

STATEMENT OF

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COMMANDER  
UNITED STATES SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND

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 this opportunity to provide an update on the posture of United States Special Operations Command (USSOCOM) and your superb Special Operations Forces (SOF). Today, I will update you on issues addressed in last year's posture statement, inform you on how SOF are proceeding in our current fights, and share USSOCOM plans and intentions for the future.

Since I last appeared before this Committee, USSOCOM's priority effort continued to be Countering Violent Extremist Organizations (CVEO). Over the past ten months, SOF played an integral role as part of the Joint Force to defeat the physical caliphate of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS). In addition, we were able to play a key supporting role enabling the sovereign forces of the Philippines—resulting in the dismantling of a declared ISIS province and the liberation of Marawi. Elsewhere, in coordination with allied and host nation partners SOF continued to confront ISIS and Al Qaeda (AQ) wherever they sought sanctuary, in Afghanistan, Yemen, Libya, Somalia, the Trans-Sahel, Lake Chad Basin, and the Maghreb. Wherever ISIS and AQ aspired to develop and seek sanctuary, SOF have been involved in efforts to defeat them and enabled partners not only to destroy them but also address the conditions that allowed these groups to thrive.

In an increasingly competitive global environment, SOF also stood with our European and Asian allies and partners providing assurance and enhanced capabilities against aggressive revisionist power that threaten them. In the Southern Hemisphere we continued to work closely with host nation governments, law enforcement agencies, and the Department of Homeland Security to ensure the security of our country. At the Headquarters level we continue to move out aggressively on our assigned mission of coordinating the Department's activities in Combatting

Weapons of Mass Destruction (CWMD) as well as pursuing industry leading transformational efforts to ensure we provide the most lethal and capable Special Operations Forces in support of our national security priorities. Constituting approximately 2% of the Department of Defense (DoD) budget and 3% of manpower I believe your Special Operations Forces continue to provide exceptional return on investment.

### **SOF Posture and the Strategic Environment**

The recently released National Defense Strategy (NDS) describes “an increasingly complex global security environment, characterized by overt challenges to the free and open international order and the re-emergence of long-term, strategic competition between nations.”<sup>1</sup> U.S. prosperity and security is confronted by strategic competition by the “revisionist powers” of China and Russia,<sup>2</sup> and “Rogue regimes” such as North Korea and Iran which destabilize regions by pursuing weapons of mass destruction –nuclear, chemical, and biological- or by sponsoring terrorism.<sup>3</sup> Additionally, rapid technological development lowers the bar to entry for non-state actors which exacerbates this increasingly dangerous operating environment. As such there is a high demand for Special Operations unique capabilities across the spectrum from peaceful cooperation through competition short of armed conflict, up to and including large-scale combat operations.

While we are prepared for continued global counterterrorism operations, SOF also executes a variety of critical missions in support of activities to counter every threat facing our Nation. The National Security Strategy (NSS) and the NDS emphasize the requirement to compete with our

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<sup>1</sup> 2018 National Defense Strategy Unclassified Summary Page 2.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

rivals and recognize that near-peer competition reemerged as a central challenge to the U.S. and its interests. SOF is uniquely capable of effectively competing below the level of traditional armed conflict and across the spectrum of conflict as part of the Joint Force. The 57,478 active duty, 7,668 reserve and guard component, and 6,552 civilian personnel of USSOCOM plan, enable, and conduct the entire range of Special Operations activities. In today's environment, the critical missions SOF performs continue to grow in scale, importance and demand. To this point, USSOCOM sustains an average deployed force of approximately 8,300 personnel across 90 countries. Sustaining this pace would be impossible without the essential resources we are provided.

### **SOF Resourcing**

USSOCOM and your Special Operations Forces are well resourced by the American taxpayer and Congress; we are grateful for this. In fiscal year (FY) 2017 USSOCOM's budget was \$11.8 billion with a projected increase to \$12.3 billion in FY 2018, SOF remains approximately 2% of the DoD budget. This ensures SOF is postured to operate effectively across the full range of unique capabilities. I'm forced to express my concerns, however with USSOCOM's reliance on Overseas Contingency Operations (OCO) funding. OCO funding remains critical to ensuring SOF readiness and operational effectiveness, but in recent years, USSOCOM has relied upon OCO at nearly triple the rate of the Services. Further, approximately 90% of USSOCOM's OCO funding, finances enduring capabilities. Ultimately, we must reconcile SOF's readiness, which requires enduring structure and competencies, with the relatively temporary resources achieved through OCO funding. Migrating OCO funding to the base budget will ensure SOF maintains their hard won advances in capability and capacity over

the past two decades of sustained combat while transforming the force for future threats in a turbulent international security environment.

### **Combatant Command with Global Responsibilities**

In the past two years, DoD assigned USSOCOM two roles, both of which I discussed in my last appearance before the committee: the Coordinating Authority to CVEO and the Coordinating Authority to Counter Weapons of Mass Destruction (CWMD). I want to provide an update on the progress with these roles.

As the Coordinating Authority (CA) for CVEO USSOCOM's responsibility is to provide the Department a global framework for action. While limited, doctrinally, and not constituting Command Authority, our efforts as the CA to date, resulting in quarterly, now bi-annual assessments, conducted in conjunction with our mission and interagency partners led to specific recommendations for the conduct of the overall CVEO effort. Specifically, recommendations addressed the underlying enablers which terrorist organizations use to generate and sustain their "combat power," which include foreign fighters, financing, and strategic communications. SOF CVEO operational activities, in support of Geographic Combatant Commander (GCC) objectives, deter, disrupt and destroy violent extremist organizations (VEO) globally. Our experience targeting VEO, and their global support networks, is directly applicable to our role in CWMD.

As the CWMD Coordinating Authority for the Department, we are responsible for maintaining the DoD CWMD Campaign, establishing intelligence priorities, monitoring global operations and conducting assessments. Towards that effort, we are developing a new Functional Campaign Plan to provide a comprehensive, trans-regional approach that coordinates DoD

campaign activities. In coordination with our great partner, the Defense Threat Reduction Agency (DTRA) we established a CWMD Fusion Center to design, coordinate, and assess this new trans-regional approach and connect to other U.S. Government (USG) departments and agencies, as well as international partners, including INTERPOL and EUROPOL. This is vital recognizing as we see some of the conflict exit the battlefield and transition to the intelligence and law enforcement realms. The Fusion Center leverages the resources and skills of multiple agencies to help achieve a multi-layered comprehensive approach to address the CWMD problem set. We continue to assess effectiveness towards national objectives, while providing resourcing and strategic recommendations to the Secretary of Defense and Chairman.

Countering VEOs and WMD are two of our country's most complex problems. SOF coordinate within the USG and with international partners at all levels – from the tactical to the strategic.

### **USSOCOM Priorities: Win, Transform and People.**

#### **Win the Current Fight**

Countering VEO's remains the highest warfighting priority for USSOCOM. In the last year, SOF in support of the GCCs and most often by, with and through enabled partners, disrupted and degraded ISIS and AQ's directed external operation capability, degraded their revenue, disrupted foreign fighter facilitation, diminished their warfighting ability, captured hundreds of terabytes of ISIS's and AQ's information, and interrupted or blocked their media output. Despite suffering significant battlefield losses, both ISIS and AQ remain potent in terms of ideology and the means to promulgate it and determined to pursue their nihilistic objectives. We will continue to face future challenges as these groups exploit the lack of partner capacity and under-governed areas.

We remain focused on disrupting external attack capabilities, destroying or neutralizing AQ and ISIS safe havens, developing and enacting a long-term approach to defeat VEOs, and building partner capacity so host nations can achieve sustainable localized security. SOF's CVEO efforts range across GCC areas of responsibility and are an important component of an overarching whole of government approach to advance broader national security objectives to defend the Homeland, our citizens, our Allies and partners. Trans-regional threats such as ISIS and AQ require the Joint Force to work with interagency and coalition partners to target financial, material, and personnel supply chains that facilitate these terrorist organizations. Securing and holding our gains also requires a focused, coordinated effort to empower local entities within and among the populations that terrorists exploit to degrade their message and ability to recruit. These important tasks cannot be done by SOF alone and require strong, properly financed interagency partners. Ultimately, we endeavor to reduce this global threat to the local level where partner forces are capable of conducting sustainable security operations.

SOF is also engaged in countering Iran's destabilizing activities in the Middle East, which stoke sectarian tensions and set the conditions for VEOs to emerge and thrive. The threat posed by Iran and its network of partners, proxies, and associates continued during 2017. Iran took advantage of regional instability to expand its influence through partners and proxies, weapon proliferation, funding and messaging. To counter these efforts Special Operations Forces support United States Central Command (USCENTCOM) through a variety of activities in order to contain Iranian influence, discourage their destabilizing behavior and disrupt their actions. In parallel, we also endeavor to assure Israel and regional Gulf partners through foreign internal defense, security force assistance, security cooperation and other supportive activities.

North Korea's advances in its nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles program poses a serious threat to the U.S. homeland and international peace and security. Accordingly, USSOCOM maintains a persistent and rotational presence on the peninsula, working closely with our South Korean and interagency partners to enhance their capabilities and prepare for future crises or conflict. We train to ensure readiness for the entire range of Special Operations contingency operations as part of the Joint Force. We are examining our force structure and capabilities on the Peninsula and across the region to optimize support to United States Pacific Command (USPACOM) and to United States Forces Korea, and our Allies.

United States European Command's (USEUCOM) efforts to counter Russian aggression remains a Special Operations priority from both an employment and sustainment of the force perspective. Russia is a strategic competitor intent on undermining U.S. global influence, and the unity of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) Alliance. As part of the Joint Force, SOF provide unique options to counter Russia's use of indirect actions and unconventional warfare techniques. Integrated with USEUCOM's efforts to ensure Allies and partners are secure from military aggression or coercion, SOF maintain persistent presence and outreach in many European countries - including the Baltic nations, Poland, Romania, Ukraine, and Georgia. In partnership with our Allies and our interagency partners, USSOCOM assists in strengthening host nation and NATO capabilities - including the development of their own capable and sustainable SOF. Congress's recently approved authority for Section 1202 funding will provide us greater agility in approaching this nuanced challenge. We also support the NATO SOF Headquarters, which is integral to this strategy through their efforts to integrate, train, develop and foster lethal and professional Allied SOF capabilities. These partners are critical to deter and, if necessary, respond to Russian aggression.



China is a revisionist power intent upon expanding its regional and global influence, while developing capabilities to limit our Nation's ability to project power throughout the Indo-Pacific region and undermine U.S. influence globally. SOF support USPACOM's efforts by maintaining a persistent SOF presence in over a dozen countries in the USPACOM area of responsibility – ensuring our Allies and partners are secure from military threats and building partner capabilities to address complex threats in the region.

In summary, USSOCOM plays an integral role in opposing today's threats to our Nation, to protecting the American people, to securing our homeland, and in maintaining favorable regional balances of power. However, as we focus on today's operations we must be equally focused on required future transformation. SOF must adapt, develop, procure and field new capabilities in the interest of continuing to be a unique, lethal, and agile part of the Joint Force of tomorrow.

### **Transform Capabilities, Processes and Structure for Future Security Challenges**

As a legislated Service-like entity, USSOCOM is charged with manning, training and equipping your Special Operations Forces as well as caring for our assigned personnel and their families. In this capacity, we must continue investment in our future capabilities. As stated in the NDS, "Sharpening our competitive edge will require creative approaches, resources, and disciplined execution."<sup>4</sup> We will continue to transform our force and business practices using the resources we are provided. Creative SOF approaches and disciplined execution will increase lethality, build new partnerships and keep pace with the dynamic strategic environment.

In pursuit of increased lethality and other effects we will continue to streamline our efforts to rapidly prototype and experiment to field needed capabilities. We extensively leverage

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<sup>4</sup> 2018 National Defense Strategy pg.37.

commercial off the shelf (COTS) systems to ensure we have rapid solutions to the problems our operators face. Some areas of focused Research Development Testing and Evaluation and developmental investment include cyber, next-generation, Low-Observable Infiltration Platforms, airborne high-energy laser applications, automation and machine learning. We are pressing initiatives to integrate rapidly evolving technology in the fields of big data management and machine learning into all aspects of our operations and activities. We are major contributors to the ongoing Under Secretary of Defense for Intelligence's Project Maven initiative to automate the time intensive process of recognizing and identifying the tremendous number of objects of interest within various full-motion video feeds. Our investment in Project Maven helps us with the processing, exploitation, and dissemination of Intelligence Surveillance and Reconnaissance (ISR) media as does Congressional support for SOF ISR capabilities through the ISR Transfer Fund appropriations in FY2016 and FY2017. These supplemental OCO appropriations for ISR ensured SOF possessed assets necessary to execute critical missions.

Cyber operations are an integral part of our global activities. SOF employ cyber tools across the full spectrum of operations. Cyber integration facilitates advanced targeting and enables freedom of maneuver for SOF and our allies and partners at the tactical level. Operationally, we coordinate and integrate cyber across the Theater Special Operations Commands as a force multiplier to GCC operations. At all levels, SOF leverage USCYBERCOM and organic SOF cyber capabilities. The importance of these cyber capabilities will only increase in the future; additional dedicated cyber resources will be required to allow USSOCOM and the Joint Force to compete with adaptive adversaries. USSOCOM strongly

supports DoD investment in "cyber defense, resilience, and the continued integration of cyber capabilities into the full spectrum of military operations."<sup>5</sup>

USSOCOM continues to embrace new and leading-edge networks, tools, and venues to reach the broadest markets and attract innovators in commercial industry and academia that offer solutions and capabilities for our research, development, and acquisition programs. Our SOFWERX initiative has a network of over 6,000 collaborators and contributors. SOFWERX provides a direct warfighter nomination process to identify emerging requirements. This process combines with "outside the wire" access for non-traditional technologists, entrepreneurs and other individuals with innovative solutions to solve problems rapidly. This approach provided solutions ranging from the creative application and rapid prototype modifications of COTS to the exploration of non-radio frequency communication techniques to enhance survivability in both terrestrial and aquatic environments. Current efforts include exploring opportunities with 5G networks and unlicensed high speed wireless communications, evaluating open-source software applications, and continuing "Thunder Drone" activities which focus on counter-Unmanned Aerial Systems (UAS) challenges and solutions as well as opportunities to enhance our offensive use of UAS, especially in coordination with machine learning enabled capabilities. SOFWERX has benefited greatly from Congressional support. SOFWERX's efforts towards technological innovation result in rapidly fielded solutions with the potential to reduce acquisition costs not just for USSOCOM, but also for the Services.

In the last year, we conducted substantive war fighter conferences with each of the Services and we are very pleased with the outcomes of these engagements and what they portend in terms of future interoperability. The talks allowed the Services and USSOCOM to explore

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<sup>5</sup> 2018 NDS Unclassified Summary pg 6.

opportunities for enhanced joint integration and interoperability for current operations while establishing collaborative venues for the development of capabilities necessary for the future. The talks will gain us efficiencies through increased cooperation in the development of specific capabilities associated with CWMD, ISR, command, control, communication, computer, intelligence and information (C4I), rapid acquisition, and joint training and exercises. The engagements were crucial to improve our common operational picture, identify Special Operations-Service capability gaps and set a course to develop solutions. We intend to sustain the momentum of these annual conferences through continued engagements that enhance joint teamwork and the warfighting capability of the Joint Force. For example, during the past year, Marine Corps Systems Command leveraged the USSOCOM Sensitive Site Exploitation Program to select the next generation biometric identification device. This capability enables the verification of biometric signatures against the DoD authoritative database. Another great example is the 33 USSOCOM Light Tactical All-Terrain Vehicles (MRZR) procured by the U.S. Army's 82nd Airborne Division combat evaluation to meet a Global Response Force operational gap resulting in a cost avoidance to the U.S. Army of \$5M in R&D funding. Furthermore, the U.S. Marine Corps' Program Executive Office Land Systems has utilized the USSOCOM's Five Year General Service Agency Blanket Purchase Agreement contract to acquire their fleet of MRZR. In all cases, USSOCOM worked closely with the U.S. Army and U.S. Marines sharing all test data, internal air transportability certifications, airdrop certifications and other information to facilitate the rapid acquisition of the MRZR by those Services. In addition to equipment we also partner with the Services, to develop facilities, most recently in USEUCOM and USPACOM to enable SOF to rapidly respond to trans-regional threats.

Modernizing key capabilities to increase lethality, includes accelerating recapitalization of air, ground, and maritime mobility systems and strike aircraft. We continue to enhance agility proactively shaping the environment by placing capability and infrastructure where we can enable agile, timely, and effective responses. USSOCOM has requested a modest increase to its resource top line for personnel and funding consistent with the Secretary's direction to build capacity and improve lethality and force planning priorities in the DoD's Program Review. The current budget supports recapitalizing platforms in addition to developing technological capabilities. Programmatically, we focus on enhancing Service-provided platforms with Major Force Program-11 funds to provide the Special Operations peculiar needs of the force. SOF effectiveness depends highly upon the Services' investment decisions. A good example is the recapitalization and procurement of the Special Operations variant of the CH-47 aircraft, which will replace 61 legacy sheet-metal airframes with new machined-framed aircraft. We are completing production engineering, and this year we will begin production of the first four of 61 aircraft. We execute this program in close collaboration with U.S. Army's CH-47F Block II effort. The U.S. Army is providing common production, labor, and material costs, while USSOCOM is recapitalizing dynamic components and Special Operations Aviation unique equipment including Survivability Systems, Multimode-Radars, and Airborne Mission Networking capabilities. The Special Operations variant of the CH-47 aircraft enables USSOCOM to reliably meet both current and future, critical and time-sensitive, Special Operations vertical lift mission requirements. In addition, we invest in capabilities necessary for the denied battlefields of the future. This includes submersibles, terrain following / avoidance, all-weather radar, advanced electronic attack capabilities, countermeasures and precision

munitions. Special Operations peculiar precision guided munitions for airborne platforms are funded to full rate production levels.

Similarly, we recognize that as technology advances, we must also advance how we apply and capitalize upon that technology. In addition to advancements in tools and technology, we find and hire the right people and partner with various agencies within the DoD, the interagency and international organizations and entities. To keep pace with the accelerating rate of change, let alone get in front of it, we must build agility - both operational and institutional - into all that we do. We constantly improve command and control capabilities, organization, and partnerships.

While USSOCOM works with our interagency partners to strengthen America's alliances, we also focus on expanding partnerships with key stakeholders and developing new partnerships. In addition to the previously mentioned relationships with the other Combatant Commands, the Services, commercial industry and academia, we expanded cooperation with the defense agencies, the interagency, Allies and partners. Ensuring SOF understand and can seamlessly operate within the vast array of USG entities and with our international counterparts is key to Special Operations success now and into the future.

We depend extensively upon the capabilities that reside within the defense agencies and commands, such as the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA), the Defense Logistics Agency (DLA), U.S. Transportation Command (USTRANSCOM), the Defense Information Systems Agency (DISA) and the Defense Threat Reduction Agency (DTRA). The relationship between USSOCOM's Sensitive Site Exploitation Program and DIA was established in 2008. Recently, DIA Advanced Technologies Intelligence and the National Exploitation Center were instrumental in the development of a new state-of-the-art capability for USSOCOM's

exploitation efforts which provide SOF enhanced capabilities at deployed locations to analyze explosives, narcotics, fingerprints, documents, and electronic media. In collaboration with DLA and USTRANSCOM, we used their expertise and wide network of resources to feed, fuel, and support operations down to the most remote and austere locations. USSOCOM also adopted the DLA hosted Defense Property Accountability System, an existing DoD Technology, as the auditable accountability system for Special Operations peculiar equipment which is just one tool we use to ensure good stewardship of taxpayer resources. DISA provides resilient network services to ensure continuous connectivity to mission critical information as we manage the fourth largest C4I system in the Department. We see evidence of our adversaries taking COTS technologies and reconfiguring and employing them as weapons and surveillance systems, such as small UAS. The recent integration of Joint Improvised-Threat Defeat Organization with DTRA provides us with an expanded ability to counter these improvised threats confronting the force today.

In addition to leveraging the Department's strengths, we invest heavily in relationships with interagency partners; we have approximately 40 Special Operations liaison officers working across 16 agencies in order to ensure interoperability to support national objectives. This is but one touchpoint that SOF has with interagency colleagues. SOF face tough challenges around the world, working side-by-side with counterparts from the Departments of State, Treasury, Justice, Energy, Homeland, the Intelligence Community, U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and others. These partners are critical to mission success and advancing national interests. The U.S. cannot succeed in facing today's national security challenges with the military alone. We rely on the collaboration and support of interagency partners for enduring whole-of-

government solutions to the problems the Nation faces, and also stand ready to support interagency-led efforts where we are needed.

The SOF relationship with the Department of State and USAID is one example of how we work with our interagency partners in the interest of pursuing sustainable security operations. Together, we more effectively coordinate efforts to incorporate security, development, and diplomacy across the entire continuum of U.S. government activities. We can optimize effectiveness of U.S. support to advance development, diplomatic priorities, and promote U.S. national security interests by working together. We share the goal of improving country capacity, resilience, and self-reliance in order for a country to move beyond the need for assistance and creating opportunities for a country to independently advance development and maintain their own security.

As part of transforming, and in line with the NSS, we seek to strengthen alliances and build stronger international partnerships. International partners provide complementary and sometimes unique capabilities and forces to the fight. For over a decade, USSOCOM's Sovereign Challenge program opened the doors to the military leaders of over 125 sovereign states via their defense and military service attaches assigned to Washington embassies. Over 1,700 Sovereign Challenge alumni returned home to positions of greater responsibility in their respective countries' military forces and societies. Working through the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations and Low Intensity Conflict (ASD SO/LIC) and the Office of the Secretary of Defense for Policy, we have negotiated formal agreements with 23 nations, who now have full-time representation on my staff. We have 20 U.S. Special Operations Liaison Officers assigned to U.S. Embassies. This unparalleled international network translates into greater global collaboration and synchronization across both the U.S. and Allied Force. Foreign



partner SOF played a significant role in the defeat of ISIS in support of USCENTCOM and 25 Allies and partners are providing SOF to ongoing campaigns in Iraq and Afghanistan. These mutually-beneficial partnerships are focused on improving international SOF capabilities and their ability to operate with us, which is USSOCOM's responsibility under Title 10, Section 167. Additionally, we've used established bi-lateral agreements to reduce costs associated with sustaining forces worldwide, such as acquiring life-saving freeze-dried plasma from our French Allies.

Congress's support is key to SOF efforts to work by, with, and through partners. The foresight of Congress in codifying what was previously Section 1208, a temporary authority in the FY 2005 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA), into Title 10 under Section 127e allows USSOCOM to spend up to \$100M to provide full-spectrum support to a foreign force whose unique access and capabilities support SOF operations to combat terrorism and achieve results. In FY 2017, we expended nearly \$80M in OCO funding to resource 21 programs with measurable regional and global impact. This is another area where we work closely with our State Department and other interagency partners to ensure our programs and activities are nested within whole of government strategies and contributing to achieving broad national security objectives.

Similarly, Section 1209 of FY 2015 NDAA— allowed us to build a 50K+ force of Vetted Syrian Opposition to attack ISIS and, with U.S. and coalition support, expel ISIS from 98% of the areas under their control in Syria. Since receiving Sec 1209 authority in FY 2015, USSOCOM has executed \$868M to procure ammunition, weapons, vehicles, communications and other equipment in support of USCENTCOM's effort to defeat ISIS – Sect 1209 is the decisive ingredient in the military defeats ISIS suffered in Syria this year.

In a similar manner, I would like to thank Congress for passing Section 1202 of this year's NDAA. Section 1202 provides up to \$10M during each of FY 2018 through 2020 to provide support to foreign forces, irregular forces, groups, or individuals engaged in supporting or facilitating ongoing or future authorized irregular warfare operations by SOF. This new authority will provide us greater agility in countering the malign activities of competitors short of armed conflict by partnering with the kinds of forces best suited to address the growing hybrid threat to U.S. interests and to Allies and partners. We will apply Section 1202 in a measured manner, in coordination with the State Department and interagency, and I am confident the enhanced partnerships formed will pay dividends long into the future.

As we transform the organization to increase lethality, build partnerships and evolve to meet tomorrow's challenges, we appreciate the support of Congress to provide the authorities to make the reforms to keep the leading edge. The Command appreciates the support of Congress in enacting Section 809 in the FY 2018 NDAA requiring a report on extension of development, acquisition, and sustainment authorities of the military departments to USSOCOM. Providing USSOCOM service-like authorities for acquisitions of Special Operations peculiar equipment permits the Command to better meet expectations established by the Secretary of Defense, which seeks to instill budget discipline and effective resource management, develop a culture of rapid and meaningful innovation, streamline requirements and acquisition processes, and promote responsible risk taking and personal initiative. The USSOCOM staff is actively supporting the Secretary of Defense's review of Service authorities and looks forward to the outcome of this review.

We are also attentive to and appreciative of ASD SO/LIC's revised role. Section 922 of the FY 2018 NDAA which formally codifies the position of the ASD SO/LIC into the chain of

supervision between the Secretary of Defense and the Commander USSOCOM for Title 10, man, train, and equip responsibilities. We are working closely with ASD West and his staff to ensure he can fulfill his responsibilities for advocacy and oversight in the most efficient manner possible which we think will result in the optimized integration of USSOCOM in the DoD.

While these advances in technology, procurement, partnership and authorities enhance SOF, it doesn't change the fact that people are the most important asset. Understanding and communicating across cultures and languages, building and maintaining effective networks of action and working with partners to achieve common interests all demand the highest quality people with keen interpersonal skills. The creativity, initiative and spirit of the people who comprise the Special Operations Force cannot be overstated. They are our greatest asset.

### **People—USSOCOM's Most Precious Asset**

USSOCOM continues to recruit, assess, and select the very best. We then train and empower our teammates to solve the most daunting national security problems. We also manage people throughout their Special Operations careers. My most sacred responsibility is to take care of our people. To do that, we must continue to build resiliency and provide the best possible care for our service members and their families.

A constant primary focus for the USSOCOM team is the operations tempo, personnel tempo (PERSTEMPO) and readiness of your Special Operations Force. The latest calculations from across Special Operations show that the vast majority of currently deployed Special Operations Personnel are adhering to the Secretary of Defense directed goal of 1.2 deployment to dwell (D2D) for Active Forces and 1.5 for Reserves Forces. Currently 12% of deployed Special Operations Forces have a D2D of less than 1.2, and 3% of the force is currently deployed below

1.1. This represents a significant improvement over the last ten years, but we still have further to go. The SOF component commanders are working to bring the entire force into compliance with the directed D2D goal. We are implementing a number of initiatives to do this. USSOCOM is using the Defense Ready program to track individuals' D2D ratios and PERSTEMPO, allowing leaders at all levels to track and forecast a person's time away from the unit and family. To balance demand for SOF, USSOCOM instituted measures to satisfy requirements at a rate the operational forces can sustain while banking readiness for future threats. This ensures service components are supporting the GCCs, with a tailored force, while maintaining a 1.2 D2D ratio. As part of this process USSOCOM evaluates missions which don't require SOF unique capabilities which may be transferred to the conventional forces or international partners. We are aggressively addressing the D2D challenge and expect to achieve the Department standard by the end of the 2018 calendar year.

Without a doubt, the high operations tempo and PERSTEMPO challenge our teammates. The Preservation of the Force and Family (POTFF) program was founded to address these challenges, and we are deeply grateful for Congress's support for this priority effort. POTFF is vital to ensuring the physical, psychological, spiritual, and social resilience of service members. POTFF's investment and preventative efforts directly contribute to reduced injuries and rapid rehabilitation, and enhance force retention, career longevity and the overall health of the Special Operations Force. Simply put, it is our "stay well" plan. POTFF is integral to the way we do business and how we keep Special Operations Teammates balanced and prepared to shoulder the demands we place upon them. We are adopting innovative practices and technologies to meet the challenges, and indicative of success, we have been asked by several of the other Services to share best practices and lessons learned. Specifically your passage of Section 555 of the FY 2018

NDAAs making USSOCOM's family programs authority permanent ensures the health of the force.

Key to the POTFF strategy and overall readiness is also ensuring we take care of families. I deeply appreciate that Congress allows USSOCOM to tailor family programs that meet the specific needs of the SOF community. You enable us to conduct pre and post-deployment programs, SOF unit orientations, and other events that strengthen relationships between warriors, their spouses, and their children.

USSOCOM has made tremendous progress reducing suicides, but I'll be blunt – we must do better. I'm working with the Services and leading academics to refine the suicide prevention strategies, and we are addressing the underlying cognitive processes that lead to suicides. I am pleased to tell you over the past five years suicide rates have declined by 70%. I attribute this success to leaders at every level embracing behavioral health and care as being equally important as physical fitness. We are trending in the right direction, but remain keenly focused on suicide reduction. We are also developing suicide prevention training for families, given we have found that spouses are often the first to notice when their partners are struggling. We will work vigorously to provide the resources and services to the SOF community that will help further reduce the number of suicides within the force, families, civilians, and contractor teammates. Even one suicide within the force is too many.

In conjunction with the POTFF effort, I am greatly appreciative of Congress's support by authorizing USSOCOM to have its Warrior Care Program; peer to the Service programs, it is often heralded as the gold standard. When the resilience of our warriors and their families is severely challenged due to wounds, injury, or illness, our Warrior Care Program provides advocacy and care coordination through the recovery and rehabilitation process. The primary

objective is to retain our highly skilled people and return them to their units. With the highest retention rate of any of the service programs, the Warrior Care Program ensures that USSOCOM is able to best capitalize on the immense investment of time and resources applied to your SOF, enhancing readiness.

Readiness extends to ensuring Special Operations Teammates operate in a safe and healthy military culture. Leaders across USSOCOM are committed to advancing a climate where sexual harassment and sexual assault are not tolerated, condoned, or ignored. Commanders empower their subordinates to take appropriate action to protect personnel from these and any other inappropriate, unsafe or criminal behaviors which, if unchecked, degrade unit morale, effectiveness and, ultimately, lethality.

In response to guidance from the fiscal year 2018 NDAA House Armed Services Committee Report, we implemented an enterprise-wide assessment of culture and accountability within SOF. The assessment was designed and administered by organizational behavior specialists and collected additional data on sexual misconduct, illicit drug use, accountability, and unauthorized media release. This survey was incredibly important to us. I personally encouraged the voluntary and anonymous feedback from all members of USSOCOM to ensure a deep and academically rigorous analysis of our teammates' thoughts and feelings, vetted by subject matter experts, Inspector General, and Judge Advocates.

I am pleased to report that USSOCOM is improving across many key areas, according to the survey. The data indicates that SOF continues to trend below the incident rates of the Services when compared to the DoD, and we are seeing an increase in SOF using behavior health services. The survey also showed broad consensus that SOF leaders hold personnel accountable who exhibit problematic behavior and demonstrate poor judgment. USSOCOM is a transparent

and accountable command and I am encouraged that SOF people value the accountability, integrity, and commitment to honorable service deep within the core of the force.

In addition to caring for Special Operations Personnel, I want to thank Congress for the support to educational and training programs. I appreciate your consideration of the Joint Special Operations University (JSOU) request to obtain the same Title 10 Authority that the DoD Regional Centers and the traditional Professional Military Education institutions have to rapidly hire faculty with expertise in selected disciplines not normally found within the military and civil service communities. This will give JSOU the flexibility to rapidly hire the best-qualified faculty to provide the best advanced education to personnel. This Title 10 authority also gives JSOU the option of five or six-year appointments for top performers versus the longer hiring period and permanency of traditional Title 5 authority—this will allow us to hire the best, most relevant instructors on a continuing basis.

### **Closing Remarks**

Thank you for this opportunity today to speak with all of you and thank you for your steadfast and continued support of USSOCOM and your phenomenal Special Operators. I look forward to continuing the productive and transparent relationship we maintain with Congress as we face and overcome the many challenges the country faces.