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HEARING
ON
NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT
FOR FISCAL YEAR 2017
AND
OVERSIGHT OF PREVIOUSLY AUTHORIZED
PROGRAMS
BEFORE THE
COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
ONE HUNDRED FOURTEENTH CONGRESS
SECOND SESSION
—
SUBCOMMITTEE ON EMERGING THREATS AND
CAPABILITIES HEARING
ON
**SPECIAL OPERATIONS FORCES IN AN
EVOLVING THREAT ENVIRONMENT:
A REVIEW OF THE FISCAL YEAR 2017
BUDGET REQUEST FOR U.S. SPECIAL
OPERATIONS COMMAND**
—

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**SPECIAL OPERATIONS FORCES IN AN EVOLVING
THREAT ENVIRONMENT: A REVIEW OF THE FISCAL
YEAR 2017 BUDGET REQUEST FOR U.S. SPECIAL OPER-
ATIONS COMMAND**

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES,
SUBCOMMITTEE ON EMERGING THREATS AND CAPABILITIES,
Washington, DC, Tuesday, March 1, 2016.

The subcommittee met, pursuant to call, at 3:35 p.m., in room 2118, Rayburn House Office Building, Hon. Joe Wilson (chairman of the subcommittee) presiding.

**OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. JOE WILSON, A REPRESENTA-
TIVE FROM SOUTH CAROLINA, CHAIRMAN, SUBCOMMITTEE
ON EMERGING THREATS AND CAPABILITIES**

Mr. WILSON. Ladies and gentlemen, I call this hearing of the Emerging Threats and Capabilities Subcommittee of the House Armed Services Committee to order. I am pleased to welcome everyone here today to discuss our special operations forces in an evolving threat environment and to review the fiscal year 2017 budget request for the U.S. Special Operations Command.

Our special operations forces [SOF] remain essential and sometimes sole line of effort across the globe, offering lethal, flexible, and responsive options for geographic combatant commanders and the Commander in Chief.

We have seen special operations forces increasingly leveraged for asymmetric and unconventional warfare operations against nation-state threats such as Russia, China, and Iran. Looking forward we expect special operations forces to remain heavily deployed across the globe in constant, sadly if not increased, numbers throughout fiscal year 2017.

While the President's budget request includes a 2.3 percent increase to U.S. Special Operations Command, many challenges remain since the force is heavily dependent on overseas contingency operations funding.

Furthermore, we see dwindling support from the military services who themselves suffer broader cuts and drawdowns. As we conduct oversight and preparation for the National Defense Authorization Act [NDAA], this subcommittee will spend considerable time ensuring that all resources are aligned and all policies appropriate.

This includes focusing on how our special operations forces are being used to counter adversarial propaganda and enabling our partner forces across the globe with new programs such as the Eu-

ropean Reassurance Initiative and the Counter Terrorism Partnership Fund.

Lastly, but of considerable importance, is the 1208 counterterrorism program authority used by the special operations requiring reauthorization beyond 2017. This important operational authority has proven critical to our global efforts to counter Al Qaeda and Daesh.

I understand the Department [of Defense] [DOD] will seek an extension of this important authority to 2020. So we look forward to discussing that today.

I would like to welcome our distinguished panel of witnesses and appreciate their service and perspectives on all of these issues. Today we welcome Ms. Theresa Whelan, the Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations and Low-Intensity Conflict [SOLIC], and General Joseph Votel, Commander, U.S. Special Operations Command.

I would like to welcome Ms. Whelan in her new role which carries many important responsibilities, but also take the opportunity to recognize the service of General Votel who was recently nominated as commander of U.S. Central Command.

General Votel's contributions have been critical in safeguarding our Nation and our allies. And we wish you the best of success as you further serve American families.

I would like to turn to my friend the ranking member, Mr. Jim Langevin of Rhode Island, for any comments he would like to make.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Wilson can be found in the Appendix on page 29.]

STATEMENT OF HON. JAMES R. LANGEVIN, A REPRESENTATIVE FROM RHODE ISLAND, RANKING MEMBER, SUBCOMMITTEE ON EMERGING THREATS AND CAPABILITIES

Mr. LANGEVIN. Thank you Mr. Chairman. And I want to thank our witnesses for testifying today on the President's fiscal year 2017 budget request for Special Operations Command [SOCOM] and special operations forces.

And, General, in particular, thank you very much for your service. And I look forward to hearing the testimony from both of our witnesses today. And also welcome to you, Secretary Whelan.

Today in the midst of our discussions and debate about decreasing end strengths of general purpose forces, and plan drawdowns and contingencies overseas, our special operations forces continue to serve in a high operational tempo.

Special forces are the pinnacle of our strategy for defeating terrorists around the world, underpin our sensitive military operations, and stand ready to deploy on a moment's notice.

Although SOCOM has authority for spending on SOF-peculiar equipment and needs, we often neglect to recognize the reliance on general purpose forces and service budget's requirements ranging from enablers to facilities, to family counselors.

I hope today's hearing will provide a better understanding of the impact of those drawdowns and budget reductions of their enterprise as well as inform us of the process in place for ensuring that SOF service common needs are being budgeted for by the services,

especially those that are necessary to preserve the health of the force and their families.

With regard to SOF-peculiar investments, I am pleased to see stability in the science and technology allocation, as well appropriate budgeting for these activities over the Future Years Defense Program.

Leveraging and spurring innovation is a theme across the Department in the budget request. And SOCOM certainly has experience in the area.

I appreciate the use of existing authorities to push the envelope rather than reinventing the wheel, examples being the recent SOFWERX Initiative and the utilization of the Small Business Innovation Research authority.

I also appreciate that in reaching to non-traditional defense partners, SOCOM continues to utilize the tremendous in-house capabilities available, such as our defense labs and DARPA [Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency] programs.

So with that there is much to discuss in the hearing. And in order to allow for dialogue I am going to end my remarks by welcoming Ms. Theresa Whelan in her capacity as the Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense, Special Operations/Low-Intensity Conflict and performing the duties of Assistant Secretary for SOLIC.

With that I would also like to congratulate General Votel on his nomination to be the commander of Central Command. Again, General, I want to thank you for your extraordinary service and dedication to our country and look forward to your upcoming confirmation hearing.

So with that, Mr. Chairman, I yield back and look forward to the hearing. Thank you.

Mr. WILSON. Thank you, Mr. Langevin.

I would like to remind our witnesses that your full written statements will be submitted for the record. So we ask you to summarize your comments in 5 minutes or less.

And then following your comments each person, each member of the panel, will have the opportunity, at a strictly enforced 5 minutes, by Mr. Pete Villano. And so that everyone has an opportunity to ask questions. Particularly I want Congressman Brooks to ask questions since he was here first.

So we will proceed, Ms. Whelan, to begin with you. We look forward to your opening statement.

STATEMENT OF THERESA WHELAN, PRINCIPAL DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE FOR SPECIAL OPERATIONS/LOW-INTENSITY CONFLICT (ASD/SOLIC)

Ms. WHELAN. Thank you, Chairman Wilson, Ranking Member Langevin, and distinguished members of the committee. And thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today.

I am here performing the duties of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations and Low-Intensity Conflict to report to you on the health and welfare of our Nation's special operations forces enterprise, and on our ability to address our country's security concerns using special operations, now and into the future.

I am pleased that my partner at the table this afternoon is General Votel, who has been an exceptional U.S. SOCOM commander. And our entire SOLIC team was very glad to learn that he has been nominated to lead U.S. Central Command.

I would like to say up front that we are very grateful for the committee's strong support of special operations initiatives and resources. My remarks this afternoon will focus on three topics: the current operating environment, SOLIC's policy priorities, and our oversight activities.

Today our SOF personnel work in an environment where global conflict has expanded beyond the physical to dimensions such as cyberspace, the social media sphere, and bio warfare. Individuals, illicit networks, and terrorist groups such as Daesh can disrupt economies, interrupt the flow of information, and perpetrate significant violence, destabilizing countries and entire regions.

We are also seeing other nations, our peers and near peers, making use of these same new technologies to enhance aggressive, asymmetric tactics. In the face of this evolving strategic landscape the ability of SOF to operate unobtrusively with a small footprint in contested environments is becoming ever more crucial.

As a result it is important that we get our policy for and our oversight of SOF right. So I will describe some of our major priorities. First and foremost we prioritize developing the best SOF personnel and equipping them with cutting-edge technologies.

That requires constantly improving our existing platforms, equipment, and gear. It also means investing in new, innovative technologies. Another important policy priority is building strong working relationships with the SOF of allied and partner nations.

By boosting other nations' SOF capabilities we have the potential in the future to leverage those forces including their unique authorities. In particular the Counterterrorism Partnership Fund, CTPF, significantly boosted our most important tool, section 2282, the Global Train and Equip authority.

We appreciate Congress's continued support for this and other capacity-building authorities. Likewise our counterdrug authorities permit SOF and other DOD components to work with U.S. partner nation law enforcement to help counter drug trafficking and other forms of transnational organized crime which can serve as a source of funding for terrorists, insurgents, and other threat networks.

Another important part of SOLIC's work is oversight. For example we work with the Joint Staff and SOCOM to ensure that SOF activities are consistent with the policy guidance of the President and the Secretary of Defense.

We also routinely conduct site surveys to assess and evaluate our train and equip programs so that they are as effective and efficient as possible. SOF amounts to roughly 1.8 percent of the overall defense budget, and we remain committed to strengthening our budget management to maximize taxpayers' return on investments in SOF.

We will continue to work closely with Congress as we allocate resources and implement programs. In conclusion, I would like to thank Congress for its continuing support of our men and women in uniform and their families. And I look forward to your questions.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Whelan can be found in the Appendix on page 31.]

Mr. WILSON. Thank you very much, Ms. Whelan. We now proceed to General Votel.

**STATEMENT OF GEN JOSEPH L. VOTEL, USA, COMMANDER,
U.S. SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND**

General VOTEL. Good afternoon, Chairman Wilson, Ranking Member Langevin, and distinguished members of the subcommittee.

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you this afternoon along with my teammate, Ms. Whelan, to discuss the current posture of the United States Special Operations Command and this year's budget request.

While my priorities remain unchanged from testimony last year, I can assure you right up front that U.S. SOCOM is always learning, evolving, and adjusting to meet the current operational environment.

Our commitment to excellence and our dedication to serving the needs of our Nation have never been stronger. On any given day nearly 10,000 SOF men and women are deployed or forward stationed to roughly 80 different countries around the world.

They fill geographic combatant commander requirements that span the range of our congressionally delineated core activities from behind the scenes information gathering and partner building to high-end dynamic strike operations.

Every success that they have reinforces what we already know. Our people are our greatest asset. They are adaptive, bold, and innovative. Through persistent presence in harm's way they allow us to see opportunities early, and they routinely deliver strategic impacts with the smallest of footprints.

Perhaps no story makes this point more clearly than that of Senior Chief Petty Officer Ed Byers, a Navy SEAL [Sea, Air, and Land] who was awarded our Nation's highest military honor, the Congressional Medal of Honor, just yesterday.

Master Sergeant Josh Wheeler, an Army operator who put himself in the line of fire and gave his life to protect our partner raid force in Iraq as they rescued scores of Iraqi and Kurdish hostages, is yet another hero among our force.

Stories of these two American heroes are now publically known. But it is the stories of the thousands of other quiet professionals that will remain unknown that truly characterize what we provide for our Nation.

We recognize, however, these sacrifices do not come without a cost. So let me say right up front, and emphasize my strongest point this afternoon, I want to thank the committee for your devotion to the well-being and resiliency of our special operators and their family.

Their emotional, social, psychological, and physical health is in good hands thanks to all of you. And we are truly grateful for your continued support.

The environment in which these great Americans serve continues to evolve. We are in an era of rapidly shifting power, with competi-

tion and conflict between both state and non-state actors, actors who are increasingly ambiguous and transregional.

As a result this past year we focused on gaining a deeper understanding of today's gray-zone challenges. And we restructured operational rhythm to focus on the transregional nature of violent extremist organizations. Given this complex security environment, the demand for SOF skills is understandably high.

Yet it is clear that significant expansion of U.S. SOCOM's role carries significant risk. It remains true, SOF cannot, and should not, be mass produced. Nor can we build or rebuild the force overnight. The skills, maturity, and agility that we expect of our force requires significant time, effort, training, and investment to develop and sustain.

It is also true that we do not deploy or employ SOF without external support. U.S. SOCOM is fully dependent upon and integrated with our service partners. They provide our people much of the equipment that we operate and the critical enabling forces we depend upon on a daily basis around the globe.

Not only do we rely on SOF-specific enhancements to service-managed programs but our ability to operate stands squarely on service-provided capabilities. Infrastructure, transportation, communications, ISR [intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance], and close air support are but a few of the areas of dependence.

Alongside our colleagues in the services we are grateful for the budget stability forged out of last year's agreement. And we remain hopeful for similar stability beyond 2017.

In closing I would like to thank Congress and the committee for your outstanding support in funding, in authorities, and in encouragement. Your oversight of our efforts to man, train, equip, and employ SOF remains critical as we confront an increasingly complex security environment.

We look forward to continuing this great relationship. And I pledge to you that we will remain transparent and engaged. I remain honored and humbled to command the best special operations force in the world.

I am extremely proud of each and every one of our men and women and their families as they continue to serve this great nation. I look forward to your questions and our dialogue this afternoon.

[The prepared statement of General Votel can be found in the Appendix on page 40.]

Mr. WILSON. Thank you very much, General.

We now will proceed to the 5-minute period for each member of the subcommittee. Beginning first for both of you, Ms. Whelan and General Votel, I am very concerned about state-sponsored non-state, anti-American, untrue propaganda. How can we improve our efforts to counter enemies' slanderous propaganda and recruiting efforts?

Ms. WHELAN. Thank you, Congressman. Within the Department we obviously have authorities for our support to military information systems [MIS]. And we support both the State Department as well as our operators in the field in an information operations arena.

In particular, in the field, we have MIS teams deployed with a number of embassies and supporting our COCOMs, our GCC [geographic combatant commanders] COCOMs. They are assisting in attempting to counter the negative messaging and the propaganda that we are seeing coming from ISIL [Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant] and from other sources.

Additionally, within the Department we are supporting the State Department's efforts as the lead in the counter-messaging with the establishment of the new Global Engagement Center to look at overall counter-messaging against ISIL and their propaganda, negative propaganda.

Mr. WILSON. Thank you.

General VOTEL. Mr. Chairman, if I could just add to Ms. Whelan's comments.

First of all, let me just pass my thanks to the committee and the subcommittee for your support and encouragement in the pushing us to look at and experiment with things that we can do to look at how we use publically available information and how we operate better in this sphere. So the authorities that you have passed to us are greatly appreciated and we are very, very thankful for that.

On top of Ms. Whelan's comments, which I all agree with, I would offer three things that I think we have to focus on. First, we have to be able to move as fast as or faster than our adversaries. Our messaging efforts have to be responsive, and they have to be ahead of the enemy.

Second of all, I think we have to be willing to experiment. We have to be willing to push the envelope where we can in accordance with authorities and in accordance with our laws, in accordance with the oversight that is provided for us, and continue to push in this area wherever we can.

Certainly, understanding social media and public available information is an area you are encouraging us to look in. And then third we have to remember that messaging and information operations can't be an afterthought.

It has to be something that is baked into everything we are doing. It has to be something we look at right from the beginning as we conduct all of our operations from tactical-level operations that are well supported by our MIS teams that are deployed globally all the way up to larger operations that we take in the information component and messaging component of it.

Mr. WILSON. Well. I particularly have never gotten over, I was in Islamabad a couple years ago and there was a column. It was a newspaper, very modern looking with Reuters articles, Associated Press.

Then I got inside and I saw an op ed. And the op ed was this hate filled diatribe of how the American effort in Afghanistan was specifically directed at mosque and schools and hospitals. And I thought this is lunacy.

And I looked to see who wrote it. It was written by Fidel Castro. So what an observation he had from Havana that he could see that far. But it needed to be counteracted. I mean it just was so ignorant and so insulting.

And so, as a former newspaper reporter I was particular struck by how stupid it was. But that was published in a respectable pub-

lication. I mentioned in my opening statement of 1208 counterterrorism authority which has been critical since 2005. Can you tell the committee how important this is and what the status of its maintenance?

Ms. WHELAN. I will start, sir. 1208, I think, is probably one of our most important programs to the SOF community and has probably, of all the programs that we have, and we have many successful programs, has given us the best return on investment across the board.

We have a number of 1208 programs underway now. And we very much appreciate the increase in the funding authority that we have to increase the number of 1208 programs. But 1208 has allowed us, they are small programs.

We are focused. We work with the best and the brightest in the countries in which we have the 1208 programs. And we have a great deal of flexibility. That is the other factor that makes the 1208 so valuable to our special operators, is the flexibility of the program, and the fact that the longevity of the program. Many of these programs have been in use for a number of years.

General VOTEL. Mr. Chairman, I would just add briefly to Ms. Whelan's comments because I think she hit on everything here.

This is an extraordinary authority, very unique to Special Operations Command, and I will tell you that it is not only appreciated by Special Operations Command, but in particular it is appreciated by our geographic combatant commanders, particularly the CENTCOM [U.S. Central Command] commander and the AFRICOM [U.S. Africa Command] commander, where we employ this authority the most.

There are 19 different programs in 16 different countries so this is an extraordinary capability, as Ms. Whelan indicated. We are developing some extraordinary partner capacity out there. It is usually very small. But it is very, very capable. And what we see is considerable effects, positive effects from that program.

Mr. WILSON. Thank you very much, General. We now proceed to Mr. Langevin.

Mr. LANGEVIN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Again, thanks to both of our witnesses for being here today, what you are doing on behalf of the national security of our country.

To our witnesses, as one of directed energy's strongest advocates up here in the Congress, I just want to recognize that technology has tremendous potential to change the game in our favor.

It is also true that operationalizing this technology is certainly going to be no small feat. And, therefore, I urge SOCOM to leverage the work of the Department by integrating efforts with the Joint Technology Office before making significant investments.

And I support efforts to accelerate the appropriate operational use of this technology. But much remains to be done both program- and policy-wise before it should be considered fully operational and fielded.

General Votel and Secretary Whelan, can you please describe SOCOM's efforts in directed energy and in particular are these efforts being synchronized with the Joint Technology Office?

General VOTEL. Thank you. I will start, Congressman.

To answer your question, yes, they are. We are in the early stages of this. So I would define our efforts as being developmental at this particular point.

I think what we see with directed energy is that it is a technology that will provide us precision, will provide us some level of scalability, and it is certainly something that we should look at for kind of our future operational needs.

We are aware of the extensive amount of effort that has gone into directed energy in the past. And so, some of the advice that we have gotten along the line matches what you suggested to us just a moment ago. And that is to look at what is working and capitalize on that as opposed to trying to go back and reinventing the whole program.

And so, we are well integrated with the services with a variety of different labs right now looking at this. And we have had an opportunity to talk to the Deputy Secretary of Defense about it and what we are doing. We have got good support from him with this. So we look forward to moving forward with this.

In many ways I think SOF can help the broader force with this with our testing, our development, our experimentation with it, not only provide a capability for us, but what I hope is to be able to provide something of the services where their much more considerable resources can take advantage of any success we are able to achieve.

Mr. LANGEVIN. Thank you. Thank you.

Secretary Whelan and General Votel, can you tell me what process is used to resolve disputes about whether an activity should be supported and paid for by the services?

Ms. WHELAN. Thank you, Congressman, for the question.

The primary process is we look at whether or not the activity or the requirement is SOF-specific or if it is also applicable to the general force. If it is SOF-specific then it moves into the MFP [Major Force Program] 11 SOF accounts. Otherwise we look for the services to cover it.

General VOTEL. Congressman, I would add two quick comments to you.

Part of this, I think, is making sure that we educate our force on what is, how we define SOF-peculiar and make sure that we understand how we are doing. And to that end we have established some, a narrative across the command that make sure that our leaders who are making decisions on funding and all that kind of stuff understand what it is that we consider to be SOF-peculiar.

So we aren't creating a problem in ourselves, spending money on things that we shouldn't be.

The other thing that I would tell you that we are doing is we are using our service SOCOM talks that we normally conduct in about a 12- to 18-month cycle with each of the services to talk about this specific issue right here and talk about what our requirements are to Congress for MFP 11, what our requirements are to the Department, what the intent of that is.

And then using that as a mechanism to talk about service-provided support to SOCOM and how we leverage the very unique funding authorities that Congress has passed to us to really focus on SOF-peculiar capabilities.

Mr. LANGEVIN. I am glad that there is a process in place. I think that is important.

Secretary Whelan, your predecessor created a special operations oversight council. Do you intend to continue that initiative, and is the council properly staffed and resourced?

Ms. WHELAN. Thank you, Congressman. Yes, actually, I do intend to continue it. And in my capacity performing the duties I intend to maintain that council.

I think it was a valuable tool for my predecessor because it allowed him to engage with the COCOMs, the services, as well as SOCOM in a high-level forum to discuss issues that may not have been resolved at lower levels.

So it was a consultative tool for him in conducting his responsibilities, his specific SOCOM oversight responsibilities. I think that it will continue to be a very useful tool for me as long as I am performing the duties of the Assistant Secretary of Defense.

From a resourcing standpoint it does not require much in the way of resourcing. My SOLIC staff serves as the executive secretary for it. It only needs as necessary.

Actually, most of the issues are resolved at the working level through working groups. So we had a SOPOC [Special Operations Policy Oversight Council] meeting this past summer more as a wrap-up of issues that had been resolved. I do intend to have one this spring, again, to just review the bidding because we don't have any contentious issues. But I think it is a valuable tool.

Mr. LANGEVIN. Okay. I am glad to hear that. Very good. Thank you. My time has expired. I thank you both again for your testimony, your service to our country, and, General Votel, again, all the best to you. Thank you.

Mr. WILSON. Thank you, Mr. Langevin.

And Congress is very fortunate to have a veteran of Iraq and Afghanistan in its service, Congressman Duncan Hunter of California.

Mr. HUNTER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Gentleman and lady, thank you for being here.

I have got a couple things. It will probably go fast. One, I grabbed the Marine Corps about 2 months ago and brought them up to my office because there were some guys in from Australia where they use moving robot targets that they can network and program to run together, run away, or charge you, or flee.

And what the Australian SAS [Special Air Services] figured out is it was the first time a lot of their guys hadn't been overseas and had to shoot people, had shot a moving target. Are you aware of anything like this? Is SOCOM aware of them?

General VOTEL. I am aware of a variety of—

Mr. HUNTER. Okay.

General VOTEL [continuing]. Technologies and training apparatuses that are out there that really just, you know, put people in situations where they have to respond.

Mr. HUNTER. These are robots that move.

General VOTEL. And move. And I—

Mr. HUNTER. Actually move away from you?

General VOTEL. Yes, Congressman. I am aware of that. I don't know if it is a specific program that you are talking to. But I certainly——

Mr. HUNTER. This was called Marathon, but, you know, there are probably a bunch out there. But they just did a demonstration at Camp Pendleton for MARSOC [Marine Corps Forces Special Operations Command] and the Marines about 2 weeks ago when I was in town.

Anyway, pretty interesting stuff that I didn't believe until I actually saw it. So I just wanted you to be, I mean, you know, there is tons of stuff out there and I am sure you see a whole bunch of it.

Number two, you have purview over what special forces operators, or what different groups, and by group, not just Navy SEAL groups, but the different groups spend in their wheelhouse, right? You have purview and they have transparency to you on what they buy and what they spend.

So it came to my attention, especially watching Senior Chief Byers get the Medal of Honor, I have had multiple SEALs, multiple times in the last 6 months come to be in San Diego because I am in San Diego, and tell me how things have changed dramatically from 5 or 6 years ago.

Meaning, they don't get weapons now to work up with for 2 years. They get their weapon when a guy comes back and hands over the weapon. And then they have to recalibrate it, put on all their optics, all their laser stuff for themselves.

And then they have to turn that weapon back in again even if they are still in workups and they are going to deploy 9 months later, they still have to give the weapon back to the next guys that are, you know, going out.

It wasn't like that in the 2001 to 2010 timeframe. Are you aware of that? What they have to do with their weapons? And I don't, I mean, the operators get tons of stuff. I would say that the most important thing to them is their weapon. That is what you kill people with in the end. And things have changed.

General VOTEL. Congressman, I am aware of your recent correspondence with Naval Special Warfare Command over this particular issue. And I know that Admiral Losey provided with an interim response here. And so to answer——

Mr. HUNTER. But you are familiar with the——

General VOTEL. I am aware of that, and we are certainly running that down. So I would just add that, you know, one of the things that we do try to do with the weapons, you would recognize as a veteran, these guys put a lot of rounds through the weapons. So——

Mr. HUNTER. Yes. But I was in the Marine Corps I mean, I was——

General VOTEL. Right.

Mr. HUNTER. You know, we just took what we got and did whatever we were told. But—you guys are special. That is why you have special in your name.

General VOTEL. That is right. And so what we do try to do is ensure with that many rounds going through our weapons that they do have the right level of depot maintenance when they come back

from deployments or long training periods. And if that is contributing to something here that might be creating a——

Mr. HUNTER. This is not a factor of too many rounds going through the weapon barrel. And then you just change out the upper, the barrel anyway.

General VOTEL. Yes.

Mr. HUNTER. And you have armorers that do that in the Army and in the Navy. I have been to the armory in Coronado. But anyway that is not the problem.

General VOTEL. Congressman, I look forward here to talking with the Naval Special Warfare Command about this specific issue and making sure that we understand it here. And that if there is something that we are contributing to that is impacting readiness of our operators we will certainly take immediate action to kind of correct that.

Mr. HUNTER. Because, you know, you have different tiers within the special operations community, too. You don't see the higher tiered units changing their weapons in when they come back.

So I guess this is my question. It is a matter of where the money is being spent. So this leads me to this, what are your priorities? For instance, for the SEALs, so if it isn't having a weapon that stays with you during your deployable term, then what are the priorities?

Do we have more SEALs now? Do we have more special forces? Did we increase the manpower and that is where the money is going as opposed to weaponry? Is that where your priorities are? And do you set priorities for all the different units? And do those priorities that you set overarch everything, or do you set specific priorities for different units?

General VOTEL. First off, to answer the first part of your question, as you know the special ops community has grown considerably over the last decade or so. So we are roughly twice the size of what we were.

So that certainly is a component of that. What I do on an annual basis is, I provide capabilities planning guidance to my commanders, to my component commanders, to my resource sponsors that provide the broad outline, and principles under which we will make investments in our capabilities.

I don't get down into the specifics of individual weapons and that type of stuff. But what I do try to do is focus them on the priorities that I have. First and foremost being readiness, being the ability to do what the Nation expects special operations to do.

And second of all, being able to accomplish the missions that we are being asked to do in support of the geographic combatant commander. So those two items, I think, as we look at resourcing, I think, really provide the overarching priorities that I try to focus the command on.

Mr. WILSON. And thank you again, Congressman Hunter, for your dedicated service to our country.

We now proceed to Congressman Pete Aguilar, of California.

Mr. AGUILAR. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you to both our witnesses.

General Votel, you mentioned in your testimony transregional challenges and the fact that operating across geographic combatant

command boundaries is problematic for us. Do you believe personally that the DOD's geographic combatant command structure is set up in a way to effectively combat the challenges we face now and in the future?

General VOTEL. I think we are. Certainly when any particular organization focuses in a particular region they have a tendency to focus in that region and not as much on outside of that.

What we are attempting to do with our transregional look, particularly at terrorist organizations, is to really bridge that together.

So what SOCOM has been asked to do is to take lead in how we look at transregional violent extremism, how we establish a common intelligence picture for organization like the Islamic State, how we establish common operating pictures, how we assess ourselves across the whole threat.

And then how we make recommendations up through the Chairman to the Secretary of Defense for allocations of our resources, how we go after that particular threat.

So you know I think what we have learned here is that the enemies we face, not just terrorists, but I think if you look at things like Russia or other threats that we have out there, they don't operate with inside of bureaucratic boundaries that we may have established.

And so, it is important that we have the ability to transcend these boundaries and look at the whole problem instead of just portions of the geography. And that is what our transregional approach is attempting to do.

Mr. AGUILAR. Thank you. One more for you, General. You mentioned in your testimony this a variation of what the chairman mentioned, and modern mass communication technologies have emerged to create an opening for exploitation by outside state, non-state actors.

We have seen the effects of some of this communication including propaganda in my district. I represent San Bernardino. Could you expand on how you see the outgrowth of mass communication affecting us in the future and how you think these types of conflicts, what role SOCOM will play to assist in responding to them?

General VOTEL. Well, thank you. I think the most immediate impact is that mass communications, you know, and combined with social media and a variety of tools like that really enable large populations in very disperse places around the globe to communicate very, very quickly.

And I think that is an aspect of the environment that we operate in right now. That is not something that we have dealt with in the past. And so, it has changed the way that populations communicate. It has changed the way that governments communicate to their people. It has changed the way that popular support you know is developed or sustained for particular causes out there.

And so, I think it is a feature of the environment that we are going to have to deal with in the future. And so what it requires us to do is to understand social media, to understand publically available information, to understand sentiments of the people out there, and to be able to leverage that.

First of all, for our own understanding, and second of all, to ensure that the people that we support out there can get truthful, ac-

curate information out there to the populations that we are attempting to work on their behalfs or we are attempting to support in various locations around the world.

So I really think this is an area of growth for us and an area that we have to continue to pay more and more attention to.

Mr. AGUILAR. Appreciate it. This question is for both of you.

Earlier this week CNN reported that operations involving special operation forces have begun in Iraq. I realize that we have a limited amount of what we can go into here. But would you mind expanding on as much as possible the actions our operators are taking to confront ISIS [Islamic State of Iraq and Syria]?

General VOTEL. I would just add I think what we are doing, Congressman, is we are trying to present them with as many different dilemmas as we can, and make it as difficult for them to sustain their so-called caliphate as we can.

And special operations plays an important role in that. So do our conventional forces. And I am just extraordinarily proud of the way that we are working with our conventional forces to kind of create that effect on the ground.

And while this is an extraordinarily complex environment, a complex enemy, a complex political and security situation here, I think we are beginning to see positive aspects of some of the work that we are doing in this regard.

Mr. AGUILAR. Thank you. Ms. Whelan.

Ms. WHELAN. The only thing that I would add, Congressman, is that our special operations forces are critical to enabling our partners to actually be more effective in their operations in this region as well. So I think that that is a very important role that our special operations personnel perform and they are uniquely qualified to assist in that area.

Mr. AGUILAR. Thank you both. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. WILSON. And thank you, Congressman Aguilar.

We now proceed to Congressman Rich Nugent, from Florida.

Mr. NUGENT. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And I appreciate the panel here today and, General, particularly, your service to our country.

I want to talk about particularly the branches and support that you receive from all. You know, within the current budget environment you know the support for special operations is clearly strained.

For example the Navy's intent to cut the reserve helicopter squadrons 84 and 85 which actually provided, you know, 70 percent of the lift for special operators. And obviously the Navy, you know, they saw it as an underutilized helicopter squadrons because it wasn't supporting the Navy mission necessarily. And it kind of got lost in the shuffle.

So if you could, is there a way for you to tell me the dollar amount in regards to what the service branches, what the quantity of support is that they provide you? Is there a way of breaking out what that is? Whether it is, you know, big Army, or the Navy, or the Air Force? Is there a way or is there a measurement of exactly what that costs those branches?

General VOTEL. Congressman, I think there probably is. I would, with your indulgence, I would take that for the record and try to

provide you a response in terms of how we do that. I would just say right up front though that, as I mentioned in my remarks, we are extraordinarily dependent on the services.

[The information referred to can be found in the Appendix on page 65.]

Mr. NUGENT. Absolutely.

General VOTEL. You know SOCOM has been well taken care of by the committee. And for that we are very grateful. But the message that I try to continue to send is that while we are grateful for the support we get for SOCOM, it is the impact on the services you point out that really does impact what we do.

Mr. NUGENT. That is why I was wondering what that impact is. Because my understanding is that they don't. No one has ever sat down and said you know what does it cost us—

General VOTEL. Yes.

Mr. NUGENT [continuing]. To support.

General VOTEL. And I would add that I think that it is multi-dimensional. It is, as you suggest, helicopters. And, by the way, I appreciate the support of this committee and subcommittee in helping ameliorate some of that and alleviate some of the stress that that loss of those squadrons.

Mr. WILSON. Well, Congressman Zinke was behind you, for sure.

General VOTEL. Well, I am aware of that, and I am thanking the Congressman.

But the impact is also on people, for example. As the services draw down and become smaller, that is a smaller pool from which we can draw from. As they impact, have impacts to their training areas, that is an impact on training areas that we utilize. As they impact their school slots, that is an impact on people that we send to school.

So there is extraordinary impact out there and dependence on the services. And so I look forward to trying to answer your question a little fulsomely here for the record. But there is no doubt that we are extraordinarily dependent—

Mr. NUGENT. Yes. I just want to make sure that as we are drawing down, and particularly, you know, the branches as the resources become less for them, that we have a way of knowing that they are fully resourcing the mission of the special operators to make sure that you can get to the places you need to get to. I am sure that is never a problem. But I would think on the training side, that is where you start getting hurt.

General VOTEL. Congressman, you are exactly right. And I will speak for the service that I come from, the Army. You know right now every rotation we have out at the national training center in California has a SOF component to it to some extent.

So while we should be concerned about the impacts and the hard decisions [the] services are making, the one aspect of the environment that we have now that we didn't have 12, 15 years ago was the interdependence and the real understanding of SOF conventional force integration.

I am extraordinarily proud of this. And if there has been a positive aspect to being at war for this long, one of those positive aspects is it has created the interdependence between conventional forces and SOF forces.

And as I talk with the service chiefs and other senior leaders, this is something that we always recommit ourselves to, to ensuring that we continue to train together, and we continue to build on those hard won lessons from combat.

Mr. NUGENT. And just to build on Representative Hunter's question, and I am not sure, and I don't totally understand, you know, what the issue is. Well, I do understand what is the issue. But it is hard for me to fathom that. When I put deputies out on the street, I know exactly if I hired a deputy, I had to have this, this, this, and this and everybody got that kit. Unless you had something special, if it was a sniper, different story.

So I don't understand what is going on with, you know, the SEALs in regards to pulling weapons back and it is typically the one you sleep with. That is the one you work with. That is the one you train on. So it would be interesting to hear from Representative Hunter what the answer is that you come back with. I appreciate that.

General VOTEL. Thank you, Congressman.

Mr. NUGENT. I yield back.

General VOTEL. Thank you.

Mr. NUGENT. Mr. Chairman, Thank you.

Mr. WILSON. And thank you Congressman Nugent for your background as a former sheriff. All of this is so helpful.

And then we are grateful to have the former Lieutenant Governor of California of all things, Congressman John Garamendi.

Mr. GARAMENDI. I am just trying to figure out what help that might be in this context. But moving on.

First of all, Secretary Votel and, excuse me, Secretary Whelan and General Votel. General, congratulations on your new assignment.

I want to focus on ISR for a few moments, and whether the requirements are being met or what you might need. We will soon be writing a new authorization here. And this seems to be one area where there is great demand and not enough supply. So, General, let me start with you specifically about ISR requirements, manned, unmanned, any other thing that you might need.

General VOTEL. Thanks. Thanks, Congressman. Let me just state right up front you are not going to meet many military leaders that are going to tell you that they are satisfied with the amount of ISR that they have.

We have an insatiable appetite for it. It has changed our operations, the way we conduct things, significantly. And so you are not going to meet many people who are going to say, yes, I have everything I need.

With that, having said that, we, of course, make a fairly significant investment within our SOCOM authority here for SOF unique capabilities both manned and unmanned to meet some of our requirements.

That meets a portion of our requirements. But we are, again, to the earlier conversation, we are dependent on the services to do that. So one of the things that I am very happy for this coming year is that there is good work at the Department level to address the broader ISR requirements out there.

And, of course, as you look at ISR it isn't just about platforms in the sky. It is about those platforms. It is about the sensors we put on them. It is about the ability to transmit that information across the network. And then it is about the ability to exploit that information so we understand what we are looking at.

And so all of that, I think, really requires a very comprehensive Department look. And so I am very pleased that the Department is approaching it in that manner. And so we will continue to press our requirements for that. And I think the Department has heard us and others here on this particular topic.

Mr. GARAMENDI. So as we develop the National Defense Authorization Act nothing special for you, but a great deal special for the overall Department.

General VOTEL. I think that is right, Congressman. I think it is. I think we have to support that because we all depend on it. ISR isn't just unique to us. Everybody depends on that.

Mr. GARAMENDI. Fair enough. I would like now to move to Ms. Whelan. The 1208 authorization, it is up for reauthorization. We are starting to work on it already. The question, apparently it speaks to terrorism. Is that geographically eliminated or terrorism wherever it might be outside of the United States, I suspect?

Ms. WHELAN. Thanks, Congressman. No, it is not geographically limited. We have 1208 programs. Most of our 1208 programs are in the Central Command and Africa Command AORs [areas of responsibility] to date, but there are some in other locations.

So it is just generally a very valuable tool for us in terms of working with our partners and enabling our partners to be part of the counterterrorism effort globally. And as we see ISIL in particular spreading its tentacles globally, programs like 1208 become very important to us.

Mr. GARAMENDI. So the authority to conduct operations, SOF operations, in Syria is from 1208?

Ms. WHELAN. No, sir. The authority is not derived from 1208 specifically.

Mr. GARAMENDI. We have been debating here for some time whether we have the courage to do an AUMF [Authorization for Use of Military Force].

Ms. WHELAN. So the 1208 is specific to working with partner forces. We utilize the AUMF as our legal justification for our engagement in Libya with partner forces against ISIL and/or AQ [Al Qaeda].

Mr. GARAMENDI. So the current Afghanistan authorization use force has gone from Iraq to Syria to Libya. Next stop is?

Ms. WHELAN. So the AUMF was focused on Al Qaeda. And the legal rationale was that ISIL publically declared itself to be the successor to Al Qaeda. And so consequently the AUMF allows us to address ISIL where we find ISIL in Libya or—

Mr. GARAMENDI. I am out of time. But perhaps you can list all the places where ISIL now has declared itself to be in the world?

Ms. WHELAN. There are a number of locations. I can list a few off the top of my head. It would not be exhaustive.

Mr. GARAMENDI. So could I.

Mr. WILSON. Thank you, Congressman Garamendi.

And now we proceed to Congressman Doug Lamborn, of Colorado.

Mr. LAMBORN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you both for what you do for our country, General Votel, for your service. I really appreciate that.

Let me ask, drill down on a particular issue that another Congresswoman, Gwen Graham, and I have worked on. In last year's fiscal year 2016 NDAA we were able to, with the help of the rest of the committee and the rest of Congress, obtain money for Israel to do tunnel detection and research and development so as to detect and map and defeat tunnels.

And this is a joint program because our country can benefit from this also. And \$40 million was authorized and appropriated. And I know that CTTSO, the Counter Combatting Terrorism and Technical Support Office, is playing a role in this along with JITDA, the Joint Improvised Threat Defeat Agency.

So how are things going? And what progress are we making? And what kind of feedback can you give us on this particular narrow, but important subject?

Ms. WHELAN. Thanks for the question, Congressman. So how are things going? Basically we have the possibility of a few prototypes of new technology for operational evaluation in 12 to 18 months.

We actually just recently met, it was in January. Sorry. It was in January that we met with our Israeli counterparts to discuss the way forward, and particularly how we were going to utilize the additional money that was authorized.

We have agreed on 17 projects, 5 of which have actually been initiated in 2015 on a smaller scale. So we are upscaling them. Seven of the projects we agreed to are for detecting tunnels. Six are for mapping them.

And then we have some other projects based on, focused on developing new tunnel detection and mapping technologies. We have one related to intelligence collections. So there is a very robust agenda that we have set, we and the Israelis, have set out for ourselves.

So I think we feel that we are in a pretty good position to move forward with them in partnership. And we hope to, as we move forward, to clarify what, as these programs develop, what future requirements might be.

Mr. LAMBORN. Thank you. And, General, do you have anything to add to that?

General VOTEL. I think Ms. Whelan has pretty comprehensively covered that. I would just tell you we are the beneficiaries of the great work that is done at CTTSO and the great programs like this that CTTSO provides oversight for.

And I can tell you we watch very carefully that type of stuff. The subterranean aspect of the threat is one we have to pay attention to as well. Not just for terrorism, but for some of our other mission areas. And so this is all very good, good work that we think will benefit us as well.

Mr. LAMBORN. Well, that is wonderful. I think you guys are doing a great job in helping push this forward with our Israeli allies.

Now changing subjects entirely, talk about the tragic subject of suicide. I know that that is an issue with special forces folks that sometimes come back with hidden injuries. What can you tell us about progress that we are making there in the special forces in particular?

General VOTEL. Yes. Thanks. First of all thanks for the questions.

And then let me just say it up front, the support that we have gotten from the committee and from Congress in general for a number of pilot programs and other programs related to our Preservation of Force and Family have been extraordinarily well received by our service members and their families. And so I thank you for the continued support.

What I can tell you about suicides is that over the last 4 years we have seen a 33 percent decline in the number of suicides. We track them very closely. And this continues to be a challenge for us.

Last year we had a total of 17 suicides across the SOCOM enterprise. That certainly is 17 too many. I do expect this is a challenge we will continue to deal with. But we are making good progress with this.

The resources that we leveraged from the services and the resources that we are able to bring to our organizations include social workers, operational psychologists, additional chaplain support, licensed social workers, for example are really making a difference for us.

And so what I am seeing in the command is that there is a greater willingness to make use of those resources.

The number one message that we convey across SOCOM with respect to this particular problem is that, from our perspective, we consider it absolutely normal and expected that our people and their families will ask for help.

That is why the resources are there. And that is why you are helping us make that investment. And I think that message is beginning to resonate. One of the things that I do track on a very close basis is not only suicides, but suicide ideations.

And what I do see is that ideations are going up. But I would offer that to you as a positive sign. Because what it indicates is that our people know there are resources available. They know they can go to those resources. And they know they can go to them without concern for being stigmatized for asking for help.

And in many cases we see peers, family members, and medical workers, other teammates that see a problem in somebody and get that person to care. And as far as I am concerned every one of those cases is a win.

And so I am positive about the direction we are moving in. We have got a lot of work to do. And we will stay on this. But we are very appreciative for the support we get from the committee on this.

Mr. LAMBORN. Thank you for what you do.

Mr. WILSON. And thank you, Congressman Lamborn.

And we now proceed to Congressman Brad Ashford, of Nebraska.

Mr. ASHFORD. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And thank you both for your service. I want to focus in on something that we are involved

in at the UARC [University Affiliated Research Institute], The University of Nebraska in conjunction with STRATCOM [U.S. Strategic Command].

The mission, one of the missions of the UARC there deals with basically supporting our warfighters, finding ways to protect them by developing wearables to detect foreign agents, and so forth and so on.

And today I was talking to them. They talked about a vaccine that they have developed to inoculate SEALs to specific bio threats. So there is this ongoing, I am sure by others other than the UARC in Omaha, but across the country and other places.

How is that going in developing wearables to make our warfighters safer? And where do you see those partnerships going in the future? General or Ms. Whelan.

General VOTEL. Let me start. Congressman, I will tell you I am not particularly familiar with the program that you are talking about here. But to your point about the things that we are doing to try to protect our operators better.

Within SOCOM we have made a significant investment in this particular area, particularly in some of our technology development areas. We have a program we call TALOS [Tactical Assault Light Operator Suit]. And what it is designed to do, is it is designed to really help protect our operators at their most vulnerable point.

And that is not just physical protection, but it is also medical protection and it is increased situational awareness, it is increased visibility. So we are very focused on making sure that our people, you know, have the most advantage at the points of which they are most vulnerable.

And I can certainly see a program like you are outlining here as being very helpful. You know, some of the areas in which we do operate are not the most pleasant environments. And so we have to make sure we do everything we can to protect our people. So I look forward to looking at the program that you describe here and how we might combine that with some of our current efforts.

Mr. ASHFORD. Great. Thank you. Ms. Whelan.

Ms. WHELAN. The only thing I will add to that, Congressman, is through CTTSO we collaborate and look for opportunities to collaborate with a lot of different partners in the university realm as well as, obviously, the private sector in developing new technologies to assist special forces personnel. So this would certainly be something that CTTSO might be interested in as well.

Mr. ASHFORD. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Yield back.

Mr. WILSON. Thank you, Mr. Ashford.

And we are very fortunate that we have the first Navy SEAL to serve in Congress, and additionally he is an Iraq veteran, Congressman Ryan Zinke, of Montana.

Mr. ZINKE. Well, I can tell you, General, it was a lot easier being a SEAL. But good to see that you have a Frogman with you.

I guess what I hear from friends and acquaintances that are still on the teams, there is a lot of frustration on rules of engagement, particularly prioritization of collateral damage, and the time it goes through the process. There is frustration on acquisition, on getting things quicker to the front lines.

And you know when I looked at it, it was you know as bureaucracies expand over the period of time, we have kind of lost from what I see a little edge of getting things the quickest because of the process in place. And sometimes the process mitigates the risk. But the downside of it is that we don't get things to the front line fast enough.

And, of course, then the debate between is it a service support, is it a SOF support, what do we do? And there is an unintended consequence sometimes where the services have different priorities. And as they contract their services, the unintended consequence is we don't have, you know, a view from here of what it means to SOF. The HS [helicopter support] squadrons for example.

But do you track when the SOF forces ask whether it is a RPA [remotely piloted aircraft] or a boat or a you know regular helicopter, do we track the number of requests versus the number of fills, whether they fulfilled those requests?

And if that is declining, which I sense it is, do the group commanders and the SOF forces track that so we can have a look at it to make sure that, if there is a cut, intended cut, we can get in there and make sure that the priority is known?

General VOTEL. Certainly from the U.S. SOCOM headquarters level we track the requirements that our forces put out there and then how those are being fulfilled. So the quick answer to your question is yes we do. I don't have the immediate number for you so I won't hazard a guess here.

And I would be happy to respond with something on that. But we certainly do track our requirements for all of our organizations.

[The information referred to can be found in the Appendix on page 65.]

Mr. ZINKE. I think all of us would be interested to know what the unintended consequences are on this so we can look at it and see if it adversely affects your mission.

Secondly, is I don't see the requirements for SOF going down. Every committee hearing I have been to in the last year here the solution set is always add SOF, always add SOF. You know and I look at it, it concerns me because I think that the force is probably—well I will ask you. I think the force is probably strained, but not broken. Is that a fair assessment?

General VOTEL. I would answer it a little bit different way. I think our readiness right now is stable. And I think we are, you know, we are at a, we are at a pretty predictive level of deployment right now in terms of, you know, forces we are pushing out there.

As I look at the numbers, and I track them very closely on a daily to weekly basis here, we are usually pretty consistent about 7,500 people to, you know, 70, 80 different countries even before what is out there. And that is a pretty steady state for us.

So one of the things we have been able to do is understand our deployment tempo much better. We do track operational tempo of organizations. We do track personnel tempo of individuals. And you know largely through the great work of my predecessor, Admiral Bill McRaven, we really got these things in place.

Mr. ZINKE. What is your goal on pillow time? I mean, I am not talking training, but time at home for your operators. Is it the

same between the SEALs and the SF [Special Forces] and the Rangers?

General VOTEL. The goal is to have a deployment-to-dwell ratio of 1:2, is what we strive for. You know the threshold is 1:1. If we have to go less than that then I have a requirement to——

Mr. ZINKE. Is that training or is that actual time at home?

General VOTEL. I am talking mostly about deployments now in terms of organizations deploying. What we do try to do within kind of our first temple rules is we do track time that people are away from home for training and that type stuff.

Mr. ZINKE. The figures I got were somewhere around 280.

General VOTEL. It is about 250 days.

Mr. ZINKE. 250 days gone from and the solution to that, I don't think we are going to get out of wanting special operations, but when do you say no? Because eventually you are going to have to say no to these missions and task someone else. And there is a breaking point. Is that at 250 or——

General VOTEL. I would——

Mr. ZINKE [continuing]. 280 or 300 days, or?

General VOTEL. I would say that we are saying no right now. You know as I look at all the requirements globally for special operations forces and capabilities that are out there that are being asked for from the geographic command commanders, we are having to make hard decisions all the time in terms of that, in terms of the operations that we can support.

So you know for me it is a pretty delicate balance. We look at particular organizations. We look at particular capabilities we have out there. You know I can tell you the most heavily deployed part of our force right now are our civil affairs soldiers, men and women.

They deploy at a higher rate than everybody else. So we pay particular attention to that. We have been with some of our elements, NSW [Naval Special Warfare] and our Marine Special Operations Command have been able to get into a fairly predictable ratio of deployments now that are helping with them.

Some of our Army, some of our Air Force elements are deploying at a little higher rate. So I think what we have to do is we have to continue to look at this all the time, continue to——frankly it is about priorities. It is about accepting risk. And we are doing that on a regular basis.

Mr. ZINKE. Thank you, sir, Mr. Chairman. And good luck and good hunting in SOCOM.

Mr. WILSON. Thank you very much, Congressman Zinke. And now we will be concluding with a very dedicated member of Congress who has visited with our troops in Iraq and Afghanistan, Congresswoman Elise Stefanik.

Ms. STEFANIK. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And thank you to Ms. Whelan and General Votel for testifying here today and for your service and leadership to our Nation. General Votel, I wanted to congratulate you and wish you my best for what I am sure will be a swift confirmation for Central Command.

I wanted to direct my questions to you, General Votel. At your recommendation I recently met with Mr. James Geurts, Director of

SOF Acquisition, Technology, and Logistics about SOFWERX, which you and I discussed.

And I was encouraged by their willingness to embrace and support innovation in unique ways. Can you just describe to the committee today why you think SOFWERX is important and what new initiatives have come from it?

General VOTEL. Yes. Thanks. And thanks for your recent visit. We are very glad to host you down there.

So what SOFWERX does for us is it provides us a publically available platform where we can bring members of academia, members of industry, a variety of others into our spaces, and we can collaborate on problems that we have, as perhaps you may have seen or heard a little bit more about that from Mr. Geurts.

What we are able to do is we are able to take advantage of technology, laser printing, other things that are right there for us to do rapid prototyping. Rapid prototyping is, I think, is one of the biggest lessons that we have learned out of this.

We can bring operators together with scholars, with members of industry. We can address hard problems. And as we look at the solutions that industry provides to us we can provide them immediate feedback from an operator who will say why this won't work or why it might work or what we might do to it to make it better.

And then we can immediately model that through the, kind of the magic of laser printing right here and immediately look at how that might work. So I think it is changing. It is helping us address hard problems.

It is helping us identify solutions faster. And it is changing the way that we look at acquisition in Special Operations Command. Much more collaborative, much more focused on rapid prototyping, and much more focused on being open and available to industry and academia.

Ms. STEFANIK. I appreciate that comment. My follow-up, which you answered, was about how this work can influence how DOD conducts acquisition and procurement. And I think your example of rapid prototyping and getting the best and brightest minds from industry, from tech companies, from academia is a great model.

I wanted to ask specifically, will the decrease in procurement funding by \$97 million from fiscal year 2016 levels in the President's budget request impact SOFWERX's mission specifically?

General VOTEL. I don't expect that it is. I looked at the numbers for SOFWERX and it looks pretty consistent to me. In fact I think it is a little bit of an increase in the coming years. So I think we are in pretty good shape at SOFWERX.

Ms. STEFANIK. Great. I yield back, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. WILSON. And thank you very much, Congresswoman Stefanik. And Secretary Whelan, best wishes on your new duties. And, General Votel, best wishes to you. And, again, I thank both of you for what you have done for our country. We are now adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 4:45 p.m., the subcommittee was adjourned.]

A P P E N D I X

MARCH 1, 2016

PREPARED STATEMENTS SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD

MARCH 1, 2016

Chairman Wilson Opening Statement
Hearing:
“Special Operations Forces in an Evolving Threat Environment: A Review of the
Fiscal Year 2017 Budget Request for U.S. Special Operations Command”

March 1st 2016, 3:30pm, 2118

I call this hearing of the Emerging Threats and Capabilities subcommittee of the House Armed Services Committee to order.

I am pleased to welcome everyone here today to discuss our Special Operations Forces in an Evolving Threat Environment, and to Review the Fiscal Year 2017 Budget Request for U.S. Special Operations Command.

Our Special Operations Forces remain the central, and sometimes sole, line-of-effort across the globe, offering lethal, flexible, and responsive options for Geographic Combatant Commanders and the Commander-in-Chief. We have seen Special Operations Forces increasingly leveraged for asymmetric and unconventional warfare options against nation-state threats such as Russia, China, and Iran. Looking forward, we expect Special Operations Forces to remain heavily deployed across the globe in constant, if not increased, numbers throughout fiscal year 2017.

While the President’s budget request includes a 2.3% increase to U.S. Special Operations Command, many challenges remain since the Force is heavily dependent on Overseas Contingency Operations funding. Furthermore, we see dwindling support from the Military Services, who themselves suffer broader cuts and drawdowns. As we conduct oversight in preparation for the National Defense Authorization Act, this subcommittee will spend considerable time ensuring that all resources are aligned and all policies appropriate. This includes focusing on how our Special Operations Forces are being used to counter adversarial propaganda, and enabling our partner forces across the globe with new programs such as the European Reassurance Initiative and the Counterterrorism Partnership Fund. Lastly, but of considerable importance, the 1208 Counterterrorism Program authority used by Special Operations requires reauthorization beyond 2017. This important operational authority has proven critical to our global efforts to counter al Qaeda and Da’ash. I understand the Department will seek an extension of this important authority to 2020, so we look forward to discussing that today.

I would like to welcome our distinguished panel of witnesses, and I appreciate their service and perspectives on all of these issues. Today we welcome:

Ms. Theresa Whelan, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations and Low-Intensity Conflict

General Joseph Votel, Commander, U.S. Special Operations Command

I'd like to welcome Ms. Whelan in her new role, which carries many important responsibilities, and also take this opportunity to recognize the service of General Votel, who was recently nominated as Commander of U.S. Central Command. General Votel's contributions have been critical in safeguarding our nation and our allies, and we wish him the best of luck as he moves on.

I'd like to turn now to my friend and Ranking Member, Mr. Jim Langevin from Rhode Island, for any comments he'd like to make.

STATEMENT OF THERESA WHELAN
PRINCIPAL DEPUTY ASSISTANT
SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
SPECIAL OPERATIONS AND LOW-INTENSITY CONFLICT

BEFORE THE 114th CONGRESS HOUSE
ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON EMERGING THREATS AND CAPABILITIES

MARCH 1, 2016

Introduction

Chairman Wilson, Ranking Member Langevin, and distinguished members of the Committee, in the absence of a sitting, Senate confirmed, Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations/Low-Intensity Conflict, I appear before you today performing the duties of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for SO/LIC. I am pleased to be joined today by the Commander of United States Special Operations Command (USSOCOM), General Joe Votel. General Votel has been an exceptional USSOCOM commander, and our entire SOLIC team was very glad to learn that he has been nominated to lead U.S. Central Command.

Congress has demonstrated a clear commitment to the special operations force (SOF) enterprise, as evidenced by your thoughtful oversight and by the strength of the SOF budget in the current fiscal year. Thank you for your support of special operations initiatives and resources.

I am here to report on the health and welfare of our Nation's SOF enterprise, the progress we have made and the challenges we face, and on our ability to address our country's security concerns using special operations capabilities—now and into the future. I have divided my testimony into three sections addressing current operating environment, SO/LIC's policy priorities, and oversight activities.

Evolving Threats and Special Operations Forces

As our nation's security challenges become increasingly complex, maintaining and improving our SOF capabilities must happen at a rate that can meet these challenges. Today, the domains of global conflict have expanded beyond the physical to dimensions such as cyberspace, the social media sphere, and bio-warfare. These domains are increasingly accessible to non-state actors. With advanced technology at their fingertips, individuals, illicit networks, and terrorist groups—such as Daesh—can disrupt economies, interrupt the flow of information, and perpetrate significant violence, destabilizing countries and entire regions. Additionally, we are seeing other nations—our peers and near-peers—making use of these same new technologies to enhance aggressive asymmetric tactics creating new levels of disruption and instability.

In the face of today's evolving strategic landscape, the ability of SOF to operate unobtrusively with a small footprint in contested environments is becoming ever more crucial. The defining characteristics of SOF—agility, precision, and effective use of intelligence are widely-acknowledged capabilities that are necessary to confront the unconventional threats that face our country and our

allies. As we witnessed during the last 15 years, our Commanders in Chief will increasingly turn to SOF when instability requires a U.S. military response to address the asymmetric and unconventional threats that characterize our future security environment.

SOLIC's Policy Priorities

In developing strategies and implementing policy, my office's main focus is investing in SOF people, capabilities, and partnerships, in order to prevent our nation's enemies from effectively attacking the homeland, U.S. citizens, and U.S. interests. Success means matching the right capabilities, enabled by new technologies, with the right highly-trained people to address our most pressing challenges.

Our People

First and foremost, we are about people; investing in the health, welfare, training and education of our people, and where we can, their families, is SO/LIC's number one priority. It is the duty and responsibility of the ASD for SO/LIC to advise and coordinate on personnel issues related to the SOF community. We are grateful for the continuing support that Congress has given in this area. It is not cliché to say humans are more important than hardware — it is a fundamental truth - and our special operations forces prove the rule.

The Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and Marines of USSOCOM sustain incredible deployment rates. After nearly a decade and half of continual combat deployments, it is not surprising that stress has taken a toll on both the force and their families. To address that issue, our office has been working with USSOCOM as it stands up a network of holistic support services for each tactical unit. These services include family counseling, physical training, rehabilitation, and behavioral healthcare. From a policy perspective, there should be a team of professionals ready to guide and care for every special operator and family member in need. General Votel's testimony will cover this in depth, but the benefits cannot be overstated. Although SOF suicide rates have seen a modest decline in recent years, one is too many, and there is still more we can learn about effective prevention. We thank you for your continued support of these crucial initiatives.

Another personnel issue that relates to readiness is implementation of Secretary Carter's recent decision open up all military positions—including special operations specialties—to women. Special operations demand a wide range of perspectives and skills, and we will steadfastly maintain the high standards that

make our Special Operators superior now, while seeking excellence wherever it resides. This recent change in policy will help us do that.

Develop Cutting Edge Technology

To keep our capabilities at the cutting edge requires constant improvement of existing technology platforms, equipment, and gear. It also requires investing in new, innovative technology through a sustained focus on research, development, testing and evaluation (RDT&E). For decades, the United States and its military maintained a significant advantage over our peer competitors through leap-ahead technologies and innovation. Today, the ubiquity of advanced technology allows our near-peer and non-peer competitors to erode that advantage and even—at times—operate on a level playing field. From a policy and strategy perspective, that reality highlights the importance of investing in technology and gear that can make our special operations forces cheaper, lighter, faster, and more lethal.

SOF technology and capabilities are also significantly intertwined with the decisions made by the Army, Navy, and Air Force. It is worth noting because we must remain alert to the second- and third-order effects of budget cuts to the Services. Depending on those reductions, USSOCOM may be forced to slow or halt certain modernization and recapitalization programs, reducing SOF's capability and/or capacity in vital areas. In the meantime, however, we will continue making the smart investments that will keep our SOF at the cutting-edge of technology and equipment.

We support and encourage USSOCOM's leveraging and testing of Service developed Directed Energy technologies to increase future SOF capabilities. Similarly, we note how the Services have leveraged the pioneering efforts USSOCOM conducted in the test and procurement of its ground mobility system.

ASD(SOLIC) also has the Combating Terrorism Technical Support Office, which provides rapid R&D prototyping and a robust, off the shelf equipment demonstration capability. Its products are widely shared and enhance DoD, inter-agency, and international partner efforts to combat terrorism

International Partnerships

Another important policy priority is building strong working relationships with SOF of allied and partner nations. In the future, we will likely see SOF called upon more frequently to address instability. By helping boost other nations' SOF capabilities, we can leverage those forces in the future. Our special operators are the best force for leveraging organizations and networks, and working on the

ground with local partners. They are well-positioned to build these SOF relationships. Ultimately, in a future of globally-dispersed and irregular threats, employing SOF in contested environments will only become more important. By working closely with our partners and allies to enhance SOF around the globe, we can have them with us in the fight tomorrow.

Fortunately, our oversight committees in Congress understand the importance of these activities and have provided us authorities to undertake them. We appreciate the continuing support for these programs.

In particular, the Counterterrorism Partnership Fund (CTPF) allows us the flexibility to build and support capable partners at a much greater scale than ever before. CTPF significantly boosted our most important tool, Section 2282, the Global Train and Equip authority. This program came online at a critical junction in our CT campaigns across the Middle East and Africa. Additionally, CTPF allows us to invest in non-train and equip activities such as defense institution building programs, exercises and enabling functions, all of which are fundamental to sustaining successful SOF capabilities. As a result of CTPF's flexibility, we are able to conduct the right activities, with the right partners, at the right time, thus decreasing risk in programs failing long-term by taking a full-spectrum approach to building partner capacity.

When Assistant Secretary Lumpkin spoke here last year, he noted the importance of having the right governance in place to effectively manage the resources and ensure that we have measures of effectiveness for the CT partnership program as we build it. We take our responsibility to be good stewards of these programs very seriously, especially with such a significant increase in our building partner capacity programs. To that end, we are now standing up a counterterrorism partnerships program office to ensure effective oversight of these critical investments.

Section 1208 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2005 provides the Secretary of Defense with authority to provide support to foreign forces engaged in facilitating ongoing military operations by U.S. SOF to combat terrorism in a wide range of operational environments, often where SOF are operating under austere conditions and require specialized support from indigenous forces or persons. This authority has been critical to our special operations counterterrorism efforts. With it, we are able to very effectively enable select regular and irregular forces, groups, or individuals involved in counterterrorism efforts at relatively low cost for the significant operational effects we achieve. I very much appreciate Congress' continued support for this authority since 2005, to include the recent increase in authority from \$75 to \$85 million and its extension

through 2017. These programs and others are a testament to our ongoing efforts to successfully combat violent extremism globally.

In addition to counterterrorism authorities and programs, SO/LIC also provides policy guidance and oversight of DoD's efforts to counter drug trafficking and other forms of transnational organized crime. Illicit trafficking serves as a significant source of funding for terrorists, insurgents, and other threat networks. We know transnational criminal networks move a range of illicit goods, including drugs, people, weapons, wildlife products, natural resources, and money. In some cases, those same networks facilitate the activities of violent extremists, terrorists, and other adversaries who threaten our security. ISIL is a case in point. DoD's counter-threat finance capability supports military operations and other U.S. government efforts to disrupt ISIL's finances and revenue sources. Our counterdrug authorities permit SOF and other DoD components to work with U.S. partner nation law enforcement to help counter these illicit trafficking activities. These are important efforts, and we appreciate Congress's continuing support for these authorities.

Effective Oversight

The oversight my office conducts takes many other forms as well. For example, we routinely conduct assessment visits abroad to evaluate our train and equip programs, to ensure they are as effective and efficient as possible. We use those visits to gather lessons learned to be used to inform future proposals. Daily we interact with the Joint Staff to help develop and refine proposals for counter terrorism operations to insure they meet the President's and Secretary of Defense's rigorous policy standard.

But, above all, the principal duty of the ASD(SO/LIC) is overall supervision of SO and LIC activities within DoD. In this capacity, the ASD(SO/LIC) advises and coordinates with the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisitions, Technology & Logistics USD(AT&L) on acquisition priorities and requirements for SO- and LIC-related material and equipment; ensures compliance with the law as well as DoD policies and priorities; participates in the Defense Acquisition Board and other appropriate boards and committees as the proponent for SO and LIC issues; and maintains liaison to monitor progress in achieving milestones.

SO/LIC works closely with USD(AT&L), USSOCOM, and the Services on the oversight of various programs to ensure adequate acquisition strategy and funding are in place to meet validated SOF requirements. This includes precision guided munitions, unmanned aerial vehicles, submersibles, aircraft recapitalizations, individual operator equipment, and technology programs.

The special operations acquisition process adheres to the same DoD policies, regulations, and instructions that govern all of the Department's acquisition activities. USSOCOM coordinates its acquisition activities with USD(AT&L) and ASD(SO/LIC) and hosts semi-annual Acquisition Summits to ensure full coordination and transparency of acquisition activities within the Department.

As the nature of our security environment rapidly changes, our task is to sustain SOF's comparative capability advantage in a time of tight budgets. SOF amounts to roughly 1.8% of the overall Defense budget, and we continue strengthening our budget management to maximize taxpayers' return on investment in SOF. By leveraging the expertise of the OSD staff, the Joint Staff, and USSOCOM, we have been enhancing our oversight to guarantee the best use of resources. We will continue to work closely with Congress as we allocate resources and implement programs.

However, even as we practice careful oversight of taxpayer dollars, the increasing demands on SOF programs and capabilities may begin stressing our budget. If we receive funding levels below the President's Fiscal Year 2017 request, providing enough SOF capability to respond to the range of global security threats will become a challenge. This is especially true considering SOF's interdependence with, and in some cases, dependence on Service-provided capabilities.

Fortunately, the partnership between conventional and special operations forces is stronger than ever. The Services continue supporting SOF's capabilities by providing combat enablers that are either not organic to or adequately sized in SOF units. These capabilities provided by the Services, including intelligence and combat service support, are vital to both special operations mission success and to the readiness of the SOF community.

Conclusion

The emphasis on increasing our comparative advantage in special operations capabilities that began around the start of Operation Enduring Freedom, in 2001, will not abate any time soon. SOF are the force of choice for missions in non-permissive conditions and politically-sensitive areas. In addition to engaging in the current areas of active combat, we must prepare for emerging areas of instability and conflict around the globe, as well as the persistent risk of attacks on the Homeland. Such preparation includes strategic planning for our nation's future SOF requirements.

As the senior policy advisor to the Secretary of Defense on special operations and counterterrorism, the responsibility for much of that planning falls to the

ASD for SOLIC supported by an outstanding civilian and military staff. Moving forward this year, and as we transition to a new Administration next year, as long as I am entrusted with the responsibility to perform the duties of the ASD, I will work daily to ensure that our special operations force is ready to face future challenges. This testimony has highlighted a few of the critical policy priorities and oversight functions that we in SO/LIC emphasize; the list is illustrative, but by no means exhaustive.

The wars in Afghanistan and Iraq have demanded the focus of defense policy and operations for almost fifteen years. We have asked much of the men and women assigned to our SOF units and their families during that time, and we will continue to ask much of them in the future. They have never let us down. Our solemn contract with them, therefore, is to remain committed to doing everything we can to ensure that these brave warriors have the best training, equipment, and overall support we can possibly provide. We will continue to work closely with Congress to ensure we have the right policies, agile authorities, and enhanced oversight structure in place to employ SOF effectively.

I thank Congress for its continuing support of our men and women in uniform and their families, and look forward to your questions.

Theresa Whelan
Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for
Special Operations/Low-Intensity Conflict

Theresa Whelan, a career member of the Senior Executive Service, currently serves as the Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations/Low Intensity Conflict. Ms Whelan brings over twenty-seven years of experience in the defense intelligence, defense policy and national intelligence communities.

Prior to assuming her current position, Ms Whelan served as the national intelligence officer for Africa on the Director for National Intelligence's National Intelligence Council. Between 2003-2011, she held three separate deputy assistant secretary of defense (DASD) positions within the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy: DASD, Homeland Defense Domains and Defense Support to Civil Authorities; DASD, Defense Continuity and Crisis Management; and DASD, African Affairs.

In addition to the deputy assistant secretary positions, her other assignments in the Department include Under Secretary of Defense for Policy's Balkans Task Force, Senior Program Director for the US/South Africa Joint Defense Committee, Countries Director for Southern Africa and West Africa, and African military capabilities analyst for the Defense Intelligence Agency covering West, Central and East African countries.

Ms. Whelan has a Master of Arts in national security studies from Georgetown University, a Master of Science in national security strategy from the National War College, and a Bachelor of Arts in international relations with a minor in Russian studies from the College of William and Mary.

Her awards include two Presidential Rank Executive Awards, at the Distinguished and Meritorious levels; two Department of Defense Medals for Distinguished Civilian Service; the American University Roger W. Jones Award for Executive Leadership; the Paul H. Nitze Award for Excellence in International Security Affairs, and the French National Order of Merit.

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SUBCOMMITTEE ON EMERGING THREATS AND CAPABILITIES

STATEMENT OF

GENERAL JOSEPH L. VOTEL, U.S. ARMY
COMMANDER
UNITED STATES SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND

BEFORE THE

HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON EMERGING THREATS AND CAPABILITIES
MARCH 1, 2016

OPENING REMARKS

Mr. Chairman and distinguished Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to address you today as the 10th Commander of United States Special Operations Command (USSOCOM). This is my second address on the posture of US Special Operations Forces (SOF). Since my statement last year, the challenges we face in the security environment have continued to evolve and create new conditions to which the military must adjust. USSOCOM is also evolving and tailoring our expertise to these challenges, though we remain consistent in our priorities, our commitment to excellence, and our dedication to serving the needs of our nation. During my remarks, I would like to discuss how we see the security environment changing, and how we believe SOF can best contribute to safeguarding the security of the American people, both now and in the future.

TODAY'S US SPECIAL OPERATIONS FORCE

USSOCOM is unique among the Unified Combatant Commands in that it was legislated into existence, and has Service-like responsibilities to organize, train, and equip Special Operations Forces. Our mission, as I pointed out last year, 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.

USSOCOM has approximately 56,000 active duty, 7,400 reserve, and 6,600 civilian men and women serving in a wide variety of roles and functions. Our organizations include Army Special Forces, SEALs (Sea, Air, Land Teams), Air Commandos, Rangers, Army Special Operations Aviation, Marine Raiders, civil affairs personnel, and psychological operations personnel. Our military personnel include both active duty as well as Guard and Reserve SOF,

which provide us with an essential operational capacity that allows us to surge in support of emerging requirements. We also have a variety of enablers that are critical to our success in diverse mission sets which include acquisition experts, logisticians, administrators, analysts, planners, communicators, and other specialists who are instrumental in fulfilling our mission.

On any given day, nearly 10,000 SOF are deployed or forward-stationed in more than 80 countries worldwide. They are filling GCC requirements that span the range of our Congressionally-delineated core activities. Our actions in support of the GCCs include such mission sets as: enhancing partner capabilities; coordinating counter-terrorism (CT) planning and operations; supporting the capabilities of our interagency partners; and developing critical relationships with key influencers. In all of these examples, which cover just a segment of our activities, SOF plays a key role by working with a range of partners on complex and demanding problem sets. Even in those situations where SOF are in the lead for small-footprint, high-risk missions, we are fully integrated with, and fully dependent upon, our conventional force, international, and interagency partners.

Given the security environment we now face, the demand for the skill sets that our SOF operators possess is understandably very high. Although we will always answer these calls, expanding USSOCOM's role in multiple locations is not without risk. The skills, maturity, and agility that we develop in our operators requires significant time, effort, and investment. This is one of our SOF truths: SOF cannot be mass-produced. Therefore, the employment of SOF should be based upon where we can create the greatest strategic effect to advance our nation's interests. I believe we need a continuing dialogue on how this can be accomplished, as well as how we can best prepare to meet the challenges we see developing in the future.

ENDURING PRIORITIES AND PROGRESS

My priorities remain unchanged from those I discussed with you last year. Focusing on these priorities have helped us continue to develop appropriate capabilities and capacities to meet the needs of our nation, as well as the needs of our force. I would like to take a moment to review these priorities as well as mention some of our ongoing efforts in each.

First, we are ensuring SOF readiness by developing the right people, skills, and capabilities to meet current requirements as well as those that will emerge in the future. Although we share responsibility with the Services for developing our special operations forces, USSOCOM has the responsibility for ensuring the current combat readiness of SOF. To maximize our effectiveness here, our readiness assessment process focuses on identifying GCC demands, and assessing our ability to support those requirements as well as our ability to surge in support of new demands. This approach is helping us identify and rectify any gaps we may have in supporting the GCCs. In another important dimension of readiness, we are implementing the Defense Secretary's decision to fully open all military positions, career fields, and specialties, including special operations specialties and units, to women. We did not request a waiver to this decision because our range of missions require a wide variety of skills and perspectives. As I conveyed to the USSOCOM Enterprise through a recorded video, we will not lower, raise or create multiple sets of standards for SOF; our priority is to identify and train the very best people for these demanding roles.

Second, we must help our nation win in today's challenges and contribute to keeping the nation safe. Our most important effort under this priority has been to organize our processes for dealing with trans-regional threats – those challenges that are dispersed not only across the borders of nation-states, but also across our GCC boundaries. As a headquarters with global

responsibilities, USSOCOM is well-positioned to help the GCCs prioritize and synchronize SOF operations to maximize our effectiveness. This trans-regional approach also allows us to better inform DoD decision-making processes on force management and determine where we can act to seize opportunities. Our role in Operation Gallant Phoenix, aimed at countering the flow of foreign fighters, is prime example of our integrated and innovative approach to the challenges we face. This effort has enabled a very limited number of people to have a significant impact on these networks.

Third, we are continuing to build relationships with international and domestic partners through sustained security cooperation, expanded communication architectures, and liaison activities. USSOCOM has strengthened the relationships and connections that provide the foundation for this network to enable more regular communication and collaboration. Over the last two years, we have invested heavily in integrating our international partners into our headquarters. We now have representation from 17 nations working with us in Tampa, and we are placing our own liaisons into 15 partner nations across the globe. Our facility provides our international partners access to their own national classified communication systems while placing them in a single collaborative space, side-by-side with their US counterparts.

We are also continuing to find opportunities to work across the interagency on our most pressing national security challenges, and have hosted a number of collaborative sessions to improve our perspectives on these issues. For example, last year we hosted a counter-ISIL forum with representatives from the Departments of State, Justice, Homeland Security, Treasury, and Defense, as well as the FBI, CIA, Office of the Attorney General, Office of the Director of National Intelligence, USAID, and other departments and agencies. We have also held other such forums this past year with the Department of State on messaging, and with 18 of our

international partners on coordinating hostage rescue operations. There is still more to be done, and I look forward to working with Congress in determining how we can best work across the interagency and serve the national security interests of the United States.

Fourth, we are preparing for the future by investing in SOF that are able to win in an increasingly complex world. 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 challenges. Improving our ability to perform in the future requires us to find innovative ways to invest today in programs that enhance existing capabilities as well as create new advantages for our SOF operators. Programs such as the Tactical Assault Light Operator Suit (TALOS) are providing us with the ability to collaborate and rapidly prototype with industry, academia and other government organizations to match the latest technologies with the needs of our force. Another critical effort is our SOF Information Environment, which supports our need for better situational awareness, collaboration, decision-making, and synchronization under complex conditions. While these technologies are important, we believe humans are more important than hardware, and are expanding our investments in the human part of the equation. Our Future Special Operator concept describes appropriate attributes and competencies of the future force and is helping us identify and build the right mix of cultural and language expertise. We are also investing in education and training that will further enhance our forces' ability to adapt and innovate in rapidly changing conditions.

Critical to all of our efforts is ensuring we preserve our force and families, providing for their short- and long-term well-being. People – military, civilian, and families – are our most important asset. To the maximum extent possible, we are working with the Services to fulfill the needs of our force in terms of care. Where there are gaps in their ability to meet the unique

needs of our operators, which is driven by a high, sustained operational tempo, the relative maturity of our force, and the range of stressors our force and families are placed under, we are building programs to fill these gaps. In our efforts to address these needs, we are partnering with academia and governmental agencies, as well as non-governmental agencies. We have also begun to integrate discussion of these subjects into our professional military educational venues, so that the notion of seeking help and continuously building resilience becomes a habit, rather than an aspiration.

I believe these are the right priorities – and I also believe we are seeing progress toward generating the right capabilities and capacities to deal with the emerging security environment.

THE STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENT AND USSOCOM

Last year, I provided an overview of how we see the strategic environment changing in ways that enhance the ability of connected and empowered populations to reshape security conditions – which are taking place against a backdrop of power shifts among both state and non-state actors. Today, I will explain how I see this environment influencing the challenges we face – specifically, those that we consider “trans-regional.” Improving our understanding of the context of these challenges will improve our ability to identify appropriate solutions.

This is clearly an era of rapidly shifting power, which has stimulated increased competition and conflicts between states, within states, and across their borders. As power shifts, we frequently see competition emerge as empowered actors attempt to expand their spheres of influence, while others attempt to preserve the status quo. Empowered actors naturally seek to seize new privilege commensurate with their elevated power status – this is not new. What is new is that increasingly, populations are becoming connected through modern

communications technology and are demanding change on a range of governance issues. Grievances can now quickly mobilize a connected population and create opportunities for exploitation by outside state or non-state actors.

Trans-regional challenges are situations in which an actor, such as a violent extremist organization (VEO), operates across the borders of states – and more problematic for us, across our GCC boundaries. When these organizations are able to leverage local grievances in multiple locations simultaneously, they create an “archipelago” of local insurgencies. These situations are a combination of internal instability and external exploitation. Importantly, these insurgents are motivated by local conditions, though are willing to associate with the trans-regional actors when it suits their purposes. What may appear as a vast, trans-regional threat is in many cases, a series of local issues that an external actor has taken advantage of by leveraging modern communications and culturally-attuned messaging. These associations are opportunistic and based on shared, but often transient, interests.

When these political conditions exist, aggrieved populations are vulnerable to any narrative that is acceptable within the culture and directed at the perceived source of grievance. Organizations such as ISIL are using communication tools to recruit both regionally and globally – exploiting potential recruits’ receptivity to a jihadist message. We must recognize that while the gaps between increased power and lagging privilege are opportunities for our adversaries to exploit, they are also opportunities for us to build stability in strategically important areas, and undermine the ability of these VEOs to build inroads. Over time, we can act to sever the linkages these groups depend upon for survival. What will remain is denying future opportunities to these groups to exploit local grievances for their own purposes.

USSOCOM'S VALUE TO THE NATION

Despite this complex security environment, USSOCOM is well-postured to support the GCCs in countering these trans-regional challenges by virtue of its global perspective. Our responsibility to synchronize planning against VEOs will help the GCCs identify opportunities to influence dynamics in one region by applying pressure in another. Further, we can provide a range of local options, which includes building critical influence with key actors, to magnify our strategic effects.

The range of challenges we deal with in this environment, and the span of their reach, prevent a one-dimensional approach from achieving our desired ends. Partners, both international and domestic, are critical to providing us with the range of capabilities, resources, and access we require. USSOCOM's extensive investment in building a global network of partners has proven indispensable in developing comprehensive approaches against these threats. Although we work with a large network of partners, USSOCOM can also provide the capability to act discreetly in politically-sensitive situations, where a low-visibility approach is more effective than a larger footprint.

While the challenges we face will not be solved by military capabilities alone, there are simply cases in which force will be our only recourse. For these situations, USSOCOM has invested a great deal of effort in ensuring we are fully integrated with the Services. SOF plays an important enabling role for conventional forces in conflict. Simultaneously, we tirelessly work to improve those capabilities that we are uniquely structured to provide. Yet even in these cases, most SOF missions require non-SOF support; we remain fully dependent upon our Joint Force partners.

By understanding the complex security environment, building meaningful relationships with our domestic and international partners, and ensuring we are integrated with the Joint Force, SOF can help influence strategic outcomes prior to crisis. Properly posturing SOF will help us identify emerging issues and rapidly adjust our approaches to best seize opportunities. All of these characteristics allow us to develop long-term and cost-effective options to prevent or mitigate conflict, and create decision-space for policymakers. We also can deter and disrupt the most immediate and important threats to US, partner, and allied interests.

Therefore, SOF's value to the nation lies in: our global perspective that spans regional boundaries, coupled with our ability to act and influence locally with a range of options; our networked approach that integrates the capabilities of our domestic and international partners, paired with our ability to act discreetly against our most important threats; and our seamless integration with the Services to support and enhance their effectiveness, while we provide capabilities that SOF is uniquely structured to deliver. All of these are only possible due to our people - adaptive, agile, flexible, bold, and innovative – who allow us to seize opportunities early, and have strategic impact with a small footprint.

With the range of capabilities that we can deliver, there are a variety of functions we are called upon to fill. These functions can be categorized into three broad bins: things we must do, things we are expected to do, and things we should do. Each of these bins are important for the security of the United States; our task is to determine the appropriate balance across each of them. To be clear, we are laser-focused on today's fight, but we remain vigilant in preparing SOF to best meet the challenges of the future.

WHAT WE MUST DO

SOF remains a multi-spectrum, multi-phased force – we provide a full array of capabilities across the range of conflict, and are prepared to support the GCCs when conflicts escalate. Yet, USSOCOM provides two no-fail mission sets to safeguard our interests.

First, we must provide the ability to rescue and recover US citizens from hostage situations. This is one of the central missions USSOCOM was created to execute. Recovery of Americans in crisis situations denies the incentives to attempt to coerce US policymakers with the lives of US citizens in the future, while safeguarding the lives of those currently in danger to the best of our ability.

Second, SOF plays a critical role in reducing incentives to obtain and employ weapons of mass destruction (WMD), as well as deny the effects of current and emerging WMD-capable threats. USSOCOM is forging enduring, purposeful relationships with intelligence and law enforcement agencies to fully capitalize on opportunities to achieve national counter-WMD goals. Ideally, we will be able to more formally codify these relationships to ensure proper and enduring synchronization of efforts. While forums currently exist to bring various government agencies together on these problems, they tend to be more focused in the near-term and in response to crises. The most effective options require a longer-term focus with enduring partnerships.

These capabilities are unique to SOF and constitute what I perceive as our two enduring no-fail responsibilities. However, the utility of SOF in other mission sets has led to us taking a lead role in many other challenges we face, some of which share connections to these two missions.

WHAT WE ARE EXPECTED TO DO

Over the past fifteen years, USSOCOM has invested heavily in developing counter-terrorism capabilities. The increasing influence of various VEOs has understandably resulted in a call for more capacity to counter them. Our operators undertake demanding, time-sensitive, high-risk mission sets to prevent these groups from using terrorist tactics to achieve their ends at the expense of our interests, our partners' interests, and the lives of innocent civilians. While SOF is not primarily a CT force, we recognize that we provide the core CT capabilities for the Department of Defense (DoD).

I believe the use of more kinetically-centric CT operations are best undertaken as a narrow set of actions in support of broader activities intended to separate VEOs from the populations they are attempting to influence. Certainly, this kinetic aspect of CT will play a role in safeguarding our security going forward, though not necessarily the central role.

Although SOF excel in high-risk, politically sensitive situations, the employment of SOF against any problem set is not risk-free. If we restrict our approaches to direct action-centric responses, we can quickly consume our readiness and capacity, which can undermine our ability to seize early opportunities to prevent escalation in other crises. This is particularly so when we apply a great deal of our force structure and activities against tactical conditions that emerged from unchanging – or worsening – strategic trends. A focus on these tactical conditions comes with a hefty strategic opportunity cost. We believe the most effective approach to CT is to think of it more expansively, and find options to prevent VEOs from building inroads with the populations they depend upon for their own strategic success.

Similar to the complex pathway actors seeking WMD must take, VEOs also have pathways they must travel to recruit and train, fund operations, build their networks, develop

relationships with relevant populations, organize, and equip. By looking at this problem set more broadly, I believe we can begin to undermine these groups' ability to achieve success. This approach would prioritize shaping dynamics in the human domain – influencing the “will to fight” of potential recruits as well as the decision-making of VEOs.

WHAT WE SHOULD DO

Earlier, I discussed the necessity of seizing opportunities. Many of the trans-regional actors we encounter are taking an experimental approach to find opportunities they can build upon. We should realize that *the tactical actions of our competitors are lagging indicators of where they expect to find – or have found – strategic success*. SOF's role as “global scouts” fits well with our need to also locate and seize opportunities, while denying them to our adversaries. USSOCOM is, and must continue to be, a learning organization intensely focused on finding areas of high-leverage opportunities to safeguard and advance our nation's interests.

I believe this aspect of our value is where we are currently under-invested, and will experience the highest returns on our efforts if we rebalance our activities. This rebalance will consist of deepening our understanding of complex regional issues, developing important relationships, providing early warning of emerging problems, and ultimately cultivating the influence that we can use to undermine the efforts of violent organizations. All of this preserves decision-space and expands our windows of opportunity – therefore minimizing our risk.

We are putting time and effort into developing a family of strategic documents intended to guide the development of our ability to do this. Maximizing the strategic effectiveness of deployed SOF requires a long time frame, efforts to understand underlying dynamics on the ground, and cultivation of key relationships to maximize our influence. The realities of today's

strategic environment simply defy short-term, small-force, risk-free solutions that create the desired strategic results. Improving our strategic performance will take time, but earlier commitments can help control costs overall.

Throughout the troubled regions of the world in which we operate, actors are increasingly using approaches and methods that avoid conventional military responses to territorial encroachments. Sophisticated fusions of information operations and targeted tactical actions are helping these actors find areas in which they can achieve more enduring strategic success. Russia, for example, is advancing its interests by employing a variety of approaches across their periphery that combine traditional military operations with sophisticated information campaigns aimed at a variety of audiences. The proliferation of, and increasing reliance on, unconventional tools in the security environment requires us to invest time and effort in ensuring we prepare ourselves with the proper capabilities, capacities, and authorities to safeguard our interests.

Accordingly, we are working hard to determine how we can best leverage the capabilities of our international SOF partners to mutual benefit. Their access to and influence in key strategic locations are essential to maximizing the effectiveness of our own force, while we possess capabilities that they can benefit from. However, we must remember that these arrangements are two-way streets, and built upon mutually beneficial relationships. There are a range of areas we are exploring to improve here, such as in communications infrastructure and policies that support information sharing, as well as planning integration.

Domestically, our interagency partners provide an array of essential capabilities to address many of the challenges we face – most of which defy a military-centric solution. We continue to look for ways in which we can enhance our ability to work with interagency partners. SOF capabilities alone are insufficient to achieve policy objectives, but we can create time and

space for policymakers, while identifying opportunities to integrate the capabilities of the interagency to advance our interests. Although we have made significant progress in working with our domestic partners, I believe there is much more to do.

In short, simply improving upon what we are doing today will not be sufficient to meet the challenges of tomorrow. Shifting from a reactive approach to a more proactive one will require some time and a sustained effort. I believe this approach will be the most effective in controlling the risks we face to our national security interests.

Accordingly, we are working to organize around problem sets and better integrate the capabilities of our domestic and international partners. Further, we are working to match our operators' agility with our institutional agility – improving our support to those from whom we ask so much. As an organization that routinely deals with unique and shifting challenges, we prize our adaptability. This is a characteristic we are also leveraging in our programmatic processes to best enable our force.

ENABLING OUR FORCE

The United States and our allies face an unpredictable and dynamic security environment, while DoD simultaneously faces significant fiscal constraints. To effectively confront challenges we must make timely decisions on tradeoffs between capability, capacity, and in limited cases, readiness. These decisions require analysis and oversight.

USSOCOM's overall readiness remains stable. However, we expect to see impacts on our readiness should significant constraints be put on Service budgets that result in cuts to programs and activities that we depend upon. SOF would begin to lose its technological superiority or be forced to jeopardize various essential recapitalization and modernization

programs, leaving the force with reduced capability and/or capacity in critical areas. Further, a significant increase in the demand for SOF would prevent us from adequately resetting and retraining for the large variety of missions we are expected to execute.

Programmatically, our priorities have remained consistent. We focus on enhancing Service-provided platforms to meet the needs of our force – we are therefore highly dependent on investment decisions made by the Services, and greatly impacted by budget changes that affect them. Much of our funding is currently dedicated to procurement, modernization and/or modification of aviation and mobility platforms, weapons, ordnance, and communications equipment. Our budgetary realignments are aimed at better balancing capability, capacity, and readiness as we continue to face a great deal of fiscal uncertainty. Critical procurement programs supporting the development of our force include: a precision strike package, rotary wing upgrades, and the AC/MC-130J in support of SOF aviation; improved wet and dry submersibles in support of our shipbuilding programs; and upgraded communications, weapons, protection, and visual augmentation in support of our SOF operators on the ground.

Our own investments in technology are focused on those areas that require relatively small amounts of funding in order to mature them into useful tools that uniquely meet the needs of SOF. Often they are centered on the enhancements to the platforms that form the backbone of our lethality, mobility, survivability, and communicability. We currently have a list of 32 technologies that meet this criteria and are investing in them over the next two years.

USSOCOM continues to build a culture that embraces and supports innovation in our research, development, and acquisition programs. Our acquisition team is developing and testing new operating models to help build a marketplace for SOF innovation. For example, we are piloting a venue we call SOFWERX; an unclassified, open collaboration facility designed to

bring non-traditional partners from industry, academia, and the government together to work on our most challenging problems. SOFWERX is the central node in USSOCOM's efforts to push advanced manufacturing, rapid prototyping, and 3D printing technology to our operational units. This year we have provided orientation training on these technologies to operators in two of our Service components, and are already seeing the benefits of enabling their ability to think through a problem and rapidly iterate on potential solutions at all levels of our organization.

We are also breaking down barriers to innovation through industry engagement – we are using more non-traditional contractual agreements that provide greater flexibility, including signing more than 120 Cooperative Research and Development Agreements, and awarding five non-Federal Acquisition Regulation-base contracts called Other Transaction Authorities or OTAs. The TALOS effort, which I mentioned earlier, is one of our key vehicles we are using to improve our innovation capabilities across a variety of disciplines by better collaboration with industry, which we will be applying in other efforts going forward. In the second full year of that effort, the TALOS team has grown from long, less frequent prototyping events to nearly continuous rapid prototyping in a number of key technologies.

In another important area of innovation for us, we appreciate the support you have provided through the 2016 NDAA to allow our forces to develop creative and agile military information support operations concepts, technologies, and strategies. USSOCOM is currently carrying out a series of technology demonstrations to assess innovative tools designed to detect previously unseen patterns in complex social media data, integrate and visualize vast information, and allow warfighters to sense, understand, and respond to changes in the information environment in real time. The ability to conduct effective messaging, as well as counter-messaging, will only grow in importance, given the evolving nature of conflicts.

USSOCOM'S INTERDEPENDENCE

As I have indicated, a great deal of USSOCOM's procurement is focused on Special Operations-Peculiar enhancements to Service-managed programs. Being ready to support the range of contingencies we prepare for depends upon maintaining a robust fleet of air, ground, and maritime platforms that we tailor to our unique needs through our MFP-11 funding. Our buying power is highly dependent upon the Services' continued investment in these platforms. Major cuts or reprioritization in these programs will require us to reassess our readiness investments. Not only do we focus on SOF-specific enhancements to Service-managed programs, but we also focus a great deal of our training and equipping efforts on ensuring interoperability with conventional forces and partner nation forces. Major reprioritization on the part of the Services will create a significant "sunk cost" for us.

Therefore, one of USSOCOM's greatest concerns is the potential impacts of fiscal reductions to the Services' readiness, which directly affect SOF. We have already seen reductions which negatively affect us in a variety of ways. Naval Special Warfare Command is seeing training challenges associated with lower fleet asset availability which impacts readiness and interoperability. Marine Forces Special Operations Command is experiencing reductions in access to some important school seats. US Army Special Operations Command is experiencing a reduction in the Military Training Specific Allotment as well as staffing at heavily-used ranges. Air Force Special Operations Command is facing risk in the AC/MC-130J recapitalization program. If further reductions become necessary, we are certain to see more examples of adverse impacts on USSOCOM like these.

We are also dependent upon the capabilities that reside within some of the defense agencies, such as the Joint Improvised Threat Defeat Agency (JIDA), the Defense Intelligence

Agency (DIA), and the Defense Threat Reduction Agency (DTRA). DTRA is uniquely positioned to look at WMD threats from a global perspective and provide USSOCOM with planning support, expertise and tools to counter this threat from both state and non-state actors. DTRA provides research and development support to USSOCOM by providing warfighter-unique counter-proliferation technologies. These organizations help reduce our analytical load on complex problems, while providing us with valuable insight on the threats our operators face today and will continue to face in the future. Relatedly, we appreciate the FY16 NDAA (Sec 1533) authorization for training foreign security forces to defeat improvised explosive devices (IEDs), which enables a wider effort against this shared threat. We request your continued support in sustaining budgetary allotments and authorities for these essential enablers.

Another enduring budgetary concern for us is the future of the Overseas Contingency Operations (OCO) funding, which we remain heavily reliant upon. Maintaining contingency funds is essential for responding to today's threats while preserving the ability to prepare for the future. The current fiscal environment is forcing us to continue to leverage this funding to maintain capabilities that should be programmed into our baseline budget; much of our globally-distributed, enduring operations are currently funded with OCO. We also rely upon programs and activities provided by the Services that are funded through OCO – steep reductions will impact SOF operations. In other cases, funding enduring requirements through OCO is creating challenges for the Services to adequately match manpower specializations to requirements. For example, our operational tempo has created an increased need for Tactical Systems Operators (TSOs), which are airborne intelligence specialists provided by the Services. TSOs operate on aircraft that are not programs of record, but are vital to our ability to target enemies on the ground. This creates a situation where the Air Force, as well as the other Services, have an

increased manpower bill they have not programmed for, while they provide us with essential intelligence support. For critical and unique enduring capabilities like TSOs, it is essential that we provide sustainable funding that allows the Services to provide sustainable sourcing--migrating funding from OCO to Base preserves our ability to best prepare for the future.

PRESERVING OUR FORCE AND FAMILIES

The demand for SOF across the GCCs as they deal with the complexities of the strategic environment will result in an unchanging, or potentially higher, operations tempo for our SOF operators. In order to respond to these strategic challenges, maintaining a high state of readiness among the entire USSOCOM team - service members, families, and our civilian workforce - is paramount. To this end, I continue to place the Preservation of the Force and Family (POTFF) initiatives at the forefront of my priorities.

I am deeply appreciative of the support Congress and the Department have given the Command in this area and for the collaboration and support we receive every day from the Services. With that assistance, we have built an infrastructure of holistic support services at each of our tactical units. These services include behavioral healthcare, family counseling and support services, physical training and rehabilitation, and a cadre of chaplains with skills to guide our community members anytime and anywhere. For each SOF member and/or family member requiring care, there is an entire team of professionals ready to guide and care for them during their too-short downtime before the next major training event or deployment.

USSOCOM's POTFF is an enduring element of our efforts to design, build, and implement a holistic approach to address the pressure on our total force. This program identifies and implements innovative, valuable solutions across the USSOCOM Enterprise aimed at

improving the short and long-term well-being of our SOF members and their families. POTFF addresses significant stressors on SOF families to include a lack of predictability, compressed and irregular training cycles, and limited post-deployment family reintegration time by leveraging both Service and SOF sponsored programs.

Since implementing the POTFF initiative, USSOCOM has conducted annual surveys to monitor usage and satisfaction and several psychological / health related factors. The program has increased resilience, decreased reported symptoms of depression, increased utilization of behavioral health services, and expanded access to timely rehabilitative care. As a result, we are beginning to see the benefits of these initiatives. The members of our SOF community are proactively and increasingly seeking behavioral healthcare. We are also seeing steady improvement in quickly returning our injured personnel to a full-mission capable status. We deeply appreciate Congressional support for these efforts. Resources to support the personnel, facilities, equipment and research necessary to sustain this initiative is a priority for USSOCOM.

Despite this progress, we continue to struggle with the challenge of suicides within our ranks and our community. Any loss of life has a profound impact on the Command. Accordingly, we are working with the American Association of Suicidology to review all of our suicides over the past four years to help us understand where we may better intervene to prevent these tragic events. We have also redoubled our efforts to ensure that our professional staff and leaders recognize the dynamics that lead to suicides and better understand how to intervene. We also continue to work with the Defense Suicide Prevention Office to develop a peer-to-peer mentoring program, so that our Service members and their Spouses have access to critical support networks during trying times. We are seeing indicators of progress in this area, and will

continue to stress the value of behavioral health care across the continuum, from individual and unit performance enhancement to crisis intervention.

WORKING WITH CONGRESS

Thank you for this opportunity to discuss the posture, perspective, and health of our Special Operations Forces. I would also like to extend my thanks for your support on a range of issues that are critical to ensuring USSOCOM is able to provide the Secretary of Defense and the GCCs the capabilities that are in such high demand in our current security environment. Given that we expect demand for SOF to remain high, it is incumbent upon all of us to do our utmost to ensure those in the SOF community and their families are properly cared for.

Congressional support is critical to ensure we can improve our ability to act early and seize opportunities in this complex environment. This improved ability to influence outcomes will come through a combination of tailored authorities and effective programs that enhance our capabilities, while ensuring that we adequately care for our people. The potential fallout of possible budget reductions in the future remains a significant concern for us — the indirect impacts on USSOCOM of cuts to the Services could potentially undermine our ability to field the best possible Special Operations Forces.

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 US tax dollars.

General Joseph L. Votel

Commander, U.S. Special Operations Command

General Joseph L. Votel attended the United States Military Academy and was commissioned in 1980 as an Army Infantry Officer. His initial assignments were to the 3d Infantry Division in Germany where he served as a Rifle Platoon Leader, Executive Officer, Battalion Adjutant and Rifle Company Commander.

Following this tour, he was assigned to Headquarters, Allied Forces Southern Europe-Naples, Italy, and the NATO Peace Implementation Force (IFOR) in Sarajevo. He commanded the 2nd Battalion, 22nd Infantry (Light) at Fort Drum, N.Y., and was subsequently selected to command the 1st Ranger Battalion at Hunter Army Airfield, Savannah, Ga. Following attendance at the Army War College, General Votel commanded the 75th Ranger Regiment and participated in Operation Enduring Freedom, Afghanistan, and Operation Iraqi Freedom, Iraq.

As a general officer, General Votel served in the Pentagon as the Director of the Army and Joint Improvised Explosive Device (IED) Defeat Task Force and subsequently as the Deputy Director of the Joint IED Defeat Organization established under the Deputy Secretary of Defense. He also served as the Deputy Commanding General (Operations), 82nd Airborne Division /CJTF-82, Operation Enduring Freedom, Afghanistan, and was subsequently assigned as the Deputy Commanding General of the Joint Special Operations Command, Fort Bragg, N.C. His most recent assignment was as the Commanding General of the Joint Special Operations Command.

General Votel is a graduate of the Infantry Officer Basic and Advanced Courses, United States Army Command and General Staff College, and the United States Army War College.

**WITNESS RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS ASKED DURING
THE HEARING**

MARCH 1, 2016

RESPONSE TO QUESTION SUBMITTED BY MR. NUGENT

General VOTEL. USSOCOM estimates the dollar value of resources and support provided annually by the Services at approximately \$8B, more than half of which is provided in the form of military pay, benefits and allowances.

SOF organizations are the recipients of Major Force Program 11 (MFP-11) funding, and accounting for MFP-11 is straightforward and easily accomplished because it is specifically appropriated to USSOCOM and is coded as such in financial systems. However, dollars appropriated to and used by the Services to support SOF are not as easily distinguishable. While some Service funding is distributed directly to SOF organizations by their parent Service, much of the Service funding supporting SOF collectively supports an entire Service's population without regards to delineation between populations of Service SOF and General Purpose Forces. As an illustration, SOF organizations reside on military installations managed and funded by the services. As such, they are tenants of the installation and receive basic support and services as a part of the military population residing there. Examples of garrison support and services received includes facility sustainment, restoration and maintenance, shared use of weapons ranges and airfields. Further, SOF operations are almost always dependent on Services in the areas of base operating support, logistics, and infrastructure. Support to deployed SOF from the Services can also be provided via direct Service funding to the SOF organization, but is more frequently provided via funding executed by a non-SOF Service organization to support SOF requirements. The latter category, both in garrison and deployed, is very difficult to isolate in Service budgeting and accounting systems.

Difficulties in delineating costs between SOF and the Services were also acknowledged in a recent GAO Report to Congress, GAO 15-571 dated July 2015. It concluded in part that, "...neither DOD nor the military services have systematically collected, estimated, or reported total SOF funding needs." In the absence of a formal Department of Defense methodology to determine the allocation of military Service funding to support SOF, USSOCOM estimates the level of funding provided by the military Services using numerous assumptions and the values of known support, but we recognize the \$8B is only a rough estimate, and the actual costs likely vary significantly each year and are substantially different than our estimate. [See page 15.]

RESPONSE TO QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY MR. ZINKE

General VOTEL. Although we maintain a general assessment of the fills for High Demand/Low Density Service Provided Capabilities (SPCs) (e.g., ISR, rotary wing, Base Operating Support, ships), SOF's heavy reliance on numerous SPCs makes it challenging to track in a comprehensive manner. The Services have not yet fully identified where they would absorb future budget reductions, therefore, impacts on support to SOF cannot be fully assessed at this time. However, our SOF operational units are beginning to experience initial operational impacts due to shortfalls in some HD/LD SPCs. As an example, the Navy initially made the decision to decommission two helicopter squadrons (HSC-84/85) in FY16, which significantly impacted rotary wing training support to our Components. USSOCOM, working with the Navy and Congress, helped identify the potential training shortfall, resulting in the Navy's decision to retain one of the squadrons (HSC-85). We continually assess the HD/LD SPC support to our SOF units, and when able, take the appropriate measures to ensure all parties are informed to minimize the impact to SOF operations. [See page 21.]

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY MEMBERS POST HEARING

MARCH 1, 2016

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY MR. LANGEVIN

Mr. LANGEVIN. Secretary Whelan and General Votel, the SOFWERX initiative has the potential to capture and spur some exciting technology. How will the lessons learned from this creative initiative and technologies be shared across the S&T enterprise in the Department of Defense?

Ms. WHELAN. The Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations and Low-Intensity Conflict fully endorses U.S. Special Operations Command's (USSOCOM's) "SOFWER-X" initiative. Through this and other initiatives, USSOCOM continues to build a culture that embraces and supports innovation in its research, development, and acquisition programs. USSOCOM is developing and testing new operating models to foster innovation through proactive coordination with other U.S. Government science and technology (S&T) organizations. Finding innovative ways to invest in programs to enhance existing capabilities and create new advantages for our special operations forces is an important part of USSOCOM's mission.

USSOCOM has incorporated SOFWER-X lessons learned and technologies identified or developed into a variety of existing processes and forums for S&T collaboration. These forums include Service component briefings and updates, S&T Council meetings, and USSOCOM's quarterly S&T newsletter. This information is also passed to the Services, the Department of Defense (DoD), Department of Energy laboratories, and academia through briefings and updates in a variety of venues, published articles in appropriate journals, direct discussions, and briefings. Finally, SOFWER-X activities and status updates are presented at SOF Acquisition Summits organized by the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisitions, Technology, and Logistics that include participation by acquisition officials from across the Department.

Mr. LANGEVIN. Secretary Whelan and General Votel, the SOFWER-X initiative has the potential to capture and spur some exciting technology. How will the lessons learned from this creative initiative and technologies be shared across the S&T enterprise in the Department of Defense?

General VOTEL. While the SOFWERX initiative is still new and has not met its full operational stride, we agree that it has the potential to capture and spur exciting technology for the Command and the Department. Since January 1, 2016, we have hosted more than 188 SOFWERX events as disparate as a high school robotics championship, multiple "hackathons," several rapid prototyping and technology sprint events, five structured week-long training events, and more than 60 orientations for distinguished visitors from a variety of backgrounds.

We have incorporated capturing and disseminating SOFWERX lessons learned and technologies identified or developed into a variety of our existing communications processes. We are communicating this information to our Components and Theater Special Operations Commands through briefings and updates at our existing S&T Council meetings and inclusion in our quarterly S&T newsletters. Externally, we are communicating information to our partners in the Services, DOD and Department of Energy labs, and academia through briefings and updates in a variety of venues, published articles in journals, direct discussion and briefings during meetings and visits, and by maintaining an open invitation for orientation visits to the facility. We are actively communicating the SOFWERX message and status with the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Research and Engineering (ASD(R&E)), his staff, and other key members of the DOD S&T community. We participate in weekly telecons with (ASD(R&E)), attend several key planning meetings on an annual basis, and utilize those and other opportunities to actively inform key DOD S&T partners and include them in our SOFWERX activities.

SOFWERX was established under a Partnership Intermediary Agreement with the Doolittle Institute (DI). For each SOFWERX event, DI has the responsibility to help USSOCOM capture results, attendees, actions, and lessons learned, and provide this information to the Command in quarterly and annual reports. In addition, for events that require a separate Collaborative Project Order (over and above pre-planned workload), DI is responsible for preparing a detailed report of findings and accomplishments of the individual collaborative project in a document that is suitable for publication.

In summary, we support our SOFWERX efforts with both formal and informal methods of capturing lessons learned and technologies and sharing them across the SOCOM enterprise, the DOD S&T community, and our external partners. We are actively working to increase both the number of information sharing vehicles and the intended audience, and will actively work to keep you informed as our efforts progress in those areas.

