across the region.

In support of GEN Scaparrotti, we will continue to refine our SOF posture to strengthen these partnerships in order to deter or respond to aggression in the region, as well as reassure our allies and contribute to a broader deterrent effect.

*North Korea.* USSOCOM has recently focused more intently on the emerging threat that is of growing concern to us as well as most of our DoD teammates – the nuclear threat of an increasingly rogue North Korea. Although previously viewed as a regional threat, North Korea's relentless pursuit of nuclear weapons and intercontinental ballistic missiles, facilitated by a trans-regional network of commercial, military, and political connections, make it a threat with global implications. In response, United States Pacific Command (USPACOM) and United States Forces-Korea (USFK) are focused on sustaining credible combat power in the region, maintaining unrelenting resolve in the face of multiple provocations, and sustaining partnerships with our closest allies. We maintain a persistent and rotational presence on the peninsula, working with our increasingly capable South Korean partners to prepare for future crises. In the meantime, we are actively pursuing a training path to ensure readiness for the entire range of contingency operations in which SOF, to include our exquisite CWMD capabilities, may play a critical role. As previously noted, we are looking comprehensively at our force structure and capabilities on the peninsula and across the region to maximize our support to USPACOM and USFK. This is my warfighting priority for planning and support.

*Iran.* Iran uses both traditional state-based military capabilities and a network of terrorist, sub-state, and non-state partners to conduct operations, actions, and activities that incite violence and threaten US security interests. It relies on militias and a range of partner organizations to expand



its influence and develop access to key areas. SOF activities are in support of CENTCOM's efforts toward a strengthened deterrence posture, targeted counter-messaging activities, and building partner nations' capacity. Our priority remains illuminating this Iranian network in order to understand its capabilities as it seeks to expand its influence. We also support and assure Israel and regional Gulf partners with foreign internal defense and security force assistance, aiding their efforts to counter Iranian threats.

*China.* China is pursuing a long-term, comprehensive military modernization program designed to improve its armed forces' capability to fight short duration, high intensity regional conflicts. China is intent upon expanding its regional and global influence, while developing capabilities to limit our ability to project power in the Pacific. SOF actions support USPACOM's efforts to focus on building military-to-military relations with China, focused on risk reduction. At the same time, we maintain persistent SOF presence in over a dozen countries in the USPACOM AOR – assuring our allies and building partner capabilities to address complex threats. The SOF community has worked to connect experts across the region, and between regions, to share lessons learned that provide opportunities to help our partners grow more effectively.

*Other Challenges.* Although the five NMS threats are the priority challenges for DoD, we remain focused on other parts of the world in terms of presence and engagement. The USSOUTHCOM Commander recently testified that aspects of the NMS-specified threats in the Southern Hemisphere are likely to become security challenges to the US homeland itself. Four out of the five named challenges are active in this region. To help mitigate these challenges, USSOUTHCOM's lines of effort are focused on countering threat networks, preparing for and

responding to disasters and crises, and building relationships to meet global challenges. SOF are actively supporting Interagency efforts that range from counter-threat financing, for which USSOCOM is the DoD lead, to counter-terrorism. We will continue to assure allies and support efforts to counter malign activities in Latin America while working to undermine transnational criminal networks. We have learned that the best way to deal with competition short of conflict is to match the range of tools we have at our disposal to the needs of the Ambassadors and GCCs. We recently hosted a Senior Leader Seminar focused on special interest aliens that involved representatives from USNORTHCOM, USSOUTHCOM, Secretary Kelly from the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), other members of the IA, and various South and Central American Country Teams. We enjoy tremendous collaborative efforts as part of the team that provides layered security relative to our southern border and beyond.

### **The SOF Advantage**

USSOCOM provides a focused set of unique capabilities to deal with the challenges facing our Department and Nation today. Maintaining a forward presence in strategically important areas, leveraging established relationships, and identifying and addressing problems before they become full blown crises. Our ability to see, understand, and act across geographic boundaries is what allows SOF to operate globally at the speed of war, provide value to the GCCs, and provide options and decision space to national leadership. Additionally, we have increased the lethality, precision and mobility of our forces over time, which assists us in rapidly repositioning and focusing– providing enhanced options and effects.

Although SOF are effective across the spectrum of conflict, we are most optimally employed “left of bang” – pre-crisis. We believe that specialized application of SOF alongside

partner nations, the Joint Force, and the Interagency conducting activities across the spectrum of conflict allows us to present options that best serve our national interests. In fact, a critical component of our effectiveness in the field is the ability to work with the Services, defense agencies, and interagency partners to support forward deployed forces. We have approximately 30,000 personnel actively engaged in providing support to deployed units in the areas of intelligence collection and analysis; Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance (ISR) operations; cyber operations; exploitation activities; and communications and logistics support.

### **Transformation: The Next Evolution of SOF**

While we are fully committed to winning the current fight, we are simultaneously working to prepare for the conflicts of tomorrow. We are always searching for improvements and relentlessly pursuing our next advantage. Key to this effort is USSOCOM's approach to requirements validation and acquisition, which allows us to rapidly field resources to those forces actively engaged in the fight. We appreciate Congress' continued resourcing of these efforts – I assure you we will continue to maximize the return on that investment.

Our current budget supports recapitalizing our platforms as well as developing our technological capabilities for dealing with near-peer competitors and competition short of armed conflict. Programmatically, we remain focused on enhancing Service-provided platforms with Major Force Program-11 funds to provide for the unique needs of our force. As always, the effectiveness of our investments is highly dependent upon the investment decisions of the Services.

A good example is seen in the success of our critical AC/MC-130J aircraft re-capitalization efforts, which include Radio Frequency Countermeasures, Terrain Following

Radar, Airborne Mission Networking and Precision Strike Packages. We have taken delivery of 10 new AC-130J Ghostriders and remain on track to declare Initial Operational Capability by the end of 2017. In our legacy Gunship fleet, we fielded eight up-gunned AC-130W Stinger IIs with 105mm large caliber guns and immediately deployed this enhanced capability to the fight in Syria and Iraq.

To improve our intelligence and analysis capabilities, we have distributed acquisition efforts across the air, ground and maritime domains – particularly for those systems and platforms that support operations in remote locations. We are developing and fielding interoperable, networked sensors built to enable common operational and intelligence pictures as well as feed data into all-source analysis tools. This further assists us in leveraging interagency partnerships.

As previously noted, our effectiveness over the last 15 years does not necessarily equate to success against near-peer competitors. We also require urgent investments in capabilities necessary for denied battlefields of the future. This includes submersibles, terrain following / avoidance and all-weather radar, advanced electronic attack capabilities, countermeasures, and precision munitions. We must enhance our effectiveness in partnership with the services. For example, we look forward to continuing work with the Department of the Navy to develop and enhance new options to support undersea operations – a key SOF capability. This is not a one way relationship. Recently the Army leveraged the efforts of our AT&L directorate to determine their future ground mobility vehicle. We continue to refine both our tactics and technological developments to enhance our man hunting and network defeat capabilities.

To integrate the advantages of rapidly evolving technology, we are making investments that will pay dividends for future mission sets. For example, “deep / machine learning” will help

us mitigate thousands of man-hours spent on sorting through vast sums of data. The analysis of publically available information; the processing, exploitation, and dissemination of information, specifically, ISR data; and sensitive site exploitation, are all wide-open areas for the application of this technology. We are pursuing technology which can be applied to open architectures, enabling rapid upgrades and integration of commercial off-the-shelf capability to leverage the latest advancements in data analytics and machine learning.

USSOCOM continues to build networks and venues that support innovation in our research, development, and acquisition programs. These networks include industry, academia, and other government organizations. The command also continues to support agile acquisition with appropriate venues, including SOFWERX – our open collaboration facility that has now been in operation for over a year and has successfully brought hundreds of non-traditional partners together to work on our most challenging problems.

A key part of the unique capabilities that SOF bring to the fight is the ability to fight in contested areas, often leveraging and enhancing the capabilities of indigenous partner forces. Accordingly, we continue to invest in ways that allow SOF to assist our partners better: command and control; ISR; Building Partner Capacity (BPC); and Aviation Foreign Internal Defense. The emphasis for all partner capabilities is on systems and infrastructure which is organically sustainable. An enhanced ability to leverage local relationships will ultimately help us better influence regional outcomes.

We also continue to invest in safeguarding our networks and communication infrastructure. USSOCOM has a unique service-like responsibility to provide all of SOF with networks and communications capability through the SOF Information Environment (SIE). The Global Enterprise Operations Center (GEOC) located at USSOCOM HQ manages network

operations for over 70,000 SOFNET users around the world, to include over 1,200 deployed nodes. The ability to share information across our network – from the unit deployed forward to the USSOCOM Headquarters – provides us with a key advantage in dealing with the information-rich environment we find ourselves in today. Defending the SIE requires sustained investment for cyber defense sensors and tools.

A continuing key area of concern for SOCOM (cited over our last 5 years of testimony) is our reliance on Overseas Contingency Operations funding, or OCO. Since 9/11, we expanded the size of our force by almost 75% in order to take on mission-sets that are likely to endure. OCO underwrites much of that growth, which remains critical to ensuring SOF readiness. OCO represents about 28% of our FY17 budget –triple the rate of OCO reliance among the Services. Approximately 90% of USSOCOM's OCO funds enduring capabilities, which are applicable to the threats beyond the current combat environment. Ultimately, we must reconcile the nature of SOF's work, which requires enduring structure and capabilities, with the relatively temporary funding achieved through OCO. Migrating this funding to the base budget over time will provide SOF a degree of certainty in tomorrow's turbulent security environment that enables us to better program for, train, and equip our joint force.

### **The Sustainment of SOF**

Our people are our single greatest resource. The goal continues to be to recruit, assess, and select the very best, providing them the requisite training and experience, empowering them to exercise their initiative and problem solving abilities, while managing them over a potential career in SOF. This is underpinned by an ethos and process to build in resiliency and provide the best possible care system for service members and their families.

It is critical that SOF preserves its high state of full-spectrum readiness in order to support enduring, priority tasks while maintaining the ability to surge in support of major contingencies. Healthy dwell rates and Personnel Tempo are essential here. Most SOF units are employed to their sustainable limit, while some are consistently under that goal. Despite growing demand for SOF, we must prioritize the sourcing of these demands as we face a rapidly changing security environment. As we work to support the GCCs in addressing the challenges they face, we are constantly on guard against overcommitting this relatively small force.

Another key aspect of sustainment is our dependence on our Service and interagency partners. The Services provide the foundation upon which we build our force. This includes recruitment, acquisitions, intelligence, mobility, and logistics support – to name just a few. Many of the programs we have are based on Service investments and we often point out that a major shift in Service priorities will require a reassessment of our own. Our purchasing power and our readiness are inextricably linked. We will continue to work with all of the Services as well as Congress to ensure we preserve these foundations. In support of these efforts, we have scheduled annual war fighter talks with all of the Services, as well as key interagency partners (DIA, NSA, NGA, CIA), to integrate our approach to developing and resourcing the force.

Our interoperability with the Services also extends to the operations we conduct. Today we support the Joint Force in countering ISIS in Syria and Iraq, in Afghanistan, and elsewhere around the world. Examples of our interoperability occur every day, most recently in Sirte, Libya, where Special Operators assisted Libyan forces in re-taking the city relying heavily on over 450 airstrikes conducted by our Joint Force partners. Similar relationships are routine throughout all areas of active hostility, such as with the 5<sup>th</sup> Fleet in the CENTCOM AOR and multiple service and IA partners in the Philippines, where our SOF Headquarters ensure we

remain closely nested with theater service components as an integral component of the Joint Force. Today we are more than simply interoperable with the Services...we are truly interdependent.

We are also highly dependent on the capabilities that reside within the defense agencies, such as the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA), the Defense Logistics Agency (DLA), the Defense Information Systems Agency (DISA) and the Defense Threat Reduction Agency (DTRA). With improvised threats, we continue to see examples of our adversaries taking commercial off-the-shelf technologies and manipulating and employing them as weapons as well as surveillance systems, such as small Unmanned Aerial Systems (sUAS). The recent integration of Joint Improvised-Threat Defeat Organization (JIDO) with DTRA provides us with an expanded ability to counter the improvised threats confronting our force today.

We invest heavily in developing relationships with our interagency partners, as well, such as the Department of State, the Central Intelligence Agency, the National Counter Terrorism Center, and others. In total, we have 36 Special Operations liaison officers working across 16 agencies. This is indicative of the importance we place on whole-of-government solutions to the problems we all share – integrated efforts being the objective.

Operational requirements demand that we recruit, assess and select mentally and physically resilient SOF who can anticipate, respond, and adapt to any operating environment; excel in ambiguous situations; and are skilled at operating in the human domain in order to deal with population-centric conflicts. In addition to rigorous training, SOF require specialized education in areas related to our unique mission sets. SOF-specific education opportunities are an investment in our people and we will continue to augment Service-provided career development programs. A critical component to how we accomplish this is through the efforts of



our Joint Special Operations University, or JSOU, which shapes the future strategic environment by not only providing specialized joint professional military education through specific undergraduate and graduate curriculum, but also through engagement with partner nations militaries. It is imperative we continue to provide the most highly trained and educated force to support persistent, networked, and distributed GCC operations to advance our nation's interests. Furthermore, it is critical that we continuously develop their talent by providing demanding, realistic training and placing people in the right jobs at the right times to gain valuable experience. In doing so, we empower our people while challenging them to exercise their initiative and make difficult decisions. Maintaining this highly trained and experienced force is the critical objective – it enables everything we do.

Because USSOCOM is significantly engaged in current operations, we continue to incur casualties, along with training injuries and illnesses. Caring for over 6,000 active-duty wounded and ill SOF Service Members, our Warrior Care program – a peer program to the Service Warrior Care programs – remains the gold standard for SOF Service Members and families whose resiliency has been challenged by a life-altering wound, injury, or illness. Recognized by Congress as one of USSOCOM's Service-like responsibilities, the USSOCOM Warrior Care Program (also known as the Care Coalition) executes our mission of returning wounded, ill, and injured SOF personnel to their units, maintaining their experience within the force and capitalizing on the immense investment of time and resources invested in them. The USSOCOM Warrior Care Program conserves its Service Members at rates higher than the conventional Service programs due to our focus on retention.

The Preservation of the Force and Family (POTFF) initiative remains a command priority, and we are deeply grateful for Congress' support for the resources required to execute

this effort. The POTFF program enables us to build in physical, psychological, spiritual, and social resilience in our service members and their families to cope with the unique challenges of this demanding profession. The unique demands placed on SOF requires specialized attention to reduce injuries, speed recovery, and assure the overall well-being of our force. With your support, we've been able to place professional staff and equipment at our operational units where they have paid huge dividends in sustaining our warriors and their families. In partnership with academia, we are studying how we can continue to enhance the application of the POTFF's holistic approach to improve the effectiveness and sustainment of our force.

Although the command has made progress in reducing suicides, we still have a great deal of work to do. Through our partnerships with the Services and academia, we are analyzing how to better predict and prevent suicidal behaviors. We recently completed an analysis of SOF suicides over the past four years and are using what we learned to inform our suicide prevention strategy going forward. We will improve suicide prevention training for our military members and their families by addressing the underlying cognitive processes that lead to suicides and providing enhanced screening of our military members.

One consequence of our high PERSTEMPO is the challenge it creates for our families (over two-thirds of our force are married). Ensuring our families are cared for is a necessary component of our readiness posture. The Department of Defense as well as the Military Services have provided outstanding resources and support for USSOCOM families. I am also deeply appreciative of Congress's support in allowing the command to tailor family programs that are geared toward meeting the specific needs of our community. This support enabled the command to conduct pre and post-deployment programs, SOF unit orientations, and programs that enrich marital and parental relationships. This year we are using the pilot family program authority to

develop suicide prevention training for families, given we have found that spouses are often the first to notice when their partners are struggling.

## **Conclusion**

In closing, I would like to emphasize my three priorities for SOCOM now and into the future. First, SOCOM is fully committed to winning the current and future fights. Second, we must transform our force to be prepared to deal with all future adversaries. Finally, we must continue to place the greatest emphasis on selecting, retaining, and empowering our people, and sustaining them and their families.

I would like to thank you for your continued support of USSOCOM and our people. As we adapt to new roles and challenges, I look forward to sustaining an open dialogue with Congress on how we can work together to safeguard America's security interests.