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**SPECIAL OPERATIONS FORCES  
CULTURE AND CLIMATE:  
THE FUTURE OF THE FORCE**

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HEARING

BEFORE THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON INTELLIGENCE AND  
SPECIAL OPERATIONS

OF THE

COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES  
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

ONE HUNDRED SEVENTEENTH CONGRESS

FIRST SESSION

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HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,  
COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES,  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON INTELLIGENCE AND SPECIAL OPERATIONS,  
*Washington, DC, Friday, March 26, 2021.*

The subcommittee met, pursuant to call, at 11:02 a.m., via Webex, Hon. Ruben Gallego (chairman of the subcommittee) presiding.

**OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. RUBEN GALLEGO, A REPRESENTATIVE FROM ARIZONA, CHAIRMAN, SUBCOMMITTEE ON INTELLIGENCE AND SPECIAL OPERATIONS**

Mr. GALLEGO. Welcome, everybody. Thank you for being here to our Intelligence and Special Operations Subcommittee.

Before we get going, since we are conducting this over Webex, I will have to do a declaration.

Members who are joining remotely must be visible on screen for the purposes of identity verification, establishing and maintaining a quorum, participating in the proceeding, and voting.

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Finally, I have designated a committee staff member to, if necessary, mute unrecognized members' microphones to cancel any inadvertent background noise that may disrupt the proceeding.

How are we doing in terms of our Republicans colleagues getting on? Have we got more on yet?

STAFF. Currently right now it looks like we have got Ranking Member Kelly and Mr. Waltz's new link going out now.

Mr. GALLEGO. Okay. Let me just ask for—oh, we will just do UC [unanimous consent] for nonmembers of HASC [House Armed Services Committee].

I ask unanimous consent that noncommittee members, if any, be allowed to participate in today's hearing after all committee members have had an opportunity to ask questions.

Is there an objection?

Mr. KELLY. I just ask that the members who are not signed on now that are attending, Austin Scott and Michael Waltz, be considered on time for the hearing.

Mr. GALLEGO. Absolutely.

Without objection, noncommittee members will be recognized at the appropriate times for 5 minutes.

Representative Kelly, do you want us just to wait for your members or do you want to just get going with my opening comments and your opening comments?

Mr. KELLY. We can go on with opening comments. I just saw Scott and Franklin just signed in. So, obviously, I have got members signing in. We can start with the opening statements.

Mr. GALLEGO. Let's start opening statements from us. And then if we don't have a sufficient amount of your members, we will wait before we go to our witnesses. Our members don't really need to hear from us.

Excellent.

Well, thank you, everyone, for being here. I might have a little weird lighting. It is actually just morning here in Arizona, and my office/front bedroom faces east. So the sun may make me look a little weird with some of the shadows. So I apologize for that.

I call to order this hearing of the Intelligence and Special Operations Subcommittee on "Special Operations Forces Culture and Climate: The Future of the Force."

Our special operations forces [SOF] are built on a history rich with ingenuity, agility, and tenacity. The reputation of our elite warriors is renowned globally, prioritized for partnership, and feared by our adversaries.

Sustaining the responsibilities delegated by the Department of Defense, U.S. Special Operations Command [SOCOM] serves as the coordinating authority for three critical missions: countering weapons of mass destruction; web-based Military Information Support Operations, MISO; and countering violent extremist organizations, CVEO.

Now, after two decades of high operational tempo deployments to Iraq, Afghanistan, the Arabian Peninsula, and Africa, our special operations forces are at a crossroads. In 2014, former Preservation of the Force and Family [POTFF] Director, U.S. Navy Captain Thomas Chaby, stated, and I quote, "After 13 years of battle, we assess that our force is frayed and there is really no end to where we are right now."

That was 7 years ago. And even with the looming May 1 deadline to consider force posture in Afghanistan, we are still sending SOF

to fight in our longest war. And as SOCOM Commander General Clarke stated, SOF will be the last to leave.

In today's security environment, SOCOM must balance the countering violent extremist mission with another clear and present danger: the great power competition. Our most creative and agile forces are uniquely poised to significantly contribute in this fight but must be postured, resourced, and balanced to do so.

Given that SOF units do much to protect us, we must make sure that we do right by them as well. We must continue to support their force abroad, but, most importantly, at home.

The toll of high deployment-to-dwell ratio has put physical, emotional, and social burdens on our force, which I fear we do not yet fully understand. SOCOM's Preservation of the Force and Family provides resources for the force to heal and grow, but that must be supported by the larger Department and Congress.

Further, as we move to rebalance the force, I firmly believe that SOCOM requires a diverse force with an array of skills, able to conduct the range of operations involved in confronting the great powers.

Earlier this month, USSOCOM released its first-ever strategic plan for diversity and inclusion. This is an important step for the command in recognizing the intrinsic benefits of a tolerant force replete with diverse thinking, problem-solving skills, and unique capabilities.

Unfortunately, the absence of diversity in SOF is not a new issue, as highlighted in a 1999 RAND study on "Barriers to Minority Participation in Special Operations Forces."

As ASD [Assistant Secretary of Defense] Maier and General Clarke work together on implementation of the diversity and inclusion plan, I am interested in the perspectives of this group, of our panelists, on how the SOF community can attract and retain a diverse workforce amidst such sweeping cultural change.

So today I look forward to hearing from our panel of outside experts about their unique experiences and viewpoints on the direction and future of our special operations forces.

Now let me introduce our four witnesses.

Mr. Mark Mitchell, former Acting Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations and Low-Intensity Conflict.

Ms. Linda Robinson, director for the Center for Middle East Policy and senior international/defense researcher for RAND.

Lieutenant General Mike Nagata, retired, United States Army.

And Lieutenant Colonel Kate Germano—and I apologize if I didn't say that correctly—retired, United States Marine Corps. Oorah.

Thanks to such a diverse and thoughtful group of experts. We look forward to your commentary.

I will now turn to Ranking Member Kelly for any opening remarks.

Mr. KELLY. Thank you, Chairman.

I am trying to multitask here.

Mr. GALLEGO. Take your time, Trent. Just take your time. We still want some more members, more of your members to log on, too.

Mr. KELLY. Yeah, I was sending Austin the link.

**STATEMENT OF HON. TRENT KELLY, A REPRESENTATIVE  
FROM MISSISSIPPI, RANKING MEMBER, SUBCOMMITTEE ON  
INTELLIGENCE AND SPECIAL OPERATIONS**

Mr. KELLY. Mr. Chairman, thank you for your opening remarks today and your leadership in organizing this meeting. It is a very important hearing.

Today we will hear from four experts across the private sector for discussion on the culture and climate of our special operations forces, also known as SOF.

We have further broken this topic into three main buckets: the state of the force, the health of the force, and the future of the force.

Indeed, there are many challenges that our special operators face today and this subcommittee must better understand in order to conduct our oversight duties.

From the integration of women into the force to deploy-and-dwell ratios to mental health, this hearing will illuminate current challenges and offer recommendations on how to make special operations forces more effective.

I will focus my comments and subsequent questions on the third bucket of the hearing, the future of the force.

Our special operators have done a tremendous job with their counterterrorism mission over the last 20-plus years. As we continue to hear about China's malign activities and rapid military growth, we need to ensure SOF is ready for the future fight.

That includes things like language training and other training that directly relate to combating great power competition adversaries. Furthermore, it necessitates the proper structure and authorities to conduct the SOF mission.

I will highlight two recent areas of interest from this committee.

A New York Times article on March 3 described a policy change by the Biden administration that placed greater restrictions on drone strikes and raids conducted outside conventional battlefield zones like Iraq, Afghanistan, and Syria. Previously authorized by ground commanders, these operations now require White House approval.

I am concerned about the onerous increase in approval authority for which these counterterrorism tactics are vital. As testament to the effects this policy change has created on the use of their strikes and raids, AFRICOM [U.S. Africa Command] reported six strikes were conducted from 1 to 19 January of this year and, to my knowledge, zero have taken place since.

Authorities can be delegated to leaders closer to the fight with specific parameters, both in breadth, duration, or tactical mission. I completely understand the need to ensure appropriate controls are in place for conducting military operations, but I worry that this policy restricts special operations' ability to conduct necessary actions in a timely manner for the counterterrorism fight.

On March 3, members of this subcommittee sent a letter to Secretary of Defense Austin expressing our concerns about potential changes to the Assistant Secretary of Defense's role for Special Operations and Low-Intensity Conflict, the ASD(SO/LIC) for short.

The fiscal year 2017 NDAA [National Defense Authorization Act] outlined required changes for this position. These changes were



further substantiated in a memo from then Acting Secretary of Defense Chris Miller on November 18 of last year.

The elevation of ASD(SO/LIC)'s role as a direct report to the Secretary of Defense is crucial to ensure that SOF has a civilian leader shaping policy and advocating on their behalf. Empowering this role with the appropriate authority is a priority of this subcommittee.

I am interested to hear our witnesses' views on the role of the ASD(SO/LIC), the use of raids and strikes in areas like AFRICOM, and ensuring our SOF community is prepared to fight and win in a near-peer global power conflict.

I think we need to focus on diversity, both cultural and sexual, throughout to make sure that our special operators look and are able to perform the missions of the future.

I want to thank our witnesses in advance for their time today. I look forward to the continued work with our private sector experts in the 117th Congress to ensure we are appropriately postured to meet and defeat the myriad of global threats.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And I yield back.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Kelly can be found in the Appendix on page 45.]

Mr. GALLEGO. Thank you, Mr. Kelly.

Do we have a—I just want to make sure we have a substantial amount of your members that have logged on and that have wanted to log on, too, obviously.

STAFF. At this time we have got Representatives Scott, Waltz, and Franklin.

Mr. GALLEGO. Trent, what do you feel? Do you want us to wait a little longer just to let your—

Mr. KELLY. We are good, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. GALLEGO. Say again?

Mr. KELLY. We are good, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. GALLEGO. You are good? Okay. Great.

And I now turn to our panelists. I just lost my notes on here. I believe we have first was it Mr. Mitchell to speak?

Shannon, is that right?

STAFF. That is accurate, sir.

Mr. GALLEGO. Yes.

Mr. Mitchell, can you please open with your 5-minute statement?

**STATEMENT OF MARK E. MITCHELL, FORMER ACTING ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE FOR SPECIAL OPERATIONS AND LOW-INTENSITY CONFLICT**

Mr. MITCHELL. Yes. Good morning, Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Kelly, and distinguished members of the subcommittee. Thanks for the opportunity to participate in this hearing today.

I want to start off by recognizing the extraordinary contributions and sacrifices of our special operations forces, especially over the last 20 years. They are without question the best in the world.

Day in, day out they carry burdens that few will ever know about, much less fully understand. And, importantly, the vast majority of them carry out those difficult missions with profound humility, discipline, and integrity.

And for their service, their valor, their professionalism, and the burdens borne by their families, we have much for which we can and should be grateful.

And I also want to take the opportunity to thank this committee and Congress as a whole for their continued support of the POTFF initiative and hope that will be sustained.

Nevertheless, if our SOF are to be employed successfully in global competition with China, significant changes will need to be made. The world is changing rapidly, and the challenges that we face today and tomorrow are substantially different from the challenges that SOF has effectively tackled over the last two decades.

Our SOF are today a force optimized for direct action, in support of counterterrorism and counterinsurgency. While these threats are not going away, direct action capabilities are of limited use in areas of competition short of armed conflict where by definition lethal military force is not authorized.

To be clear, the United States must be able to fight and win a war with any adversary. That is the reason that we have the Department of Defense.

But deterrence and competition are not synonymous. The former is about our adversaries' assessment of our capabilities, will, and intent, and the latter is about a third party's evaluation of the advantages and strength of a relationship with us in comparison to a competitor like China.

Ultimately, this competition is about relationships developed and sustained through voluntary affinity and mutual benefit, rather than economic, political, or military coercion.

And an excessive focus on deterrence or high-end conflict and lethality miss the equally important requirement for competition. In my humble opinion, it represents a failure to understand the totality of the CCP's [Chinese Communist Party's] unrestricted warfare and a deficit of strategic thinking in the Department.

Irregular warfare conducted in support of broader, whole-of-government political warfare strategy is indispensable for competition, and SOF provides an effective and extremely economical tool for it, especially when well-integrated with other elements of national power.

But to do so, we must better capitalize on the full potential of human capital present in these United States, and this demands changes in the structure and culture of our SOF.

The leadership in the SOF enterprise, both civilian and military, must question their assumptions about missions, force structure, modernization, and concept of operation.

In simple terms, they must be as daring and creative at the strategic level as our small units are at the tactical level.

The first SOF truth is that "Humans are more important than hardware." To prepare for tomorrow's challenges, SOCOM must be willing to challenge and adapt the commando culture that currently dominates in the force.

Their recently published diversity and inclusion strategy is an important first step, but it is not enough. I would also note that it was not signed by ASD(SO/LIC).

So I think, first and foremost, SOCOM and its components need to consider adding new military occupation specialties to ensure the right advanced technical skills are resident in the force.

Secondly, they must create more and better opportunities for women to contribute, opportunities as fully fledged operators, but those which do not require them to be commandos.

Thirdly, SOCOM must undertake a concerted and well-resourced effort to recruit first- and second-generation Americans with native language and cultural sensitivities.

Our history is replete with extraordinary contributions by immigrants. And to the degree which we fail to recognize and welcome others like them with open arms, we are failing ourselves and our Nation.

Finally, SOCOM must recommit to an experimental force to test new organizations and employment concepts for irregular warfare.

Sadly, I am not confident these changes will happen without strong and empowered civilian control and leadership from ASD(SO/LIC), and that won't happen if ASD(SO/LIC) is returned to serfdom in OSD [Office of the Secretary of Defense] Policy or if Secretary Austin does not empower ASD(SO/LIC).

I listened yesterday with great interest to your Senate colleagues' hearing with ASD(SO/LIC) Chris Maier and General Clarke. It was informative but troubling. I was dismayed to once again hear a SOCOM commander emphasize his status as a combatant commander, while reducing ASD(SO/LIC)'s role to that of an advocate for SOCOM.

To me, this represents a rejection of the administrative chain of command defined in title 10. I can't for the life of me ever recall hearing the CNO [Chief of Naval Operations] stating that a key role for the Secretary of the Navy is to be an advocate.

An advocate is many things—a backer, a booster, a champion—but that is a fundamentally different relationship—in fact, an inverted relationship—from the concept of a chain of command, even an administrative one.

Mere advocacy is a cheap and ineffective substitute for authority, direction, and control, especially regarding the strategy for the future of this vital national capability.

When it comes to the legislation passed and signed into law regarding civilian control and oversight, accept no substitutes, insist on full implementation, and please do not accept anything less.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Mitchell can be found in the Appendix on page 47.]

Mr. GALLEGO. And thank you, Mr. Mitchell.

Ms. Robinson, you are on for 5 minutes.

**STATEMENT OF LINDA ROBINSON, DIRECTOR, CENTER FOR MIDDLE EAST PUBLIC POLICY, AND SENIOR INTERNATIONAL/DEFENSE RESEARCHER, RAND CORPORATION**

Ms. ROBINSON. Thank you. Chairman Gallego, Ranking Member Kelly, and members, thank you for the opportunity to share my views on the state of special operations forces. I am honored to be here with friends and colleagues.

I have devoted much of the last 21 years to research and analysis on this topic, including years of field work with SOF on five continents, in Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, the Philippines, Latin America, and Europe.

I have served in government as Chair of the Army War College Board and on the National Defense University Board to advise on professional military education and leader development.

I will summarize briefly my written statement for the record.

Special operations forces are unique, valuable, and a scarce asset for the Nation's security. It is vital, given their small numbers, to think carefully about their development and employment.

We are at an inflection point as the strategic environment has changed. Efforts to rebalance the force for new missions and reset from 20 years of intensive counterterrorism are ongoing.

Systemic issues require urgent attention, primary among them the need to expand diversity and inclusion.

Strengthening civilian oversight, as Congress has mandated, can help with all of these issues.

To ensure the health of the force and the highest ethical culture, it is imperative to meet the deployment-to-dwell ratio as soon as possible and to address all incidents of misconduct and criminal behavior in accordance with the Uniform Code of Military Justice.

Fifteen months ago, SOCOM Commander General Clarke issued a comprehensive review. The review found that the high operational tempo was responsible for some of these failings and attributed them, in part, to a culture that emphasized deployment and operational prowess.

As I recommended in a 2013 report, SOCOM itself must prioritize institutional over operational matters. SOCOM is a functional combatant command, but its primary responsibility is to organize, train, and equip the force, which is then employed by the geographic combatant commands.

I will be happy to say more about the rebalancing of SOF roles and missions in our dialogue. I offer here two overarching points.

Continued effort to rightsize the counterterrorism mission is required to free up the force for use in more strategic ways. Counterterrorism strategy itself should evolve to prioritize greater reliance on allies and partners and to address the pipeline into extremism, as decapitation and network suppression have, at best, temporary effect.

I note the ranking member's comments about the guidance for strikes and will be happy to offer my views in our dialogue.

Second, great power competition requires SOF to work more closely with the rest of the joint force and with the interagency partners. SOF has important roles, given the extent to which adversaries are using irregular and gray zone tactics.

To play those roles, SOF requires new capabilities to communicate, detect, and respond to cyber and electronic attack, as well as greater effort and investment in information operations.

Diversity and inclusion have rightly become a focus for the entire joint force. It is integral to SOF mission success to have a diverse force with the skills and knowledge to work among the world's populations.

RAND, as noted, documented the shortfalls and barriers in a 1999 study. Improvements have been marginal since then.

I would add that, in 2001, the commanding general of Special Forces stressed to me the importance of having women in the force. Today there are three women who have earned the Green Beret, two of them still in language training.

This is not where the force should be. Women have been selected and promoted in Air Force Special Operations, in Psychological Operations, and Civil Affairs. But significant barriers and cultural resistance remain.

A 2016 study found that 85 percent of special operators surveyed were opposed to letting women into their specialties, and 71 percent opposed having women in their units.

I would be happy to offer my thoughts about remedial measures for recruitment, selection, and promotion. I note that U.S. Special Operations Command issued a plan in March, and I would urge that the command develop specific metrics and targets for progress and for promotions to be tied to performance in meeting them.

I would like to finish by addressing the issue of civilian oversight, which Congress again strengthened in the latest NDAA in section 901 in order to enable the Assistant Secretary of Defense to perform its statutory roles, overseeing both policy and resources.

This is an important step to ensure civilian control over the force and the complex issues it involves. The legislation requires a direct report status for the Assistant Secretary to the Secretary of Defense for the purpose of fulfilling the service-like roles. That has now been done.

It is not enough for SO/LIC to be, quote, "in the room." With the Secretary's support, SO/LIC should ensure SOF requirements are identified and met.

Regarding the statutory role for oversight of policy, which includes formulation of strategy for the employment of the force, this needs to be closely orchestrated with the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy, in my view, precisely because more than ever SOF needs to work as part of the whole.

Thank you very much. I welcome your questions.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Robinson can be found in the Appendix on page 61.]

Mr. GALLEGO. Thank you, Ms. Robinson.

And now I would like to turn to Mr. Nagata.

**STATEMENT OF LTG MICHAEL K. NAGATA, USA (RET.), SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT AND STRATEGIC ADVISOR, CACI INTERNATIONAL, INC.**

General NAGATA. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Good morning to all of you. I am honored to participate in today's hearing. My remarks today predictably are based on my more than three decades of service in special operations forces.

On the topic of diversity and inclusion as they relate to special operations, my perspective is based on having been one of the very few Asian-American officers to rise to flag rank during a special operations career. I wish to provide two suggestions.

First, over my own career I was responsible for the recruiting, assessment, selection, and training of future SOF personnel on two

occasions, once as the commander of the Army Special Forces Qualification Course and, second, as a commander of a special mission unit. I learned from those experiences the difficulty we had and probably still have in attracting a more diverse volunteer population.

Perhaps counterintuitively for some observers, I recall that our greatest challenge was not the pass/fail rate among diverse volunteers, but rather identifying larger numbers of suitable diverse candidates that either wanted or could be persuaded to volunteer.

In my view, there is a significant shortage of scientific research into the question of whether there are important differences between what attracts a more diverse population to volunteer for the grueling experience of SOF assessment and selection, compared to what attracts our traditional demographic mix.

Said more simply, in 1984, when First Lieutenant Mike Nagata began the Special Forces Qualification Course, I remember being only one of two Asian-American volunteers. Today, I still do not know why.

Second, I often hear discussions over the need for more SOF personnel that are conversant with the cultures and languages of our near-peer adversaries, one recent example being a lament I heard over why, in an era where our greatest challenge is China, we do not have more SOF that can speak Chinese.

While I certainly consider that an important question, I believe it is too narrow. We must remember that much of today's great power competition is essentially a contest between the United States and countries like China or Russia over strategic influence with other nations, communities, ethnic groups, and the like, that are neither Russian, Chinese, or American.

In such cases, SOF's success will have less to do with understanding Russian, Chinese, or any other near-peer competitor's culture or language and far more to do with SOF's ability to have deep understanding and language compatibility with African, Middle Eastern, South Asian, Pacific Island and Archipelago, or European and even Western Hemisphere cultures and countries that we are today competing to preserve or strengthen our influence with against our foes.

Regarding the health of SOF, I wish to emphasize two related realities.

First, SOF's well-being and durability requires a constant balancing act between antagonistic impulses. Said differently, the maintenance of the health of this force is a lot like trying to balance an egg on one end. Only constant effort and attention will prevent it from falling in any particular direction.

By way of personal example, during my own career, I was repetitively deployed for many months, even years at a time, typically in harm's way. The strain on me personally and, just as importantly, the strain this created for my family has left scars that I still live with.

But, on the other hand, I and thousands like me volunteered for SOF and remained for a career in SOF because I yearned to do these very things. The strains and stresses of those missions not only made me stronger, better, and more effective than I could

have ever been otherwise, they created friendships and outlooks that have enriched and continue to enrich every day of my life.

Do I regret the costs and damage that my long absences created? Yes, I do. But if I could turn back the hands of time and could significantly alter my trajectory, would I? Paradoxically, the answer is mostly no, and I might have decided to pursue a different career path if that trajectory had been different.

Second, there is an important problem that undermines the search for ways to ensure the health of SOF. It may surprise you, but here also is a profound absence of real empirical, long-term research on what the effects of deployments, prolonged combat, exposure to blast and trauma, family separation, and so on are for SOF.

I know many would argue there is substantial research on all these topics for the U.S. military broadly, but I believe almost none of that is significant to the experience of SOF and therefore cannot take into account the very different aspects of SOF culture, the nature of our deployments and operating environments, and the consequences of physical and psychological stresses amidst these differences.

If I am correct on this assertion, then we are probably today in a classic logic trap—that one cannot solve a problem if one is unable to understand that problem.

Finally, on the future of SOF, I frequently hear in Washington, DC, these days how SOF must, quote, “pivot,” unquote, away from counterterrorism in the interest of doing more in the arena of great power competition. I understand the impulse that drives such assertions, but I think they are at best misleading and at worst possibly wrong.

The main reason is because we are witnessing a growing convergence between our near-peer adversaries and organizations that can be characterized as terrorists or extremists or at least non-state but increasingly powerful and militarily capability actors.

I will give you one example. A few years ago in the Ukraine and Crimea, Russian ethnic separatists demonstrated the ability to employ First World military and intelligence technology, sophisticated air defense systems, and highly effective cyber operations in cooperation and in concert with the Russian Government’s efforts, including the “little green men” we all know today were Russian military forces.

Proxy warfare is as old as mankind because it has always been convenient for nations or kingdoms to have someone else do their bleeding and dying for them. In today’s world of rapidly advancing technologies whose costs are falling so quickly that anyone with a credit card may have them, the attractiveness of such non-state or terrorist actors as proxy tools is proving irresistible.

Consequently, America should expect that challenging a near-peer competitor will also bring us into confrontations with those proxies, including terrorists and extremists, that will again require many of the skills that SOF developed in the counterterrorism arena.

In closing, I wish to say thank you for allowing me the chance to contribute to today’s hearing. I look forward to your questions.

[The prepared statement of General Nagata can be found in the Appendix on page 75.]

Mr. GALLEGO. Thank you, Mr. Nagata.  
And next we have Lieutenant Colonel Germano.

**STATEMENT OF KATE GERMANO, LTCOL (RET.), UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS**

Colonel GERMANO. Thank you, Chairman Gallego, Ranking Member Kelly, and members of the subcommittee, for inviting me to testify.

I am honored to be with you today to discuss diversity, equity, and inclusion in special operations and our military writ large.

Diversity, equity, and inclusion represent a really interesting paradox for the military. For as much as the programs are reviled by the average servicemen, they are perhaps the very concepts and practices that could enable the force to succeed in meeting the complex challenges of the 21st century.

But as General C.Q. Brown, the first African American to lead the U.S. Air Force, recently told CBS News, when it comes to advancement in the military, including selection for special operations roles, “ducks pick ducks.”

Now, I never thought I would use the phrase “ducks pick ducks” while testifying to Congress, but it neatly sums up how the human brain influences both the preference for sameness in our ranks and resistance to change.

Today, the military is experiencing a critical shortage of qualified young men for enlistment and commissioning. At the very same time, public trust in the military is on the decline for the first time in decades, down from 70 percent in 2018 to just 56 percent today, according to a recent poll by the Ronald Reagan Institute.

Negative stories about racism and discrimination, sexual harassment and assault, and retaliation against those who report wrongdoing are prominent in news coverage of the military. These stories have no doubt impacted public perception and the willingness of young men and women to join the services.

Because of their strategic implications for recruiting and retention, these are not issues that can continue to fester below the surface. The culture of the military and its approach to diversity, equity, and inclusion must change.

As one expert notes about why organizations fail, “Active inertia is an organization’s tendency to follow established patterns of behavior, even in response to dramatic environmental shifts.” Think the definition of insanity.

The transition of our military from two decades of counterinsurgency operations to preparing for great powers conflict, while also responding to nation-state threats, represents just such a dramatic environmental shift.

If winning wars is what we expect of our military leaders, increasing diversity, equity, and inclusion among the ranks and branches of service must be viewed as a leadership function and not a “nice to have” or check in the block.

Meeting these complex challenges will require not only cognitive diversity, but also the unique talents, experiences, and abilities of men and women from different backgrounds, ethnicities, and cultures at every level of the military, including Special Operations Command.



There are three diversity and health of the force issues military leaders must face head on to increase the public trust, build a sustainable force, and meet the imperatives the Secretary of Defense established in his recent message to the force.

First, military leaders must acknowledge that expanding minority membership at all levels of the military has both strategic and emotional implications, and they must tailor diversity, equity, and inclusion strategy, education, and training efforts accordingly.

Military leaders must understand facts don't drive human behavior. Emotions do. Neuroscience research demonstrates that making diversity a compliance issue triggers a threat state in the brain, activates bias, and potentially increases discrimination, harassment, and retaliation.

Diversity strategies and education must therefore be grounded in an understanding of the brain science of change and the feelings of grief, loss, skepticism, and anger many servicemen have as a result of our emphasis on diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Make no mistake, this is a highly emotional issue for many servicemen today, particularly in the more insular cultures like the Special Forces and Marine Corps.

Leaders should not only acknowledge the emotions involved, but emphasize that becoming a more diverse, inclusive, and equitable force actually brings the military closer to the idea of being a meritocracy, which today is something the organization can only aspire to.

Second, the Department of Defense should invest in independent, comprehensive military and special operations specific research to clearly identify how diversity contributes to a more lethal and capable force.

Up to this point the military has relied primarily on case studies from private industry, like the tech and financial sectors, to provide rationale on how diversity makes the force stronger, and it has not convinced the average serviceman.

Little, if any, independent research has been conducted to quantify how diversity makes for a more lethal force or enhances the ability of the force to achieve success in global operations.

This is a critical issue. Without military-specific case studies laying out the operational advantages women and other minorities bring to the fight, it will be difficult to reduce skepticism and instill faith in the hearts and minds of those who serve that becoming a more diverse, equitable, and inclusive force is not only fair, but essential to our abilities to win future battles.

Finally, senior leaders must resolve existing gaps in strategic plans to overcome diversity inertia. Notably, the plan for Special Operations Command lacks any mention of the word "equity." And since equity is about leveling the playing field for everyone through the identification and removal of systemic barriers to service—whether policies, equipment, practices, or behaviors—equity must be included as a bedrock pillar of all military diversity plans.

Additionally, strategic diversity and recruiting plans must include actual diversity targets based on war plan requirements and projected operational needs, as well as clear direction on who is responsible for achieving them.

It is time to give diversity, equity, and inclusion in the military more than lip service. Our failure to do so will no doubt mean that ducks will continue to pick ducks for opportunity and advancement and potentially jeopardize our national defense in the future.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify today, and I would be happy to take your questions.

[The prepared statement of Colonel Germano can be found in the Appendix on page 84.]

Mr. GALLEGO. Great. Thank you.

Thank you for all of our witnesses.

Now we are going to move into the question portion of the testimony. And just a reminder. We will limit our questions to 5 minutes per person. And then we will move in alternating manner from Republican member to Democratic member.

Give me one second, please. I am trying to catch up with my own notes here, and I have a crying baby in the background.

Start with Mr. Mitchell.

Mr. Mitchell, given your former position as ASD(SO/LIC), in what ways can civilian oversight positively impact the future of special operations forces?

Mr. MITCHELL. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I think, first of all, resourcing is the number one area that it can positively impact it. But I think also it goes to strategy. And as I noted in my opening remarks, the strategy that was signed on diversity and inclusion did not include ASD(SO/LIC) and there are a number of other areas that belong in civilian control.

I would note also yesterday that General Clarke, when he was asked about some of the changes that he had made and what his priorities were, he said more ISR [intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance] and lethality. And I felt like, okay, I don't necessarily know that that is the right—I would differ with him on whether that is the right answer moving forward for SO/LIC.

So I think that control over the resources is an important part of that civilian leadership. The staff at SO/LIC doesn't have the resources. The Secretary for Special Operations is about 40 people, whereas SOCOM has about 2,000 people on its staff. It is just a huge mismatch.

Thank you.

Mr. GALLEGO. Thank you, Mr. Mitchell.

Ms. Robinson, what do you believe are the greatest operational imperatives for SOF as the Department and government focus on strategic competitions? Do you believe there is an undue focus on capabilities rather than building critical skills and tradecraft of the force?

Ms. ROBINSON. Thank you, Chairman.

I believe that we have to focus, as has been mentioned, on the critical language and cultural skills. They require a great investment of time. And they are necessary not just for the new missions of great power competition, but legacy missions. And we have been very focused in the Middle East/South Asia region operationally for the last 20 years.

As I mentioned, I think there is a huge requirement to give more thought, as well as more investment, to what the SOF role is in information operations.

I would note that even though USSOCOM has stood up the Joint MISO WebOps Center, it only has five Active Duty civil—PSYOP [psychological operations] officers assigned to it. And this is the kind of shortfall of material and human capability that I think indicates, as Mark said, a continued focus on the kinetic rather than the nonkinetic attributes and contributions that SOF can make.

Our study, “Modern Political Warfare,” showed a huge panoply of adversary tactics that need to be met not kinetically, but nonkinetically, and together with other elements of national power, State Department and others.

So I think this for me is really the focus, because great power competition encompasses the irregular warfare spectrum.

That is not to say SOF doesn’t need to be prepared to conduct high-end conflict, and there are specific technical deficits that our last 2 years of work have shown, particularly in the EW [electronic warfare] and cyber field. There are notable requirements there. But I would just emphasize the nonkinetic as a real area for focus.

Thank you.

Mr. GALLEGO. Thank you, Ms. Robinson.

Lieutenant General Nagata, while I appreciate your perspectives regarding CT [counterterrorism] forces and their use, I do want to hear your expanded thoughts on how we continue to hear that counterterrorism is synonymous with great power competition. Do you think that is an accurate assertion? Why or why not? And do you think the force is culturally postured to support this strategic competition?

General NAGATA. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I would not say that they are synonymous, but I do believe they strongly overlap. And for those commentators or policy officials that believe SOF or SOCOM need to do less in the counterterrorism arena, I think that reality will disabuse them of that notion because terrorists simply will not be ignored.

But getting back to your question. The overlap is, as I tried to say in my prepared remarks, the arena of influence. Our near-peer adversaries are using everything from cyber operations to irregular warfare activities to extremist activities to economic activities and beyond to shape what countries and populations around the world believe in ways that are antagonistic to the interests of the United States.

In fact, in my view, the United States is currently losing the strategic contest for influence globally against too many of our near-peer adversaries.

The proper role of special operations forces harkens all the way back to the foundation, the founding of most of the special operations forces that are in existence today.

I particularly come from the Army Special Forces or Green Beret community. We were created in the 1960s for this very purpose of assisting local populations with a threat that threatened to overwhelm them. And this is as much a challenge of influence activity as it is a challenge of military conflict.

So that is the overlap. And in my opinion—I want to associate myself with some of the remarks of Mr. Mitchell earlier—the overemphasis that I believe we are placing right now on being prepared for a high-intensity conflict with these near-peer adversaries—and

I certainly vote we be ready for that—but I think there is so much emphasis on that, we are inadequately preparing ourselves—and this would include special operations forces—for the contest over strategic influence, which I personally believe will define the next generation of national security challenges of the United States.

Mr. GALLEGO. Thank you, Lieutenant General.

I now move to Ranking Member Kelly.

Mr. KELLY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I want to go back to—and, General Nagata, this is for you, because I think you understand probably command relationships better than anybody in the room from a military perspective, which is what I understand it as.

I see ASD(SO/LIC) as being a dotted line, not a direct line. I think we are talking about control. Control is not a dotted line. Control is advise. They are reported to. They help make decisions.

And I noticed Mr. Mitchell used the Secretary of the Navy and, let's say, the PACOM [U.S. Indo-Pacific Command] commander. Well, the PACOM commander does not answer to the Secretary of the Navy. He may be in his rating chain in some form, but he is administrative control [ADCON].

Listen, ASD Maier is a great guy, doing a great job, and I think he gets it. But it does not need to be a direct command relationship. It needs to be ADCON or general support or general support reinforcing. It does not need to be TACON [tactical] control or OPCON [operational] control of our special operators.

That SOCOM commander needs to be direct to the Department of Defense, the Secretary of Defense.

Do you agree with that, General Nagata?

General NAGATA. Sir, I agree with much of it. On the other parts of what you just said, I don't think I so much disagree as I think that I have a somewhat different take. But let me try to be a little more specific.

First of all, in my view, when ASD(SO/LIC) was originally created as a part of the Nunn-Cohen Amendment many years ago that I am sure you and your fellow members are very familiar with, no one at the time envisioned what would have happened to US-SOCOM as a command or SOF as a community in the ensuing decades.

The size, the prominence, the capabilities, the strategic importance and the relevance of special operations forces are far beyond anything I think the original authors of the Nunn-Cohen Amendment ever imagined.

On the one hand, SOCOM and the SOF community have grown commensurate with that rise in prominence and importance. ASD (SO/LIC) has remained essentially static.

So the ability of ASD(SO/LIC), in my judgment—I did two tours in the Pentagon, one for the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Intelligence and, second, as the Deputy Director for Special Operations and Counterterrorism on the Joint Staff—what I believe I saw was a growing inability of people like Chris Maier—who is a personal friend of mine and, I totally agree with you, is a fantastic officer—but the growing inability of people like him to keep pace with the growing prominence and importance of special operations and, most importantly, this is my view, the two single

most important functions of ASD(SO/LIC), which I personally believe they cannot do today in the way they are either configured, staffed, or given authority: effective DOD [Department of Defense] policy oversight of U.S. special operations forces and effective U.S. DOD policy support for USSOCOM and special operations forces.

But it is that growing mismatch of how SOF has changed and ASD(SO/LIC) has not.

Sorry. I didn't mean to interrupt you.

Mr. KELLY. No, no. I want to get to another question, and I want to talk about the drone strikes and where that capability is.

I am an engineer also by trade. So I understand when we had FASCAM [Family of Scatterable Mines], okay, you didn't delegate that authority down to platoon leaders. You didn't even delegate it down many times to brigade level. You had restrictions on when you could do that.

Do you think it is a great policy to maintain that, all that at the highest level, or to use strategic ways to make sure that we delegate the proper authorities to the proper level of command in the use of those strikes based on area of operation, tactical threat, the personal leadership abilities of the commander in that area? Do you think that is a way to control that?

And please be short on the answer because I have one more question.

General NAGATA. Certainly.

The short answer is, just like Mr. Mitchell, I am sure he is thinking about this, I have seen this movie before where there is a desire to constrain kinetic and lethal operations abroad, and so the decision to elevate the decisionmaking authority ensues.

Two, actually three things, in my judgment, always flow from this.

Number one, the policymaker ends up being disappointing, because what the combatant commands that are trying to chase these dangerous targets will do is simply go find more intelligence to justify the operation and inevitably it will be conducted anyways.

Number two, it does create an enormous work burden for both the combatant command, that desires SOF to do the strike, and for the special operators that have to find and fix the target. So they do a lot more work for basically the same activity that they will end up doing anyways.

And, thirdly, this is a psychological issue. I believe one of the unintended negative consequences of these decisions is it inadvertently conveys a lack of confidence and trust in the judgment of the four-star combatant command, his component commanders, and the SOF commander on the ground or on the field.

Over.

Mr. KELLY. I agree. Targets of opportunity do not re-present themselves. They are a one-time deal and timeliness is effective. And I think we have to have [inaudible].

Finally, I want to talk a little bit about a great unit that trained at Camp Shelby, Mississippi, the 442nd Regimental Combat Team, Japanese Americans, the most decorated unit in American history, who faced many of the challenges that our special operations community.

We didn't want to include them in our military. Their families were in internment camps. And we wouldn't send them to Japan, to the Pacific to fight, we sent them to Europe. And they showed us their love for this country by being the most decorated history in the history of all of our annals.

I think we have to do not like that. What I think we have to do is very targeted, to target for recruitment women, minorities. I think our SOCOM, and I think this is where ASD(SO/LIC).

What do we need to accomplish the missions of this great Nation? What does that framework need to look like? Does that need to be men, women, Asians, African? It doesn't matter, the areas that are most important. And then I think we have to recruit very hard to do that.

But I also think that takes time. It does not happen overnight. Because if we rush it, what we do is put unqualified people who fail.

And what I want to do is have gates, recruitment gates, qualification gates, that are tracked over a long period of time to make sure that we have a force that leads to a lethal force that we need, which includes diversity, and that is culture and women.

Do you agree with that, General Nagata?

General NAGATA. I do. I will be very quick since I know we need to move on to other speakers here.

But, number one, I had two uncles in the 442nd Regimental Combat Team, and both of them told me personally the reason they joined was they felt they were determined to prove the loyalty of Japanese-American citizens because that loyalty was in considerable public doubt at the time.

Getting to this question of today's recruiting challenges, as I said in my prepared remarks, I don't think we understand right now, because there has really been no adequate research about what causes someone from a diverse background or culture to volunteer to serve in special operations forces.

Lots of opinion and anecdote on this, but opinions aren't research. We need research on this question: What motivates or fails to motivate someone to volunteer for SOF?

And I will say, finally, I have learned this from someone who used to run an assessment selection program for me, there are, like, 10 things that have to happen, 10 gates that somebody has to get through and the organization has to get through for someone to serve successfully in SOF.

And he said—I was a colonel at the time—he said, “Colonel Nagata, of these 12 steps, 11 of them, if we screw up any of them, I can recover from that. There is one thing I cannot recover from: bad recruiting.”

So I will leave that for your consideration.

Mr. KELLY. Thank you, General Nagata.

And I yield back, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. GALLEGRO. Thank you, Ranking Member Kelly.

Who do we have first? [Inaudible] Larsen?

Mr. LARSEN. Yeah, thanks, Chair.

So I want to begin with a question for General Nagata and then to Ms. Germano.

Ms. Germano, just quickly, is that the title you prefer for this hearing, or should I call you colonel?

Colonel GERMANO. Sure. Ms. Germano is fine.

Mr. LARSEN. Ms. Germano. Great. Thank you.

So, General Nagata, back to the ranking member's question about not wanting to, like, recruit too quickly or change too quickly.

I agree. So why didn't we start in 1984, when you, yourself, recognized you were one of two Asian Americans and we could have had a 37-year runway to fix this problem? And now do we have to wait another 37 years, because we recognize it as a problem again?

It seems to me like the opposite of moving too quickly is moving way too slowly, which is exactly what we are doing.

Can you, General, in two sentences tell me why not in 1984?

General NAGATA. In 1984, SOF was declining. In fact, when I reported in for the qualification course, I was warned that I was joining a special forces community that was going to be disbanded by the Department of Defense. So I don't think anybody cared, frankly.

Mr. LARSEN. Okay. So kind of somewhat unique.

So let me move now to 2021, Ms. Germano, and refer back to General Nagata's point, a really good one. We have opinion. We have thoughts. We don't have the research to identify necessarily why we can't get a more diverse force.

So what do you know? What can you help us understand? What are the first steps we need to take to move towards that?

Colonel GERMANO. Well, thank you for the question, Representative.

I think, first and foremost, I had two tours on duty with recruiters, once on the executive operations officer side, and then on the other tour I was actually in charge of one of the largest recruiting stations in the Nation. And so I know firsthand what it takes for these Marines to go out and find young kids who not only have the propensity to join, but who believe there is a place for them in the service.

And I think one of the problems that we experience in recruiting is that on the officer side we tend to track diversity much more closely. When officer recruiting missions are assigned on a monthly basis, they are actually broken out by gender and they are actually broken out by racial categories.

On the enlisted side, while we track that data in terms of when people join the service and that data gets computed into the system, we don't actually have missions that are actually broken out by diversity.

So there is a big challenge in saying, well, we need to increase the diversity of the force for innovation and agility and other reasons, and yet we don't have any mechanisms to hold people accountable for making that happen.

So I really think that that is part of the broader problem when it comes to this issue of increasing diversity in the force.

And then the other part is, part of the reason that we don't see larger numbers of diverse kids being recruited is partly because of the makeup of the force that we have now. If the force is predominantly White and male, we are going to see a lag in other groups

joining the service because kids look at the recruiter and they are like, “Well, I don’t know if there is a place for me.”

So I would say it is compounded by not only what the kids read in the media, it is compounded by what the force looks like today. And then it is also compounded by the fact that we don’t track who is coming in when it’s not mentioned.

Mr. LARSEN. Okay.

Mr. Chair, I don’t see a clock anywhere, and I don’t know how much time I have left. Do you have an estimate of my time, Mr. Chair?

Mr. GALLEGO. Shannon?

STAFF. Sir, you have got about a minute and a half left.

Mr. LARSEN. Okay. Thanks.

My next question is for Mr. Mitchell, and this gets into—this actually relates to diversity and recruitment. And Ms. Robinson addressed this a little bit. It has to do with the structure of SOF forces, the teams that are put together.

And I know you have some ideas about how the nature of—the composition of those teams should change in order to address some of these issues about new capabilities.

And I wrote down a term, and I don’t know if SOF is guilty of this, but I wrote down “capability lock.” They are locked in their current set of abilities and not able to make changes organizationally to add additional capabilities.

I wonder if you can kind of relate those two issues.

Mr. MITCHELL. Yes, sir. Thanks for that question.

I would associate myself with my good friend, General Nagata, on this, is that there is a static approach to it, and I think all bureaucracies kind of have a hard time changing.

And as I mentioned in my opening remarks, USSOCOM, General Thomas had committed to an experimental force. That was quietly shelved by General Clarke.

And I think a rigorous experimentation, looking at not only new technologies but new personnel skills. The 21st century economy has created all kinds of new skills. And I think it is important for us to bring in people with new skills and figure out how we incorporate them on the battlefield.

And it is not simply enough to say, well, we have got some people here at headquarters, that we can reach back. We need to be able to put these people at the tactical edge, out there on the missions.

And we are not going to get there unless we do that fundamental reassessment of our missions and what we expect of our force and are willing to take creative risks, and we can do that with an experimentation force.

Mr. LARSEN. That is probably my minute and a half. I would just probably note, if we were able to do that, we might be able to broaden the attractiveness in recruitment.

Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. GALLEGO. Thank you, Representative Larsen.

Now we will move to Representative Scott.

Mr. SCOTT. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I just want to mention this, first and foremost. I mean, all of us that are Members are responsible for making recommendations to



the academy [inaudible] graduating class for the academies, that is probably what the leadership is going to look like in the military within the next—in the next 20 years.

And so interested in any comments on how we get more minority participation at the academy level, because, candidly, that is where the leadership is going to come from for the most part.

I know, General Nagata, you went to Georgia State, which is in my home State. Great school.

But I have several people that are of Indian heritage and Asian heritage, but I have very little minority participation when it comes to requesting a slot into the academies.

So any thoughts on that particular issue and how we fix that? Because that is what our force structure is going to look like in the future at the command level.

General Nagata, you want to take that?

General NAGATA. Yes, sir. Thank you.

I completely agree that there needs to be more emphasis on all three of the forms of commissioning. So that would be the military academies, ROTC [Reserve Officers' Training Corps], and then every service has its own version of what I went to. I went to Officer Candidate School. It is the smallest producer of commissioned officers in the Army, but it is still significant.

So all three need greater emphasis, but the nature of the emphasis is what matters. People will chase what they believe has an incentive that they want.

And that is just not—I am not just talking about the recruits themselves. I am talking about the mechanism that Kate Germano used to serve within, the mechanisms the services have to identify and recruit more diverse populations.

When is the last time—I am asking this rhetorically—when is the last time a recruiting official inside the Department of Defense was promoted because they successfully recruited a more diverse population? And when was the last time somebody was not promoted because they failed to recruit a more diverse population?

That is only one example of the incentives I am talking about; people will do what they believe is in their best interest. If more people in DOD believe it is in their best interest to recruit more and bring in more diverse officers or enlisted personnel, it will absolutely happen. Right now that is not the case.

Mr. SCOTT. Well, I guess my follow-up would be, I can't nominate somebody that doesn't apply for the nomination. And that is where—I mean, even when we have gone to principals and said, "Hey, I need minorities who are good athletes, who have A's, and we have got scholarships for them."

And to be candid with you, the people in the school system just freeze up, and there is nothing—if you are targeting someone to help them, it is different than targeting somebody to hurt them, and we have just got to be able to have some more candid conversation, I think, around these issues in the public if we are going to get there.

So for Mark Mitchell—

General NAGATA. Could I respond?

Mr. SCOTT. Yes, sir.

General NAGATA. I will be very brief.

I am going to repeat something I said in my prepared remarks. I think if you go looking for how much actual research there is on why or why not diverse candidates apply for military service, I think you will be as shocked as I was how little actual research there is.

This topic is loaded with personal opinion, but that is not the same thing as research.

Mr. SCOTT. That is right. That is right.

Mr. Mitchell, in your testimony you suggest adding new military occupational specialties to ensure the right technical skills are resident in the SOF forces.

Could you identify which specific occupational specialties you recommend adding and how they are essential to great power competition?

Mr. MITCHELL. Sure. Thank you for your question.

I first want to just say my daughter is a senior at West Point getting ready to graduate this year. And I think the opportunities come, maybe think about going around the schools and going directly to the communities and the diasporas and making a pitch to them.

On the issue of the SOF skills, I don't have a list, but I know there are things like artificial intelligence and machine learning that are important in the environment today, and it is not sufficient to take somebody who has not been through a rigorous assessment, selection, and training and to bolt them onto a team, because I think that adds undue risk.

So I would look for USSOCOM and its components to create technical specialties for these operators, again, whether it is cyber, a SOF cyber operator who can be at the edge of the battlefield and it is not an additional duty on top of his weapons training in Army Special Forces, or something else; somebody who is specifically trained to do those kind of technical skills at the edge of the battlefield.

Mr. GALLEGO. Thank you, Mr. Scott.

Mr. SCOTT. Thank you, Chairman.

Mr. GALLEGO. Not a problem.

The next round of questions goes to Representative Keating.

Mr. KEATING. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I would like to thank the witnesses.

I have two questions. Number one to Mr. Nagata.

I was interested if you could go a little further on developing your opening remarks. I thought they were quite telling when you were talking about the importance of diversity and culture when it comes not just to our adversaries but where you deploy, the environment around where you are deployed, and how important that is to our success overall. If you could expand on that, I would appreciate it.

General NAGATA. Thank you, sir. I will try to come at this in two ways, but very briefly.

First of all—and this does connect with the strain and stress on the force, but I am going to say it anyways because it is so important.

The exposure in complex foreign environments is vital to developing the skills necessary for the kinds of contests of influence that

permeate great power competition. This entire thing is a tug of war of U.S. influence versus our adversaries' influence over the countries, the nations, the populations that each of us are vying for the affection of. The more special operations forces can live and operate within those environments, the more effective they will be.

It is one thing to learn a language at a language training lab in the United States. It is quite another thing to learn that language in the neighborhood where that is what everybody speaks.

Now, of course, as soon as I say that, people say, "Oh, more family separation." Well, here is the question that I don't think we have adequately wrestled with. Why, at least for noncombat deployments, why can't families go? Why can't families go to incentivize special operations personnel staying longer in these environments, to become more culturally linguistically capable, and thereby become better competitors against Russian, Chinese, or other actors that probably won't do that? That is one example.

The second one—and, again, I will be brief for the sake of time—is that this is going to require special operations forces to invest more heavily in things that have nothing to do with weapons training. And I am going to use language training specifically.

Whether it is abroad or at home, I think it is long past time for language proficiency to be a promotion requirement, not a "nice to have." If you are going to get promoted, you have to demonstrate proficiency in a foreign language.

Thank you.

Mr. KEATING. I think that the example you gave with Crimea and Ukraine demonstrates that as well.

And thank you for your service.

And I think this is an important issue. We are severely at a deficiency in that regard.

A quick question, Ms. Germano, if I may.

In terms of an issue that I have been dealing with for a number of years, as well as members of this committee have been dealing with, in terms of inclusion, could you comment on the status of women's health resources and how that can be problematic in the SOF environment?

Colonel GERMANO. Thank you for the question.

I think that that is actually related to both inclusion and equity.

So we still find that there are barriers to women's service because of the equipment that they have to wear. And this is really the first year that we are seeing combat equipment be tailored to the female form. So I would say that it is maybe less of an inclusion issue and more of a long-term issue related to equity there.

There is still a lot of work that needs to be done. I mean, I just heard a horror story about a woman who was actually jumping out of an aircraft with her breast pump so that she could immediately go to a vehicle and prepare for a meal for her child.

So these are still issues both from a cultural perspective and then also [inaudible] perspective. We need to understand that these are just physiological medical issues. They are related to the health of the force, not specifically to the health of women.

Thank you.

Mr. KEATING. I agree. Thank you so much for that.

Mr. Chairman, I yield back.

Thank you for your service, ma'am.

Colonel GERMANO. Thank you.

Mr. GALLEGO. Thank you, Mr. Keating.

Our next person up is Mr. Waltz for 5 minutes.

Mr. WALTZ. Yeah. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

First, I just want to start with a comment. I want to associate myself with the comments from General Nagata, particularly in the language training. As an Army Special Forces officer, that is critical to what we do.

I would be interested in his thoughts, but perhaps at another time, in expanding that training, at least through the SOF force, because the Navy, Air Force, and others do not have that training.

I do want to make a broader point, and before I get into my questions, really for my colleagues. But also, Linda, it is great to see you again.

I am hearing a lot of kind of zero-sum discussion on counterterrorism versus great power competition, the shift of the force, realigning the force, rightsizing the force.

And I feel very strongly that participating in counterterrorism is often allowing us access and placement for great power competition. We have seen that in the Philippines where we have an ongoing counterterrorism force and Philippine officials are repeatedly telling us that the only reason that we still have a foothold in the Philippines at all, where obviously great power competition is at its height, is because of the counterterrorism assistance we are providing them.

We have seen it in Kenya. We just saw it, actually a great example, in Mozambique, where the government first went to the Chinese, then went to the Russians, went to the Wagner Group, and a mercenary group.

None of that worked. And now they are working with our Green Berets, who now have access and placement to understand what the Chinese and Russians are doing there, but it is because of that counterterrorism mission.

So I think we need to be very careful about that kind of zero-sum mentality.

Linda, my first question is for you. I keyed in on a statement where you said three women have received a Green Beret, but it is not where the force should be.

So my first question, do you agree with the Army's move towards gender-neutral physical standards where they, I think—and I will just tell you where I am—very rightly said to be a Green Beret or a Ranger or an infantryman requires a different level of physicality than to be a supply clerk or to be a pilot or to be a cyber warrior, and did away with gender standards, male and female, and made it more tailored towards the standards that the job required.

And I will tell you, from my perspective, for me this discussion is about standards, not gender, race, religion, or creed, because that is what combat requires. I pushed for female engagement teams because there was a need on the battlefield. I pushed—actually just passed legislation helping with maternity uniforms. I think that was just discussed.

But my concern is that, on the one hand, we make all of these areas accessible—and I think that is absolutely right—but then a

few years later we start questioning, well, why do we only have certain numbers in the force?

So, one, do you agree with the gender-neutral standard physicality? And then my next question is, how many women have applied through the Special Forces course?

Ms. ROBINSON. Thank you very much, Mike. Representative Waltz, it is great to see you, and I appreciate the question.

And I do believe gender-neutral standards are important, and standards need to be high, because that is the essence of what special operations forces require. And people have mentioned the 1999 RAND study, which I did not participate in, but it is notable that there were a number of barriers identified regarding test scores, swimming requirements, and lack of role models.

And I think there are a lot of subtle barriers that remain that can be addressed without lowering standards, which was one of the concerns expressed by those in the 2016 study, as well as effect on unit cohesion.

But I think training and socialization to prepare candidates to be successful can help more candidates meet those standards.

And then—

Mr. WALTZ. Linda?

Ms. ROBINSON. Yes.

Mr. WALTZ. So you disagree with the decision then that the Army just made where they are now reversing course and going back to male and female physical standards?

And one of the reasons was because they said, well, in the combat arms, obviously, that affects your ability to promote and your ability to rise and your ability to have access. And now they are getting a lot of pressure that having one standard is now discriminatory.

So it seems to me some groups are talking out of both sides of their mouth here. On the one hand, allow full access and the standards matter, they shouldn't be lowered, we shouldn't have tokenism; but when we don't have a certain number to get through, then we are having to—you know, there is a lot of pressure on the Army to now reverse course, and they have actually just made the decision to reverse course.

So now we are going to have male and female standards for the infantry, for Special Forces, for artillery, and last I checked, enemies' bullets don't care. Carrying that guy to the helicopter doesn't care. The artillery round doesn't care. It is a standard.

Mr. GALLEGO. Mr. Waltz—

Mr. WALTZ. So do you agree with that move then?

Mr. GALLEGO. We have to cut that short. If you want to do a yes/no answer or a maybe.

Ms. ROBINSON. Yes. And I would be happy to follow up. Thank you.

Mr. GALLEGO. We will also conduct a second round of questions for those members that have further questions.

Mr. WALTZ. Great. Thanks.

Mr. GALLEGO. Thank you, Mr. Waltz. Appreciate it.

Next we are turning this over to Representative—Vice Chair, I should say—Stephanie Murphy.

Mrs. MURPHY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

And thank you to our witnesses today.

I wanted to kind of pull the thread a little bit on what General Nagata said around the idea that a lot of the conflict is in the gray zone, and even looking at what SOCOM has done in setting up info ops, sort of a fusion center for that, and elevating those capabilities.

I used to work in OSD Policy in SO/LIC, SOCT [Special Operations and Combating Terrorism], and then I was out at the Pacific Command in the J3 [Operations Directorate]. And at that time there was this sort of distinction between white SOF and black SOF. And white SOF tends to have the skill set that we are talking about in the info ops space, in that kind of—you know, it is our MISOs. It is our folks who are trained that way.

But back in the early 2000s there was quite a bit of discrimination, maybe, or prejudice, that white SOF wasn't really SOF.

One, can you talk to me a bit about whether that culture has changed around that? And if it hasn't, does it impact your ability to grow that capability? And how can we change that cultural lens in order to encourage recruitment and retainment in that area?

General NAGATA. Thank you very much. This is such an enormous topic, but I will try to be brief.

A little unusual. If you take my career in special operations, cut it literally in half, half of my time was in—I actually don't like these terms, but I will use them—black SOF, the other in white SOF. So I have seen it from both sides.

I would argue that right after 9/11, not just special operations, but the whole U.S. military's obvious priority was capturing and killing terrorists. We then learned over time that capturing and killing terrorists is great if we are trying to save people's lives, but it actually doesn't do a thing to reduce the volume of terrorism that we are having to deal with.

And so over time I watched the SOF community suddenly start remembering, oh, yeah, these other skills we have, in psychological operations, in information operations, in local capacity building, in being better at interacting with other departments and agencies of the U.S. Government, like USAID [United States Agency for International Development], like State Department, the intelligence community, those are just as important as our ability to kill or capture terrorists.

So it reminds me of what Churchill said about Americans: We will always do the right thing after we exhaust every other alternative.

So I think there has been a reawakening in the SOF community, now that we are in great power competition, now that increasingly we are seeing this as a war of influence, where occasionally we will need to use bullets and bombs, but more frequently we will have to solve very complex problems that do not involve the use of physical force.

So things like the WebOpsCenter, things like our psychological operations organizations, other things that we can train our SOF operators on will become increasingly important that have nothing to do with using physical force.

But, frankly, is there still a tug of war between the kinetic and nonkinetic sides of SOF? Sure, there is, and perhaps there always

will be. But the bias clearly needs to be on anything that helps us engage in a war of influence.

Mrs. MURPHY. And so to follow on to that, a lot of the way in which you can drive the Department and the services into making certain missions priorities is through appropriations and resources.

Do you feel like the allocation of resources is appropriate for the direction in which the special ops should be going in?

General NAGATA. No. And I will give you two reasons why. One is an example. This is specific to counterterrorism, but it is pretty much true for everything.

My last position, I was the Director of Strategy at the National Counterterrorism Center. I did an annual review of what we euphemistically called the counterterrorism budget of the United States. There really is no such thing, as I am sure you are aware. But we did the best we could at analyzing where money went when it came to counterterrorism.

I doubt you will be surprised to know that well over 90 percent of all annual appropriations for counterterrorism activities go towards the use of physical force against terrorists and 1 percent or less goes to anything that might relate to nonkinetic approaches to counterterrorism.

And that is not the same thing as great power competition, but I will bet any empirical analysis of where money is going for great power competition would probably show you a very similar disproportionate distribution.

Finally, so long as documents, very important documents, like the National Defense Strategy, and just rhetoric coming out of U.S. Government and DOD policymakers emphasize words like “get more lethal,” they are inadvertently undermining investments that don’t involve bombs and bullets.

Mrs. MURPHY. Thank you.

Mr. GALLEGO. Thank you, Representative Murphy.

Now moving on to Representative Franklin.

Mr. FRANKLIN. Well, thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you. I really appreciate the testimony of the witnesses this morning. As a new member of the committee, this is really helping me expand my understanding, particularly around the area of ASD(SO/LIC).

And I guess my first question will be for Mr. Mitchell.

Regarding ASD(SO/LIC), since you have held this role, what should this committee be considering in the form of oversight regarding the structures and authorities for that role going forward? You have talked about this a little bit, but I would love for you to expand on that a little bit more.

Mr. MITCHELL. Yes. Thank you, Mr. Franklin, for that.

I think the committee should focus on, first of all, the relationship that ASD(SO/LIC) actually does have with the Secretary in enforcing the law, that it cannot be interfered with and there’s administrative duties as opposed to the operational role.

And I think the other piece is the resourcing of ASD(SO/LIC). As I mentioned earlier, they have only got a staff of about 40. They are growing it.

But over time, they need to add the specialists that can help them address all of the core civilian functions that they deal with.

And that is acquisition, auditing, the Comptroller, information management, the Inspector General, leg [legislative] affairs, public affairs, research and development.

Those are all inherently civilian-led functions that currently, if truth be told, are controlled by the SOCOM commander in this enterprise and really need to be transferred to the direct control of ASD(SO/LIC).

Mr. FRANKLIN. Okay. Thank you.

General Nagata, you had mentioned that our special operations forces are inadequately preparing for great power competition. You cited a couple of ways we could be doing things better, such as language training, recruitment policies and procedures.

Could you expand on that a little more? Are there areas, other areas, that you think we could be doing a better job of preparing for great power competition?

General NAGATA. Thank you.

I did not intend to convey that SOF is unprepared. I do think it could be better prepared.

Part of this is inhibited by what I have already talked about. There is so much emphasis on getting ready for a high-end conflict in the Department of Defense that it inadvertently reduces the incentive for SOCOM and special operations forces to either sustain or increase their investments in nonkinetic solutions, capacity building, things that don't involve direct combat, because the noise that is drumming in everybody's ears is get more lethal.

But perhaps more practically, I think it is time for another review of the authorities by which combatant commanders and the SOCOM commander can deploy forces abroad. In the last 20 years, most of the new authorities have been exclusively for counterterrorism purposes, and there is nothing wrong with that, because counterterrorism was such a priority at the time. Some of that is fungible for the kinds of deployments that are needed now.

But it begs the question, if we need to send special operations personnel to a part of the world where there is no declared terrorist threat, but there is an enormous struggle over American influence in that part of the world that we may not be winning—in many cases we are not winning those contests—are there existing authorities, is there existing funding to undergird the deployment and the operations and the maintenance of a substantial special operations effort in that part of the world?

I would argue in large measure I think it would require all of the DOD lawyers to go scrambling to figure out how they could take legacy counterterrorism authorities and somehow twist them to comport with great power competition. I think it is time to look for perhaps a new batch of authorities.

Mr. FRANKLIN. Thank you.

You had mentioned—when we were talking about the stress and strain on the force, that had me thinking down a different line. And there may not be enough time to fully dive into this, and I can submit it later for a deeper response from everyone on the panel. I would really love your opinions.

But I was a 26-year operator, not Special Forces, but a naval aviator, and it is just part of the military culture and ethos that you



just suck it up and get things done. I mean, that is part of what makes it such a special job.

And sometimes we are our own worst enemies, that we don't push back when probably we should, and that is part of the bravado culture. But I am also tired of burying friends of mine, as I have had a number of friends who have committed suicide after leaving their service.

I agree with you that this is not going to be a pivot situation. It is not a CT "or" great power competition. It is going to be an "and." And the burden is going to be on the troops to suck it up and get the job done.

What can we be doing from an oversight role to help our Active Duty forces help themselves? When it comes to support for mental counseling, I liked your—the thought was an interesting one about having families deploy in a noncombat situation. But I would love to get yours' and others' thoughts on how we can be better supporting our Active Duty forces in that regard.

General NAGATA. Sir, I will be very brief. Two suggestions.

One, I think we should examine the distribution and the density of psychological professional support inside special operations forces. In the community I grew up, there was lots of psychological support in some units; in others very little.

The entire force needs more psychological professional support so that the commanders, as they are making hard choices about when to deploy people, how long to deploy people, there is a psychological professional at their side giving them advice about the intangible nonphysical stress on the force, which, in my judgment, is in many ways more dangerous than the physical strain on the force.

The second one is about how at the policy level, at the policy level, and this I think dovetails nicely into the conversations about ASD(SO/LIC) and the things it needs to be able to do that it can't—

Mr. GALLEGO. General Nagata, please wrap up.

General NAGATA. ASD(SO/LIC) needs to be able to fund research.

Mr. GALLEGO. There you go. That is a good one.

Okay. Perfect.

Thank you, General Nagata.

Thank you, Representative Franklin.

We are going to move now to Representative Bacon.

Mr. BACON. Thank you. I appreciate that, Mr. Chair.

And I thank our panelists.

I have just got a couple of comments because most of my questions were already asked. But this debate a little bit on how much should Special Forces be focusing on near-peer competitors [audio malfunction] National Defense Strategy, I think is right with the near-peer competitor focus.

Our Special Forces needs to be the champion or the premier capability against counterterror. We are still going to need that capability. And so they should be the experts on that, in my view.

Secondly, when we are talking about culture, we have got to be careful we don't throw the baby out with the bathwater here. We want warrior culture. We want people with indomitable spirit. Not to say we can't have refinements, not to say people don't need to seek support after continuous deployments.

But the fact is we want warriors. We want people who have a high confidence they are going to win on the battlefield there.

And I say that as someone, I have had two different deployments with the Special Forces, though I was on the conventional side, and I also did information operations. But I was so impressed with the team.

My one area of question is, there is no doubt that the OPS-TEMPO [operations tempo] and the continuous combat deployments have a strain. Are we seeing this OPSTEMPO get better? Is it starting to go down? My sense is that it is, but I am not sure that is really the case.

And I will just yield to anybody who may have some information on that.

Thank you.

Ms. ROBINSON. I can address that.

The OPTEMPO has indeed improved. Fifteen percent decline in deployments was the official SOCOM figure, but they have not yet reached the desired deployment-to-dwell ratio of 1:2, much less to 1:3. So there is, I think, demonstrable evidence that the force is still being overdeployed.

And I just want to take this moment to acknowledge, I in no way would disagree that counterterrorism is a critical and core mission for SOF. It is simply the rebalance, in my view, is not sufficient.

And I also think throughout the last 20 years we have overemphasized the tactical direct action aspect rather than trying to affect the pipeline and trying to affect the long term. And some of our signal successes have been, I will note, building the counterterrorism service in Iraq, which actually fought most of the counter-ISIS [Islamic State of Iraq and Syria] fight.

So I am an advocate for strategic use of our force and finding allies and partners and building them to take on much of these lesser roles.

Thank you.

Mr. BACON. I would have to agree with you on that one. We can train our allies to do many of these missions. That is a force multiplier. So you have got my vote on that one.

Anybody else?

Mr. MITCHELL. Good morning, Representative Bacon.

I would just like to add here, I had a long discussion with a good friend of mine in 5th [Special Forces] Group the other day. And first of all, their POTFF, the way they have integrated all of their abilities there, I think is a great model. I would encourage the committee to go take a look at that.

And on the issue of deployability, General Nagata touched on this, and I think it is important to remember, men and women go into our communities, in the SOF community, because they want to be actively engaged.

So my own experience as a commander in the community and then as ASD(SO/LIC) is that a 1:2 is probably about right. I think when we get to 1:3, we really start to kind of lose our edge of what we need to stay engaged downrange.

So I think there is no denying it has gotten better. People are looking for predictability and sustainability.

Thank you.

Mr. BACON. I thank you.  
I yield back, Mr. Chair.

Mr. GALLEGO. Next to Chairman Takano.

Mr. TAKANO. Thank you. Thank you, Chairman Gallego, for inviting me to this hearing. And as chairman of the House Veterans' Affairs Committee, I believe we really do have to work together to support all veterans who have worn the uniform of our great Nation, including women, racial and ethnic minorities, Native Americans, and members of the LGBT [lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender] community.

Today's service members are tomorrow's veterans, and in the case of the Reserve and National Guard, some are both.

Now, understanding today's challenges will help us support the veterans community in years to come.

My first questions are for General Nagata.

In your testimony, your testimony notes that there is a shortage of longitudinal research on the specific impacts of the effects of deployments, prolonged combat exposure to blasts and trauma, family separation, and so on, as related to SOF.

My first question. Mental health and suicide prevention are among my top priorities, and based on your observation in 30 years in the SOF community, how would you characterize the impact of high operational tempo in the mental health of SOF operators and enablers?

General NAGATA. Thank you, sir.

Obviously, not being an expert in this field, all I can tell you is that I am convinced that the strain and stresses of particularly the last two decades have had lasting, in some cases devastating, mental health and psychological impacts on too many of my brethren over the last 20 years.

I, myself, have some psychological issues because of some of the strains and stresses in my career. I have learned to live with them.

Number one, I should have been more aggressive in seeking help, and, frankly, there should have been more help available. A lot of that has gotten better over the years, but I still don't think it is where it needs to be.

But, much more importantly, going back to your reference to my prepared remarks, there are a lot of people who believe that because there is a fair amount of research about the U.S. military broadly and the impact of war, that special operations forces are, therefore, covered. They are not covered.

Special operations forces operate differently. We have a different culture. As a general rule, we have a higher deployment rate. We get involved in situations that nobody else in the Department gets involved in.

So I will just reiterate my original argument. There needs to be SOF-specific research on the impact of everything from deployment tempo to the effects of blast and trauma and everything in between if we are to be more effective in helping people like I once was.

Mr. TAKANO. Sir, General, do you think that there are additional factors, such as the threat or experience of military sexual trauma, that also might be of concern for women who served in SOF?

General NAGATA. Yes, there are, because there are females that serve in special operations commands around the world. They are

just as vulnerable to the kinds of misbehavior and mistreatment that females can be vulnerable to anywhere else in the force.

I am unaware of any studies or scientific research into whether it is disproportionate in SOF, but I have personally witnessed females being mistreated in special operations forces. I have had to take Uniform Code of Military Justice action against such perpetrators.

Mr. TAKANO. Can you tell me how you think the Department of Veterans Affairs might be leveraged to assist with the longitudinal research that you have alluded to?

General NAGATA. Two ways.

One is, I suspect, I am not familiar with the data holdings of the Veterans Affairs Administration, but I would imagine they have abundant data that could contribute to such research.

But secondly, frankly, sir, over the course of my career, the number of times I had reason to care about what the Veterans Administration was doing for myself and my operators was almost zero, and it shouldn't be that way.

Perhaps that was partially my fault. Maybe I should have been conducting greater outreach. But I cannot actually ever remember a conversation in my career where the Veterans Administration's roles, missions, or contributions figured prominently, and it shouldn't be that way.

Mr. TAKANO. Well, thank you for that.

Lieutenant Colonel Germano, your testimony highlights the impact of emotions, not facts, on resistance to the integration of women into SOF elements. Even though women like Virginia Hall were part of SOF in its earlier days, when it was known as the Office of Strategic Services, the inertia remains.

How can that resistance contribute to gender-based violence, such as sexual harassment and assault? And how can that resistance be overcome?

Colonel GERMANO. Thank you for the question. And I appreciate your mentioning the historical figure there.

I think that that is a really interesting point in that the individual that you brought up is a pioneer, and virtually every other woman who has followed her into the special operations community has been a pioneer. So there is a lack of density in the community when it comes to how we are bringing individuals who are not of the majority group.

So I think that part of this issue is about solving the recruiting problem, and then part of this issue is about the culture in and of itself.

When we think of resistance to change, it is all emotion driven. And so there is a lot of anger. There is a lot of skepticism. There are a lot of feelings of perceived loss if we broaden the aperture for bringing in people who don't fit the dominant group.

We have to be willing to address those emotions first on, first by normalizing them and saying it is understandable that you may feel these things. And then there needs to be some semblance of justification to not only why it is important to make the change, but also how bringing in additional people who don't look like the majority group will actually make the group stronger.

And that goes to my point about needing tangible studies that demonstrate why bringing in nondominant-group members make the force more lethal and more operationally competent.

I hope that answered that question.

Mr. TAKANO. Thank you so much.

Mr. Mitchell, while you were at the Pentagon, how did the Preservation of the Force—

Mr. GALLEGO. I apologize, Chair Takano, your 5 minutes are up. But we are going to do second rounds. And so if you stick around, I am sure not everyone is going to have a second question and you could continue with any questions you want.

Mr. TAKANO. Sure. Thank you, Chairman Gallego. And if I can come back, I will do that. Otherwise, I will submit it for the record.

Mr. GALLEGO. Okay. Thank you, Chairman. I really appreciate it.

So we are going to go to second rounds, and I am going to start the rotation again.

I think I would like in general to have a general question to the panel of what is the advantage of a more diverse SOF that is more reflective of America in race, ethnicity, and gender, and why is this important and what we gain from this in the global fight.

And the reason I am asking this is because what I want to make sure people understand is we want diversity because we think that makes us more effective, not for the sake of diversity.

And I think that is something that we need to communicate out there because I think there is a lot of misinformation where somehow we are asking for diversity because we somehow want to be more progressive.

Can I start with Germano? Could you start and give us your opinion?

Colonel GERMANO. Yes. And I appreciate you making the distinction.

And I want to start off by saying that is really where a lot of the resistance comes from, this general perception by the majority of the military public that we are just doing this to check the block.

And so this idea that we don't have any real studies that quantify how minorities make us a stronger force is a real linchpin to the potential success of not only the force in the future, but also diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts.

The only way to reduce doubt and skepticism is by addressing the doubts and skepticism, that's the emotional aspect, but then also being able to provide facts, saying, look, these are the individuals who have these skills that are then contributing to the operational mission.

And right now we don't have that. We are trying to take civilian studies and case studies from the finance and tech sectors, for example, and apply what makes them successful to the military, and it is comparing apples to oranges.

So I hope that helped.

Mr. GALLEGO. Thank you.

Mr. Mitchell.

Mr. MITCHELL. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I would harken back to General Nagata's comments earlier and my own remarks. This is a global competition that we are in.

And populations are also mobile. In the Middle East, you find large populations from Asia, from the Philippines, from Sri Lanka, from Bangladesh. And that is all over the world.

We have this great human capital here. And in the furtherance of operational effectiveness, looking at global competition and building influence, that is why we need these men and women with native cultural and language skills.

Mr. GALLEGO. Thank you.

Ms. Robinson.

Ms. ROBINSON. I would just note that women make up half the population, yes, so we really need to ensure their ability to connect. And we saw with the use of the FETs [female engagement teams] as mentioned, these cultural support teams, having women in the formation were of great value.

And just simply the language and cultural understanding to operate across the world is just a direct requirement for a more diverse force.

And I would like to say I think the issue of standards can really be something of a shibboleth. We need to address the barriers that have been identified, and recruitment and retention should be part of special operations forces' priority.

So once you get a more diverse force, you need to work to keep it and to promote it.

Mr. GALLEGO. Great.

And, General Nagata.

General NAGATA. Thank you, sir.

I mentioned in my prepared remarks I have been responsible for two different assessment selection courses in SOF, and in both instances the maxim that we held to was our job was not to produce the world's greatest door kickers, although door kicking is involved.

Our highest responsibility was to develop the world's greatest problem solvers. And there is no more wicked problem today than great power competition, and a lot of it will not involve shooting anybody, but it will require outcompeting everybody.

So one of the oldest truths about problem solving is the more homogeneous your team is for solving the problem, the less likely you are to find the solution. The more heterogeneous your team is, the more likely you are to solve the problem.

Mr. GALLEGO. Thank you, Mr. Nagata.

And now I will turn to Ranking Member Kelly for a second round of questions.

Mr. KELLY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

And I want to start with—and I am going to use a new movie, "The Liberator," which I watched, about the Thunderbird Division at Anzio and other places.

But in one part at the end of the movie, Felix Sparks is talking to General Patton, and General Patton gives his 40 years of experience and all of the theaters and wars that he has been involved in, and he says, "My days in actual combat are less than yours." And Felix Sparks' were consecutive.

General Nagata, you understand what I am talking about. Psychological teams at the point nearest to the actual action is required and necessary. I know that from personal experience, whether you want it as a combat soldier or not.

And I will tell you, all combat experiences are not the same. And I would say the professional operators and the amount and intensity of the conflicts that they are involved in is much different.

So I agree that we need psychological warriors in the formation with them at all times, and I also think that we need to research them specifically.

I want to go to my next point, and some of these you may have to take for the record. But we have the Tuskegee Airmen, we have the 442nd Regimental Combat Team, we have African Americans which were segregated in World War II and World War I, which led to now the integration of the forces. But that is not the right solution, so I am not saying that.

But what ideas or what ways can we do it the right way this time when we are inclusive of women or people who are different and diverse? How can we as a DOD, how can we specially address this problem?

And then the second question is, is what tools and metrics and gates can we use to have truly measurable results on the impact that these things are having in changing the force?

And I teach this to kids all the time, our young soldiers or young staffers, and I tell them, "Choose your mentors well."

But I think we need to have a program where our mentors are focused and forced to choose their protégés well, and they need to be diverse to make sure that they have ownership in their successes.

And if you guys can answer that.

And, Ruben, just cut me off when time is up.

Mr. GALLEGO. You got it.

You want to start? Why don't we start with Ms. Robinson.

Ms. ROBINSON. Yes. Thank you.

I think this is a critically important point. And I think that while SOF recruits primarily from the services, it also has direct accession as well. And I think it is critically important that SOF do more in partnership with the services to recruit a diverse candidate pool.

Retired members of the community from diverse backgrounds should be engaged to help with this recruitment. More funding for recruitment at Historically Black Colleges and Universities can help encourage people, thus recruited, to branch into SOF fields.

So it is a panoply of efforts across the recruitment spectrum.

And then, as I mentioned, I think it is very important for senior leaders to be vocal and visible on this front and send a clear message that diversity is a priority; and, similarly, responding to incidences of bias or hazing.

This has to require a swift and uniform response, and I think it has been—there is still a cultural bias, as I mentioned, mentioning the statistics earlier, and the leadership of the SOF community has to embrace this as the top priority.

And I would note, I think that having the Secretary of Defense in the leadership role on this, he has been very clear, and he, himself, is modeling some of the needed behaviors.

Thank you.

Mr. KELLY. Hey, Ruben, if I can reclaim? I have one more I would like.

Mr. GALLEGO. Yes.

Mr. KELLY. And, really, guys, I really want you to submit for the record ideas on this.

But my second thing is, are we measuring the right attributes for our special forces warriors or our warriors in general, regardless of which service they are in? You know, the CT test or armed combat physical test, are we measuring the things that really matter?

Because, let me tell you, a 110-pound person cannot drag me off the battlefield. I weigh 220 pounds. So I don't care whether they are male, female, Asian, it does not matter, the physical impossibility.

But are we measuring the right things to make sure that we have combat effectiveness? And are we using the right tools?

I think we are using an antiquated system of what it means to be a warrior in order. Because let me tell you what it takes. It takes physical endurance. It takes mental toughness. It takes stamina. It takes the ability not to quit. Those things are not measurable in push-ups or sit-ups or a 2-mile run, but all those things also go into measurement.

So I would also be interested in what units of measurement would we be able to use right now to truly test the combat readiness of our warriors?

Mr. GALLEGO. We are about less than a minute for that.

Who would you like that question to go to, Representative Kelly?

Mr. KELLY. General Nagata, because I think from his thing he may have the best answer on that.

Mr. GALLEGO. Okay. General Nagata.

General NAGATA. Thank you.

This is going to sound like a biased answer because I come from the special operations community. But my personal opinion is if there is any force in the Department of Defense who gets it more right than wrong when it comes to what are we trying to select for, what are we looking for, it is the special operations community.

In my view, the two most important examples of this are—one I have already mentioned. Much of our development program is based on giving people a problem that actually can't be solved, there is no right answer, but they never quit. As long as they never quit, they are the right cut of cloth for us. It is when they start quitting that we realize, nope, you can't be a special operator.

The second one is a desire, a natural propensity for being in complexity. Most people, if given a choice between being in a simple environment or a complex environment, will always choose the simple environment. The best people we select in SOF, they go the other way: Oh, that is more complex, let me in there.

Mr. GALLEGO. Thank you, Mr. Nagata.

Now we will move on to Representative Larsen.

Mr. LARSEN. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

And my next set of questions are first for Ms. Germano on this issue that Ranking Member Kelly brought up about combat effectiveness. And this can apply to anyone, but I want Ms. Germano to answer it first because it seems that the definition of combat is changing as well. It is very different than it was 20 years ago when we were literally kicking down doors in Afghanistan and Iraq.



So if it is changing, how can that be put into the organization so that the training and standards match what kind of combat we are going to expect from SOF?

And then next, does that not open the aperture for any number of other kinds of folks to be interested in being part of SOF?

So a very loaded question. There is only one answer, but go ahead and answer it.

Colonel GERMANO. Yes or no, yes or no, yes or no.

It is an interesting predicament because we can't predict what is going to happen in the future, but what we can do is we can take past data and past types of conflict to assess what skills are most needed.

And I think that one of the areas where we have missed the boat in terms of recruiting efforts, specifically for Special Forces, but also largely for the military in general, is that we don't take operational plans and the risks that we are assessing as potential imminent conflicts, we don't translate those down into recruiting goals and metrics.

So I think that there is a lot of work to be done to connect the dots between the two, because, as was mentioned earlier, there is a really long tooth to tail to get kids in the pipeline and actually qualified to speak a language and do all those other things.

So I think really this idea about predicting which conflicts are going to happen and then what skills people will need to be successful, that has to be connected back to recruiting, and there has to be growth in terms of how our recruiting force in general looks at who the best candidates are to fit those needs.

There are a lot of assumptions, there are a lot of assumptions that go into recruiting kids, and there are a lot of stereotypes that are in the minds of the recruiters who are approaching kids to join the service.

So when we think about propensity to serve, that is not really a scientific term, and it is loaded because that is all influenced by the stereotypes and biases that the recruiting force has. So we need to work on that as well.

Mr. LARSEN. As a follow-up, let's fast forward 10 years, let's say 10 years, and instead of two or three women in the Green Berets, it is a much larger number, and many more women across all of the special operators.

Today, would they have the support network to even serve? And what kind of changes do we need to make to personnel policy, to family leave, to childcare within the military to actually be supportive?

Because I am sure that we have done the same thing for all the men in the special operations forces over the last 40 years. That is, address some of the needs. Not all of them. Clearly, that is why we have POTFF.

But we would need to make those changes, but those don't even—those don't exist now at all. I mean, we are not doing anything to support this. Even if we were able to recruit, we are not doing much of anything to help support inclusion. And we ought to, it seems.

Colonel GERMANO. As I mentioned a little bit earlier, this goes back to not only how we are bringing people into the pipeline, but how we look at diversity as an actual force multiplier.

When I was in the Marine Corps, for example, I can't tell you the number of times I would have—obviously, the smallest service with the fewest women—I would have male Marines send me their female Marines to talk about things like uniform regulations and conduct in the barracks.

We need to rethink how we think about inclusion. Those are leadership issues. They are not leadership by a woman to a woman issue. I would never have turned away a male Marine to talk about leadership or any other type of disciplinary or good-of-the-force issue.

So we really need to get past this idea of we need to have a certain number of women in a unit before we can assign more women there. We need to understand the value that diverse members bring to these organizations, and we need to embrace that.

And then we need to hold people accountable for doing the leadership things rather than thinking we can ship people off to other women so that they can deal with the women's issues.

I hope that touched on that question.

Mr. LARSEN. It does, and that is fine.

And I would yield back to the chairman, but he is probably taking his dog for a walk.

Mr. Chairman, I yield back.

Mr. GALLEGRO. Thank you.

Now let's go to Representative Scott.

Mr. SCOTT. I want to say one thing, Chairman Takano mentioned this, on the veteran suicide. And I hope everybody on this committee will recognize how the Tax Code works against our people that are hurt in combat.

And I did not realize this until a few years ago when I was taking a young man, who had lost both of his legs to an IED [improvised explosive device], hunting.

And he said, "Yeah, I tried to go back to work, but if I work more than X number of hours, I lose my Social Security benefits. So I actually have more money if I don't work."

And our special operators, whether it is black or white operations, are high-performance individuals. And when you take somebody like that and you force them to sit at home because of the Tax Code, not having a way to take care of their family, that is a problem. And I think that is where some of the suicides come from.

And so maybe we can work together with the Ways and Means Committee to try to fix some of those problems so our people who are combat-wounded total and permanent [disability] can go to work without having less money at the end of the month.

One of the things that was mentioned—and I think it was Ms. Germano that mentioned the perception of the United States military and how our faithful rating has come down over the last several years.

And my question gets to what we see in the media with regard to the military. And when I say "media," I don't just mean the news, I mean the entertainment industry as well, and then what

we see from other countries in the gray area of warfare, the social misinformation that is out there on the internet.

What role do you think the entertainment industry is having on the perception of the United States military? And what role do you think our foreign adversaries with social media are having?

Colonel GERMANO. That is a really interesting question. I will tell you, just if I were to Google the number of movies about combat women, women in the services who are combat veterans, I could probably think of three and find three.

The majority of coverage related to women and women veterans has to do with sexual assault. And so I think—I am not downplaying the issue. It is a significant issue for both men and women. But I think the way women are portrayed in the media can lend itself to a viewpoint that women are not warriors, and nothing could be further from the truth.

Misinformation plays a role in how our service members think about women and other minorities in the military. They are reading this stuff on Facebook. They are seeing photos and memes.

So they are just as influenced and susceptible as the average American in terms of our adversaries exploiting the issues, the negative issues, related to having disciplinary issues or, for example, sexual assault.

Our service men and women are active on social media. They are seeing that stuff. They are influenced by it. It is a problem.

Mr. SCOTT. I had a general suggest to me that I watch the documentary “Social Dilemma” and it was pretty eye-opening. And I think that it is a problem not just in our troops or younger people, I think it is a problem all over the United States with how much screen time people get.

And I guess what I was getting at, ma’am, I consider Ebola one of the greatest things, the stamping out of it. That was the United States military that we sent to another country to stamp out Ebola. You don’t ever see anything about that on the news. I guess it is not entertaining for the entertainment industry.

But basically if you are watching something that comes out of Hollywood, it is basically a group of special operators kicking down a door. And for the most part—and I don’t know how to say this other than to say it—for the most part it is White men kicking down a door and killing people that are from the Middle East.

And that is not the perception that we want of the United States military. But if that is what Hollywood puts out over and over and over again, then it becomes significantly harder for us to overcome that as the perception of the United States military.

But I appreciate all of you, and I hope you will pay attention to what I said on the Tax Code with regard to military suicide because that is a very serious problem for our people that are combat-wounded total and permanent.

Thank you.

Mr. GALLEGO. Thank you, Representative Scott.

Now Representative Brown.

Representative Brown? I thought we had him on earlier.

Representative Larsen then. Do you have more questions?

Mr. LARSEN. I have no further questions, Mr. Chair.

Mr. GALLEGO. Representative Murphy.

Sorry about putting people on the spot. Feel free to say no.

Okay. Let's go to Representative Takano.

I think you had a follow-up that you wanted to finish.

Alrighty then. I am striking out here. And that is fine. I feel like we are getting a lot done.

What about Representative Franklin? Do you have any follow-ups?

As we say in the Marine Corps, any last rounds?

Okay.

And I see that Takano is back on.

Chairman Takano, did you have a follow-up question?

Not sure he can hear us.

Okay. Well, pretty sure then I am going to close this hearing.

Thank you, everyone, for your time. I apologize that I was getting attacked by a black bear here this whole time and a little distracting. But I really feel this was a really great opportunity for us to learn.

And I hope you will submit some suggestions for the record. I think Ranking Member Kelly and myself and the members are always looking to see how we can improve, and especially with the NDAA coming up, seeing if we can do anything there.

So thank you again.

Ms. ROBINSON. Thank you so much for the opportunity.

[Whereupon, at 1:09 p.m., the subcommittee was adjourned.]

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**A P P E N D I X**

MARCH 26, 2021

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**PREPARED STATEMENTS SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD**

MARCH 26, 2021

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**Statement of Hon. Trent Kelly, Ranking Member,  
Subcommittee on Intelligence and Special Operations,  
“SOF Culture and Climate: The Future of the Force”  
March 26, 2021**

We have further broken this topic into three main buckets – state of the force, health of the force, and future of the force.

Indeed, there are many challenges that our special operators face today that this subcommittee must better understand in order to conduct our oversight duties. From the integration of women into the force, to deploy and dwell ratios, to mental health – this hearing will illuminate current challenges and offer recommendations on how to make Special Operations Forces more effective.

I will focus my comments and subsequent questions on the third bucket of this Hearing – the 'Future of the Force'. Our special operators have done a tremendous job with their counter-terrorism mission over the last 20+ years. As we continue to hear about China's malign activities and rapid military growth, we need to ensure SOF is ready for this future fight. This includes things like language training and other training that directly relates to combating great power competition adversaries. Furthermore, it necessitates the proper structure and authorities to conduct the SOF mission; I will highlight two recent areas of interest from this Committee.

A New York Times article on March 3rd described a policy change from the Biden Administration that placed greater restrictions on drone strikes and raids conducted outside conventional battlefield zones like Iraq, Afghanistan, and Syria. Previously authorized by ground commanders, these operations now require White House approval. I'm concerned about the onerous increase in approval authority for areas in which these counter-terrorism tactics are vital. As testament to the effects this policy change has created on the usage of strikes and raids – AFRICOM reported six strikes were conducted from 1 to 19 January of this year and, to my knowledge, zero have taken place since. Authorities can be delegated to leaders closer to the fight with specific parameters. With my 35+ years of military service, I completely understand the need to ensure appropriate controls are in place for conducting military operations – but I worry that this policy restricts Special Operations' ability to conduct necessary actions for the counter-terrorism fight.

On March 3rd, Members of this Subcommittee sent a letter to Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin expressing our concerns about potential changes to the Assistant Secretary of Defense's role for Special Operations and Low Intensity Conflict (ASD SO/LOIC for short). The FY17 NDAA outlined required changes for this position; these changes were further substantiated in a Memo from then Acting Secretary of Defense Chris Miller on November 18th of last year. The elevation of ASD SO/LIC's role as a direct report to the Secretary of Defense is crucial to ensure SOF has a civilian leader shaping policy and advocating on their

behalf. Empowering this role with the appropriate authorities is a priority of this Subcommittee.

I'm interested to hear our witnesses' views on the role of ASD SO/LIC, the use of raids and strikes in areas like AFRICOM, and ensuring our SOF community is prepared to fight and win in a near-peer, global power conflict.

I want to thank our witnesses in advance for their time today. I look forward to the continuing work with our private sector experts during the 117th Congress to ensure we are appropriately postured to meet and defeat the myriad of global threats.

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STATEMENT FOR THE RECORD

BY

MARK E. MITCHELL  
FORMER ACTING ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF  
DEFENSE  
FOR SPECIAL OPERATIONS/LOW-INTENSITY CONFLICT

ON

SPECIAL OPERATIONS CULTURE AND CLIMATE: THE  
FUTURE OF THE FORCE

BEFORE THE  
COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES  
UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

INTELLIGENCE AND SPECIAL OPERATIONS  
SUBCOMMITTEE

March 26, 2021

Mister Chairman, Ranking Member, and distinguished members of the Subcommittee: thank you for the opportunity to speak about the culture, climate, and future of our special operations forces (SOF).

For a variety of reasons, we stand today at a pivotal moment for our Nation. At war against the menace of terrorism for two decades and only barely beginning our recovery from the scourge of COVID, the United States also faces a complex threat from an increasingly capable and aggressive Chinese Communist Party. All other perils to our Republic, including Russia, pale in comparison.

The CCP seeks global economic, military, and political dominance. It aims to supplant the United States and the rules-based, democratic international order that has fostered peace and prosperity for many nations. The CCP seeks to replace this order with an authoritarian system subservient to their will and modeled on their own repressive and genocidal control in China. They seek to promote and export their model of governance: a police state that employs high-tech surveillance, state control of all modes of public discourse, and brutal oppression of all opponents: Hong Kong democracy activists, Falun Gong, the Catholic Church, and other Christian communities, and most egregiously the predominantly Muslim Uighur community. They seek to increase their economic and military leverage through industrial-scale espionage and theft of intellectual property. They convert their commercial power to political influence by coercing all who may consider criticizing their means or their ends. No responsible person should harbor any doubts about the CCP's intentions or what a world under their domination would look like.

In addition to the threat posed by the CCP, the United States must also confront an enormous national debt, substantial budget deficits, and a bitterly divided nation. Congress and the President face many difficult choices about spending priorities, especially regarding national defense. The core conventional capabilities in our Department of Defense—ships, aircraft, missiles, missile defense, etc.—and the resources needed to sustain them are increasingly expensive and, possibly someday soon, simply unaffordable. Pursuing a strategy of deterrence based solely on expanding or upgrading these capabilities risks playing into the hands of the CCP.

Nevertheless, the United States has unrivaled resources to combat this challenge. We have a republic like no other: founded upon universal values, tested through many crises, and capable of inspiring hope worldwide. We have a population like no other: large, heterogenous, resourceful, and energetic. We have an economy like no other: dynamic, creative, resilient, and adaptative. Unlike China, the United

States has strategic alliances and partnerships based not on coercion but mutual affinity, respect, and a shared vision. We also retain unparalleled cultural influence globally.

Yet, not a single one of these advantages is, in and of itself, a guarantee that we will prevail in this competition. Nevertheless, they give us an extraordinary advantage—if we can find the domestic unity needed to wield them effectively and foster the international unity needed to resist Communist China's siren song.

### **Our Special Operations Forces**

It is against this environment that I offer my commentary on our exceptional special operations forces' current state and future. Our SOF are, without question, the world's premier special operations capabilities. They are the standard by which all others are measured. Created in 1987, they came of age after 9-11 and have grown substantially in budget, size, scope, and capabilities since 2001. No other force on the planet is as capable. Still, the world is changing rapidly. The challenges we face today and tomorrow are substantially different from the challenges that USSOCOM has effectively tackled over the last two decades.

More than anything else, 20 years of conflict in the Middle East and South Asia have honed SOF's direct action capabilities to support counterterrorism and counter-insurgency. Our SOF have never been more proficient at the conduct of this mission. It has also reshaped special operations culture, from the small unit to the USSOCOM headquarters in Tampa, which plays well to a Pentagon leadership that consistently conflates deterrence with competition.

Far too many in the Pentagon tend to gloss over Great Power Competition (GPC) and focus on Great Power Conflict; this is a mistake. To be clear, the United States must be able to fight and win a war with any adversary; that is the *raison d'être* of the Department of Defense. But deterrence and competition are not synonymous. The former is about our adversaries' assessment of our capabilities and will; the latter is about a third party's evaluation of our capabilities and will relative to a competitor like China. If DoD focuses solely on deterrence, then we will likely lose the competition for influence, access, and leverage. And failure in competition has the potential to further embolden China and lead to the very conflict that no one wants to fight.

The reappearance of GPC does not mean that SOF should abandon this hard-won skillset or lessons learned. Instead, the Pentagon must take stock of the unique skills that SOF obtained countering terrorism, including leveraging relationships

and translate those skills into new and proactive strategies and methodologies. We cannot simply be content to "counter" threats but must aggressively shape the environment to our advantage. To succeed, we must reconceptualize the role of SOF in GPC while also capitalizing on the full potential of human capital present in the United States of America.

### **Great Power Competition**

If the United States wants to "compete" with China, we cannot simply adopt a transactional approach with partners and allies. We must avoid what H.R. McMaster recently called "strategic narcissism, the tendency to define challenges and opportunities abroad only in relation to the United States." Competition means helping partners and allies solve their problems in ways that are mutually beneficial. In some cases, particularly in Africa—a theater of great power competition—this means helping them better deal with terrorism, lawlessness, and insurgency. Efforts to help partners counter these threats are necessary but not sufficient for GPC.

Great power competition is or at least should be a global enterprise. It will take place in locations far removed from the South China Sea or Taiwan Straits. It will take place outside of "declared theaters of armed conflict" (DTAC), in areas where U.S. forces have only limited authority to use lethal force (i.e., for self-defense). It will also occur in places where U.S. forces are welcome only in limited numbers. Consequently, many military capabilities will be severely constrained. Persistent surveillance systems (e.g., unmanned aviation platforms) will be of little use and, in most places around the globe, DoD will not be the "lead federal agency." Military forces will operate under Chief of Mission authorities, with restrictions intended to limit political risk. Moreover, we also know that our adversaries will not work within established norms. Their intelligence and counterintelligence capabilities, especially if/when enabled by quantum computing and artificial intelligence, will pose substantial risks to both mission and force.

Consequently, the role of SOF in great power competition—and conflict—will not resemble the manhunting in support of CT or COIN, a mission at which SOF has excelled over the last two decades. SOF can play an essential role in GPC by preparing for conflict and ensuring that our armed forces possess a strategic advantage at the outset. This means building networks and capabilities to hold our adversaries' critical capabilities at risk, identifying (or creating) and exploiting vulnerabilities to derail their strategy or degrade their capabilities and influence, preparing key partners and allies to contribute to advancing mutual strategic goals.

While some may argue that SOF already does these things, I would reply, "Yes, but not well enough in this environment." Significant changes in the structure and culture of our SOF are necessary to ensure that SOF can meet the demands of the GPC environment. USSOCOM must find new and creative ways to capitalize on the full potential of human capital present in the United States of America and, potentially, overseas.

#### **Changing the Culture and Charting a Way Forward**

The first SOF Truth is that "Humans are more important than hardware." To prepare for tomorrow's challenges, USSOCOM must be willing to challenge and adapt the "commando" culture that currently reigns in the force. It must be willing to accept that the status quo developed over the last 20 years is not sufficient for the next 20 years. The leaders in the SOF enterprise, civilian and military, must question their assumptions about missions, force structure, and modernization. In simple terms, they must be as daring and creative at the strategic level as their small units are at the tactical level.

First and foremost, SOCOM and its components must also carefully consider adding new military occupational specialties to ensure the right technical skills are resident in the force. Secondly, USSOCOM must create new and better opportunities for women to contribute. Thirdly, USSOCOM must undertake a concerted and well-resourced effort to recruit first- and second-generation Americans with native language skills and cultural sensitivities. Finally, USSOCOM must recommit to an experimental force to test new organizations and employment concepts for irregular warfare.

The 21<sup>st</sup> century has brought with it an explosion of technology and, in many cases, transformed society. DoD and USSOCOM actively seek to take advantage of these technologies but typically in ways that focus mainly on technology and only secondarily on people. There are some notable exceptions, especially in space and cyber, where new military specialties have been added. In the Army Special Forces, however, the structure and composition of an operational detachment have remained static—for decades! The same can be said for a Naval Special Warfare platoon. While the Army and Navy have added new technologies and new skill requirements to these organizations, they have done so without adding personnel or new military specialties.

The modern economy has added a plethora of new skillsets, from cyber to robotics to artificial intelligence and machine learning, and many, many more. Special operations forces operating in sensitive or uncertain environments may not be able

to rely on "reach-back" for these skills. Moreover, at the tactical level, the addition of personnel who possess these skills but who have not been through a rigorous assessment, selection, and training program can pose an unacceptable risk. The best solution is to consider new special operations specialties rather than adding more requirements to an already overburdened soldier, sailor, or Marine. Given the rapid changes in technology, Congress and DoD should also strongly consider some form of increased "permeability" for specific critical skills. i.e., the ability of personnel to move back and forth between active and reserve duty.

Regarding the integration of women into SOF, it has been over five years since Secretary of Defense Carter announced his final determination to open all military positions, career fields, and specialties to women. Since then, the numbers of women who have entered the ranks of special operators through the current model are minuscule. It is simply not enough to say that women serve in Civil Affairs or Psychological Operations or Support Activities. These are invaluable contributions but limiting women to these roles contributes to a culture that does not truly value their role. Only one woman has graduated from the Army Special Forces Qualification Course and, to date, no women have succeeded in earning a Trident or MARSOC Operator badge. Moreover, the numbers of women who have even volunteered to attempt these courses are tiny. Simply put, the five-year, "gender-neutral" experiment of opening to women previously closed military occupational specialties in the special operations forces has been an abject failure.

The incontestable and straightforward truth is that the vast majority of women do not want to be "commandos," and, frankly, this is not the most effective or operationally relevant role that women can fill in SOF. Nor is it what the SOF enterprise or our Nation needs in great power competition. I do not propose that any opportunities be closed to women; the existing pathways should remain open to the handful of women who desire to pursue them. Instead, I argue that USSOCOM must find more and better ways to integrate women as fully qualified and respected "operators." We have more than adequate historical models in the Office of Strategic Services and even current special mission units.

Beyond increasing operational capabilities, these pathways must include real opportunities whereby women operators can rise in rank, responsibility, and pay. Notably, the resulting longevity will also provide an opportunity for the SOF enterprise to reap the rewards of its investments in them. Such a model would also offer female mentors for young NCOs and officers considering a career in SOF. These are necessary requirements if we are serious about retention and longevity in



the force and creates a culture that accepts women as equals and provides them opportunities to contribute in meaningful ways.

Creating these new pathways does NOT mean "lowering standards." It means, however, that the standards must be operationally relevant. Indeed, all special operations organizations must have high standards—physically, mentally, intellectually—but we must base these standards on the special missions these women will perform.

The United States is the most desired global destination for immigrants and has an incredibly diverse population. In a worldwide competition for influence with China and Russia, these recent immigrants can be formidable contributors—tactically, operationally, and strategically. In addition to creating more and better opportunities for women, USSOCOM must also aggressively recruit men and women with native language and cultural skills. This requires targeted recruiting efforts, both within DoD and in the population at large. USSOCOM and its components must develop targeted recruiting campaigns and materials for use in various diasporas found in the United States. Using materials in their native language and recruiters with knowledge and experience in these communities, USSOCOM could vastly increase the likelihood of drawing recruits from these communities.

Recent attempts like the MAVNI program were fatally flawed and, at least in SOF, failed to produce the desired effects. Congress should consider legislation modeled on the Lodge Act of 1950, which enabled direct recruiting of foreign personnel. Carefully crafted legislation with the right incentives (e.g., green cards for a limited number of immediate family and citizenship for them after completion of a mandatory service period) could significantly increase the diversity and operational capabilities of SOF.

Such programs will necessitate improved and expanded counterintelligence programs, but DoD needs to invest in new and expanded counterintelligence capabilities anyway. Enhanced by artificial intelligence, however, the funding and force structure required to address the growing CI threat should be manageable. Moreover, considering the potential talent available, it is well worth the cost. Our military history is replete with extraordinary contributions by immigrants. To the degree to which we fail to recognize that and welcome others like them with open arms, we are failing ourselves and our Nation.

Finally, the leadership of the SOF enterprise must recommit to radical experimentation for irregular warfare. While it is necessary to participate in the services modernization and experimentation programs, it is not sufficient to address the myriad irregular warfare challenges facing SOF. USSOCOM must be willing to commit forces permanently and resource them to experiment with new operational, personnel, and technology integration concepts. This critical mission cannot be left solely to special mission units; it must apply to the theater SOF that comprise the bulk of USSOCOM.

These recommendations are offered in pursuit of two considerations only: professional excellence and the continued operational success of SOF. I firmly believe that these changes will further enhance the capabilities of SOF, especially in the new and more challenging competition with China. I also know that USSOCOM will not fully implement these changes without strong and empowered civilian leadership in ASD(SO/LIC). I have written extensively elsewhere in support of the changes Congress has written into law regarding civilian control and oversight of SOF. I close by renewing my earnest request for your continued insistence on the full implementation of duly passed legislation. Please do not accept anything less.

**Mark E. Mitchell**

Mark E. Mitchell is a former senior executive in DOD who served most recently as the Acting Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations and Low-Intensity Conflict (ASD(SO/LIC)). He is also highly decorated U.S. Army infantry and Special Forces combat veteran who served 28 years on active duty. He participated in multiple combat tours in the First Gulf War, Afghanistan and Iraq. In recognition of his actions during the Battle of Qala-I Jangi in November 2001, he received the Distinguished Service Cross, our Nation's second-highest decoration for valor in combat. He served four tours in the 5<sup>th</sup> Special Forces Group (Airborne), commanding at every level from detachment to group. In addition to commanding 5<sup>th</sup> Special Forces Group (Airborne), Colonel Mitchell simultaneously commanded a nationwide, Joint Special Operations Task Force in Iraq during 2010-2011. After relinquishing command of 5<sup>th</sup> SFG(A), Colonel Mitchell served in the Office of the Secretary of Defense as the Senior Military Assistant to ASD(SO/LIC). His final assignment in uniform was on the National Security Council as a Director for Counterterrorism. In this assignment he was intimately involved in significant hostage cases and recovery efforts in Syria, Yemen, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Somalia. He was instrumental in establishing the framework for the landmark Presidential Policy Review of Hostage Policy, which resulted in significant changes in organization and policy for hostage recovery. Following his retirement from active duty, Mitchell worked as a business executive in the private sector. Mitchell holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Biomedical Engineering from Marquette University and a Master of Science degree in Defense Analysis from the Naval Postgraduate School. He also served as a National Security Fellow at the Harvard Kennedy School of Government and non-resident fellow at the Combating Terrorism Center at West Point. He has lectured at Harvard Business School, the Fletcher School of Law & Diplomacy, Joint Special Operations University, the U.S. Army War College, the National Defense University, and the United States Military Academy. He is also a board member and advisor to several non-profit organizations dedicated to serving veterans and their families, including Warriors Ethos, Gold Star Teen Adventures, the Global SOF Foundation, and Special Operations Survivors. He currently serves as a strategic advisor for Navigators Global Defense, Intelligence, Security and Space practice. He is married to the former Mary Ann Kilton of Montgomery, Alabama and they have two college-age daughters, Caroline (USMA '21) and Margaret (College of William & Mary/University of St. Andrews).

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COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES  
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

**INSTRUCTION TO WITNESSES:** Rule 11, clause 2(g)(5), of the Rules of the House of Representatives for the 117<sup>th</sup> Congress requires nongovernmental witnesses appearing before House committees to include in their written statements a curriculum vitae and a disclosure of the amount and source of any federal contracts or grants (including subcontracts and subgrants), and contracts or grants (including subcontracts and subgrants), or payments originating with a foreign government, received during the past 36 months either by the witness or by an entity represented by the witness and related to the subject matter of the hearing. Rule 11, clause 2(g)(5) also requires nongovernmental witnesses to disclose whether they are a fiduciary (including, but not limited to, a director, officer, advisor, or resident agent) of any organization or entity that has an interest in the subject matter of the hearing. As a matter of committee policy, the House Committee on Armed Services further requires nongovernmental witnesses to disclose the amount and source of any contracts or grants (including subcontracts and subgrants), or payments originating with any organization or entity, whether public or private, that has a material interest in the subject matter of the hearing, received during the past 36 months either by the witness or by an entity represented by the witness. Please note that a copy of these statements, with appropriate redactions to protect the witness's personal privacy (including home address and phone number), will be made publicly available in electronic form 24 hours before the witness appears to the extent practicable, but not later than one day after the witness's appearance before the committee. Witnesses may list additional grants, contracts, or payments on additional sheets, if necessary. Please complete this form electronically.

**Hearing Date:** March 26th, 2021

**Hearing Subject:**

"Special Operations Culture and Climate: The Future of the Force"

**Witness name:** Mark E. Mitchell

**Position/Title:** Former Acting ASD\*SSO/LIC)

**Capacity in which appearing:** (check one)

Individual       Representative

**If appearing in a representative capacity, name of the organization or entity represented:**

**Federal Contract or Grant Information:** If you or the entity you represent before the Committee on Armed Services has contracts (including subcontracts) or grants (including subgrants) with the federal government, received during the past 36 months and related to the subject matter of the hearing, please provide the following information:

**2021**

Federal grant/ contract	Federal agency	Dollar value	Subject of contract or grant
None			

**2020**

Federal grant/ contract	Federal agency	Dollar value	Subject of contract or grant
None			

**2019**

Federal grant/ contract	Federal agency	Dollar value	Subject of contract or grant
None			

**2018**

Federal grant/ contract	Federal agency	Dollar value	Subject of contract or grant
None			

**Foreign Government Contract, Grant, or Payment Information:** If you or the entity you represent before the Committee on Armed Services has contracts or grants (including subcontracts or subgrants), or payments originating from a foreign government, received during the past 36 months and related to the subject matter of the hearing, please provide the following information:

**2021**

Foreign contract/ payment	Foreign government	Dollar value	Subject of contract, grant, or payment
None			

**2020**

Foreign contract/ payment	Foreign government	Dollar value	Subject of contract, grant, or payment
None			

**2019**

Foreign contract/ payment	Foreign government	Dollar value	Subject of contract, grant, or payment
None			

**2018**

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None			

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**2021**

Contract/grant/ payment	Entity	Dollar value	Subject of contract, grant, or payment
None			

**2020**

Contract/grant/ payment	Entity	Dollar value	Subject of contract, grant, or payment
None			

2019

Contract/grant/ payment	Entity	Dollar value	Subject of contract, grant, or payment
None			

2018

Contract/grant/ payment	Entity	Dollar value	Subject of contract, grant, or payment
None			



## Special Operations Forces Culture and Climate

### The Future of the Force

Linda Robinson

CT-A1302-1

Testimony presented before the House Armed Services Subcommittee on Intelligence and Special Operations on March 26, 2021



For more information on this publication, visit [www.rand.org/pubs/testimonies/CTA1302-1.html](http://www.rand.org/pubs/testimonies/CTA1302-1.html)

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*Special Operations Forces Culture and Climate: The Future of the Force*

Testimony of Linda Robinson<sup>1</sup>  
The RAND Corporation<sup>2</sup>

Before the Committee on House Armed Services  
Subcommittee on Intelligence and Special Operations  
United States House of Representatives

March 26, 2021

I view the issue of special operations forces (SOF) culture and climate through the lens of what the nation asks of its SOF, which shapes who they are and what they do. SOF are a unique asset to serve national security interests. As the array of assigned missions in Title 10 U.S. Code Section 167 indicates, SOF are relatively flexible which places considerable responsibility on policymakers to carefully determine their appropriate uses. This challenge is compounded at historical inflection points (such as the current one), when strategic conditions dictate a reprioritization. The 2018 National Defense Strategy elevated interstate competition while continuing to articulate robust counterterrorism objectives.<sup>3</sup> Two decades of high operational tempo and frequent combat by SOF have exacted a toll that requires ongoing remediation. Systemic issues that are critical to the future of the force, prominently including the lack of gender, racial, and ethnic diversity in the force, also merit sustained attention.

#### A Time of Transition and Transformation

First, we must look at where we have been. Twenty years of counterterrorism focus have unbalanced the force and overused it. Contributing factors include actions and inaction that prioritized counterterrorism, did not sufficiently oversee the effects on the force, and did not adjudicate the demand for SOF from geographic combatant commands, as well as the counterterrorism machinery and the White House process that was created after 9/11.<sup>4</sup> Compounding these factors was a special operations culture of separateness and even entitlement that was accentuated by this prioritized counterterrorism focus. By contrast, when I first engaged with the community 20 years ago, the culture of the quiet professional predominated.

A touchstone for course adjustments may be found in the SOF Truths, coined in 1988 and adopted by the newly formed U.S. Special Operations Command, particularly the first two truths:

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<sup>1</sup> The opinions and conclusions expressed in this testimony are the author's alone and should not be interpreted as representing those of the RAND Corporation or any of the sponsors of its research.

<sup>2</sup> The RAND Corporation is a research organization that develops solutions to public policy challenges to help make communities throughout the world safer and more secure, healthier and more prosperous. RAND is nonprofit, nonpartisan, and committed to the public interest.

<sup>3</sup> U.S. Department of Defense. *Summary of the 2018 National Defense Strategy of the United States of America: Sharpening the American Military's Competitive Edge*, Washington, D.C., 2018.

<sup>4</sup> Linda Robinson, Austin Long, Kimberly Jackson, and Rebeca Orrie, *Improving the Understanding of Special Operations: A Case History Analysis*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, RR-2026-A, 2018.

“Humans are more important than hardware” and “Quality is more important than Quantity.” A focus on personnel and the quality of the force is required to transform SOF to meet current objectives and to address systemic issues that have languished as operational priorities took precedence over institutional ones.

Senior leaders have taken initial steps to address command climate and culture issues. The Comprehensive Review published in 2020 identified some important causal factors, and GEN Richard Clarke has begun to implement solutions.<sup>5</sup> RADM Collin Green laudably called for a deep look at the sources of the abuses and crimes in the SEAL community. The most urgent steps required to continue this course correction include (1) rapidly meeting the dwell-to-deployment ratio and (2) ensuring strict application of the Uniform Code of Military Justice, which will help restore the professionalism of the SOF community as its core value. Three other suggestions are, first, to hold every officer accountable for the appropriate command climate at all echelons. Senior noncommissioned officers are the backbone of every tactical unit; they must be models in all respects. Second, selection and promotion precepts must prioritize promulgation of the values, character, and service ethic above all else. Third, the community would benefit from a shift to seeing itself, and acting, as part of the joint force and of the wider interagency team, not an entity apart.

The joint headquarters U.S. Special Operations Command (USSOCOM), as I wrote in a 2013 study published by the Council on Foreign Relations, can usefully elevate its focus on institutional over operational issues.<sup>6</sup> As part of this effort, it should shed extraneous missions (for example, synchronizing counter-weapons of mass destruction [WMD] efforts across the government). SOF has vital but niche tactical roles in the WMD mission, but synchronizing roles distract from its pressing internal duties. Other adjustments can ensure that USSOCOM focuses on its core responsibilities to organize, train, and equip the force and fold its strategy and concept development into the larger joint process.

SOF roles and missions, as noted above, are changing with the strategic global circumstances. Rather than solely critique USSOCOM for lagging adaptation and a continued focus or overfocus on counterterrorism, it is more intellectually honest to acknowledge that, in recent years, higher guidance has lacked the needed specificity regarding the metrics to scope the counterterrorism mission and has lacked a concomitant acceptance of the risk implied in doing so. The counterterrorism enterprise should become smaller, and this should be clearly directed from above. The guidance documents, starting with the National Defense Strategy, introduced a great deal of ambiguity in maintaining the objective of “defeating terrorism,” which is unrealistic and results in the nonstrategic use of SOF. In my view, the stated priorities in the current National Counter-Terrorism Strategy should be adjusted to emphasize the priorities that will permit the needed rebalance: (1) to rely heavily on our allies and reliable partners and (2) to focus on stemming recruitment into terrorist organizations. The procedure for authorizing strikes requires both legal rigor and operational effectiveness.

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<sup>5</sup> U.S. Special Operations Command, *United States Special Operations Command Comprehensive Review*, January 23, 2020.

<sup>6</sup> Linda Robinson, *The Future of U.S. Special Operations Forces*, New York: Council on Foreign Relations, Council Special Report No. 66, April 2013.

A more general requirement to ensure proper development and use of SOF, including proper sizing of roles and missions (as Congress has been aware of and is actively engaged in addressing), is the needed strengthening of civilian oversight for both policy and resources, which has never been adequate and has been compounded since 9/11 with massive growth in USSOCOM, the force, the budget, and operations. As Section 901 of the fiscal year (FY) 2021 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) acknowledges, there is no simple organizational formula to accomplish this requirement. The Secretary of Defense should sufficiently empower and entrust the Special Operations/Low-Intensity Conflict lead civilian to fulfill the dual roles for policy and resources, and that lead civilian must work closely with the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy to ensure the synchronization of policy.

### Rebalancing Special Operations Forces Roles and Missions

Carefully circumscribing the use of SOF for counterterrorism missions should go hand in hand with careful delineation of appropriate roles for SOF in interstate competition. A 2018 RAND study I led, *Modern Political Warfare: Current Practices and Possible Responses*, surveyed competitors' irregular tactics and reliance on measures short of war and concluded that SOF have distinct contributions to make in this realm.<sup>7</sup> As our current work as well as exercises and the rotations at combined training centers indicate, most of these missions are conducted in tandem with other joint forces and with interagency partners. Force structure and capabilities need to adapt significantly for these new missions involving peer and near-peer competition. The critical capabilities in great-power competition include new language, culture, communications, and cyber and electronic sensing capabilities and a much greater investment in information operations, which have been critically under resourced for years.

However, to avoid creating a new formula that results in overuse of the force, this rebalancing of SOF missions must occur within a finite cap to ensure that dwell-to-deployment ratios are met as the first priority. The health of the force requires that this reset for readiness be the governing metric. Formalizing criteria to determine what is and is not an SOF mission can help. There is already a yardstick that can be converted to a decision tool: Is it a politically sensitive mission? Does it occur in a contested or denied environment? If not, another element of the joint force can do it.

The Irregular Warfare Annex to the current National Defense Strategy contains some useful guideposts, particularly in locating SOF roles within the context of what the rest of the joint force will do and what the interagency partners have the authorities and capabilities to do.<sup>8</sup> SOF are part of this constellation of actors, who all need to do their parts. When they do not, SOF often step in to fill the vacuum.

<sup>7</sup> Linda Robinson, Todd C. Helmus, Raphael S. Cohen, Alireza Nader, Andrew Radin, Madeline Magnuson, and Katya Migacheva, *Modern Political Warfare: Current Practices and Possible Responses*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, RR-1772-A, 2018.

<sup>8</sup> U.S. Department of Defense, *Summary of the Irregular Warfare Annex to the National Defense Strategy*, October 2020.

A final point is that every operation should be subjected to a checkup. Sometimes, legacy missions continue on autopilot. It is obvious to me, having spent a great deal of time on assessments, that a better job needs to be done in evaluating all operations. Sometimes, data collection is not even mandated, making valid assessment impossible. Where data are sparse, innovative techniques can help.<sup>9</sup> But even when assessments are conducted, they are often not used to make decisions about whether to continue, adapt, or stop a program.

### Addressing Systemic Issues

The transformation of the force is needed, as just noted, to meet the challenges of a changing strategic environment. Transformation is also vital to strengthen SOF's ability to conduct all missions, legacy or new. When I was first introduced to the SOF community 20 years ago, one of the first generals I met talked at length about the need to integrate women into the force. We have made little progress since then. The same critique applies to every other diversity metric. We are fighting with one hand tied behind our back if we do not use the full talents and diversity of our population. It is just that simple.

Diversity challenges continue to plague SOF. Although two women have proceeded through selection, and one has earned the Green Beret to serve in the U.S. Army Special Forces, this agonizingly slow progress suggests ongoing procedural barriers as well as cultural resistance. Changing these attitudes is the job of all senior leaders and should be their top priority. Selection and promotion should be contingent on this metric. In 2016, a RAND study found that 85 percent of special operators surveyed were opposed to letting women into their specialties and 71 percent opposed women in their units.<sup>10</sup> Respondents stated that standards would be lowered and unit cohesion would suffer. At the same time, four in ten agreed that women could be helpful in sensitive operations and engaging with local populations. Other studies found similar attitudes. Notably, a recent commander of the Army Special Warfare and School strove to adapt training and selection standards to remove outdated and unnecessary components that actively deselected desired competencies and prejudiced women candidates. But obstacles remain.

Ethnic and racial diversity is also lacking, and although this too has been recognized as compromising the effectiveness of the force, barriers to diverse recruitment, selection, and retention remain. A RAND study documented this underrepresentation more than two decades ago and found that such barriers as swimming requirements, test scores, and an absence of role models affected recruitment efforts.<sup>11</sup> The Army and Navy adopted measures to address those barriers, but they clearly have been insufficient. This year, Congress has mandated an

<sup>9</sup> Linda Robinson, Daniel Egel, and Ryan Andrew Brown, *Measuring the Effectiveness of Special Operations*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, RR-2504-A, 2019.

<sup>10</sup> Thomas S. Szayna, Eric V. Larson, Angela O'Mahony, Sean Robson, Agnes Gereben Schaefer, Miriam Matthews, J. Michael Polich, Lynsay Ayer, Derek Eaton, William Marcellino, Lisa Miyashiro, Marek Posard, James Syme, Zev Winkelman, Cameron Wright, Megan Zander-Cotugno, and William Welser IV, *Considerations for Integrating Women into Closed Occupations in U.S. Special Operations Forces*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, RR-1058-USSOCOM, 2016.

<sup>11</sup> Clifford M. Graf II, Margaret C. Harrell, Sheila Nataraj Kirby, Jennifer Sloan McCombs, Curtis Askew, *Are There Barriers to Minorities Joining Special Operations Forces?* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 1999).

independent study, in Section 557 of the FY 2021 NDAA, to galvanize additional remedial action.

Opportunities exist for progress across the range of issues that this committee and subcommittee are examining, and it is my hope that Congress will find eager and willing partners in both the civilian and uniformed members of the administration.

**Linda Robinson**

Linda Robinson is director of the Center for Middle East Public Policy and a senior international/defense researcher at the RAND Corporation. She is also a best-selling book author. She co-authored *Modern Political Warfare: Current Practices and Possible Responses*, one of RAND's most downloaded publications of 2018. She is currently leading a study on future warfare including information, cyber, space and special operations. Robinson has published 15 RAND studies and four trade books, including *One Hundred Victories: Special Ops and the Future of American Warfare* (2013); *Tell Me How This Ends: General David Petraeus and the Search for a Way Out of Iraq* (2008), *Masters of Chaos: The Secret History of the Special Forces* (2004), and *Intervention or Neglect* (1992). She has been a visiting fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations, Johns Hopkins, Wilson Center and the International Institute for Strategic Studies. She has taught a course on influence, information and the media at various senior service educational institutions since 2005.

Robinson served as chair of the U.S. Army War College board of visitors and the National Defense University board of visitors as an unpaid government appointee from 2010 to 2017. For her leadership on professional military education issues, she received the Outstanding Civilian Service Medal. She has advised military commanders and conducted extensive field research on five continents over a 30-year career. She was senior editor of *Foreign Affairs* magazine and an award-winning foreign correspondent. She is a life member of the Council on Foreign Relations.



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COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES  
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**Hearing Date:** March 26th, 2021

**Hearing Subject:**

SOF Culture and Climate: The Future of the Force

**Witness name:** Linda Robinson

**Position/Title:** Senior International/Defense Researcher

**Capacity in which appearing:** (check one)

Individual       Representative

**If appearing in a representative capacity, name of the organization or entity represented:**

RAND Corporation

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**2021**

Federal grant/ contract	Federal agency	Dollar value	Subject of contract or grant
Contract	U.S. Army	6,599,000	Army Research Division
Contract	Office of the Secretary of Defense	28,413,245	National Defense Research Institute
Please see attached			

**2020**

Federal grant/ contract	Federal agency	Dollar value	Subject of contract or grant
Contract	U.S. Army	37,911,683	Army Research Division
Contract	Office of the Secretary of Defense	64,142,500	National Defense Research Institute

**2019**

Federal grant/ contract	Federal agency	Dollar value	Subject of contract or grant
Contract	U.S. Army	39,643,946	Army Research Division
Contract	Office of the Secretary of Defense	64,047,994	National Defense Research Institute

**2018**

Federal grant/ contract	Federal agency	Dollar value	Subject of contract or grant
Contract	U.S. Army	38,074,151	Army Research Division
Contract	Office of the Secretary of Defense	62,888,034	National Defense Research Institute
Contract	U.S. Air Force	46,704,687	Project Air Force

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Organization or entity	Brief description of the fiduciary relationship
N/A	

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Contract/grant/ payment	Entity	Dollar value	Subject of contract, grant, or payment
N/A			

2019

Contract/grant/ payment	Entity	Dollar value	Subject of contract, grant, or payment
N/A			

2018

Contract/grant/ payment	Entity	Dollar value	Subject of contract, grant, or payment
N/A			

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Official Statement by Lieutenant General (Retired) Michael K. Nagata, US Army  
House Armed Services Sub-Committee on Intelligence and Special Operations Hearing:  
*"SOF Culture and Climate: The Future of the Force"*  
26 March 2021

I am honored to participate in today's important hearing. My remarks today are based on my more than three decades of service in US Special Operations Forces (SOF).

On the topic of Diversity and Inclusion (D&I) as they relate to SOF, my perspective is based on having been one of the few Asian-American Officers to rise to Flag Rank during a SOF career, and I wish to provide two suggestions related to this effort.

First, over my own career, I was responsible for the recruiting, assessment, selection, and training of future SOF personnel on two occasions: once as the commander of the US Army's Special Forces Qualification Course, and second as Commander of a Special Mission Unit. I learned from those experiences the difficulty we had in attracting a more diverse volunteer population. Perhaps counter-intuitively for some observers, I recall that our greatest challenge was not the pass/fail rate among diverse volunteers, but rather identifying larger numbers of suitable diverse candidates that either wanted, or could be persuaded, to volunteer. In my view, there is a significant shortage of objective, scientific research into the question of whether there are important differences between what attracts a more diverse population to volunteer for the grueling experience of SOF Assessment & Selection, compared to what attracts our traditional demographic mix. Said another way, in 1984 when Lieutenant Michael Nagata began the Special Forces Qualification Course, I remember being only one of two Asian American volunteers. Today, I still do not know why.

Second, I often hear today discussions over the need for more SOF personnel that are conversant with the cultures and languages of our Near Peer Adversaries... one example being a lament I heard over why, in an era where our greatest strategic challenge is China, we do not have more SOF that can speak Chinese. While I certainly consider that an important question, I believe it is also too narrow. We must remember that much of today's Great Power Competition is essentially a contest between the United States and countries like China or Russia over strategic influence with other nations, communities, ethnic groups, and the like that are neither Russian, Chinese, or American. In such cases, SOF's success will have less to do with understanding Russian, Chinese, or any other Near Peer Competitor's culture or language, and far more to do SOF's ability to have deep understanding and language compatibility with African, Middle Eastern, South Asian, Pacific Island and Archipelago, or European and even Western Hemisphere cultures and countries that we are today competing to preserve or strengthen our influence with, against our strategic foes.

Regarding the Health of SOF, I wish to emphasize two related realities.

Firstly, SOF's well-being and durability requires a constant balancing act between antagonistic impulses. Said differently, maintenance of the health of this force is a lot like trying to balance an egg on one end, only constant effort and attention will prevent it from falling in any direction. By way of personal example, during my career I would be repetitively deployed for many months, even years, at a time and typically in harm's way. The strain on me personally, but more importantly, the strain that this created for my family, has left scars that I still live with. Yet, on the other hand, I and thousands like me volunteered for SOF, and remained for a career in SOF, because I yearned to do these very things. The strains and stresses of those missions not only made me stronger, better, and more effective than I could have ever been otherwise, they created friendships, memories, and outlooks that have enriched, and continue to enrich, every day of my life. Do I regret the costs and damage that my long absences created? Yes, I do. But, if I could turn back the hands-of-time and had the power to significantly alter my trajectory, would I? Paradoxically, the answer is mostly no, and I might have decided to pursue a different career path if that trajectory had been different.

Second, there is an important problem that undermines the search for ways of ensuring the health of SOF. It may surprise you, but here also is a profound shortage of real, empirical, long-term research on what the effects of deployments, prolonged combat, exposure to blast and trauma, family separation, and so on, are for SOF. I know some would argue there is substantial research on all of these topics for the US Military broadly, but I believe almost none of that is specific to the experiences of SOF, and therefore do not take into account the often very different aspects of SOF culture, the nature of our deployments and operating environments, and the consequences of physical and psychological stresses and traumas amidst these differences. If I am correct in this assertion, then we are probably today in a classic logic trap, that "one cannot solve a problem if one is unable to understand that problem".

Finally, on the Future of SOF, I frequently hear in Washington DC these days how SOF must "pivot" away from Counterterrorism in the interest of "doing more" in the arena of Great Power Competition. I understand the impulses that drive such assertions, but I think they are at best misleading, and at worst quite wrong.

The main reason is because we are witnessing a growing convergence between our Near Peer Adversaries and organizations that can be characterized as Terrorist or Extremist, or at least Non-State, but increasingly powerful and militarily capable actors. Two examples are instructive:

In Yemen today, the Houthis, who just a few years ago were a relatively obscure tribal group, are today a highly capable and powerful military proxy of Iran. The Houthis today can successfully employ surface-to-surface ballistic missiles, long-range weaponized and swarm drone attacks, and precision-guided anti-ship missiles.

A few years ago, in the Ukraine and Crimea, "Russian Ethnic Separatists" demonstrated the ability to employ "first world" military and intelligence technology, sophisticated air defense systems, and highly effective cyber operations, in cooperation and concert with Russian



Government efforts, including the “Little Green Men” who we all know today were Russian military Forces.

Proxy warfare is as old as mankind because it has always been convenient for Nations or Kingdoms to have **someone else** do their bleeding and dying for them. In today’s world of rapidly advancing Technologies, whose costs are falling so quickly that anyone with a credit card may have them, the attractiveness of such non-state or terrorist actors as powerful proxy tools is proving irresistible. Consequently, America should expect that challenging a Near Peer Competitor will also bring us into confrontations with these proxies, including terrorists and extremists, that will again require many of the skills that SOF developed in the Counterterrorism arena, whether that be the precision-strike abilities of SOF, or the abilities of SOF to effectively compete in the classic “struggle over hearts and minds”, instead of bombs and bullets.

In closing, I wish to thank the Committee for allowing me the opportunity to provide a small contribution to today’s hearing, and I look forward to your questions.

**Michael K. Nagata**

Michael K. Nagata is a Senior Vice President and Strategic Advisor for CACI International, and also owns and operates Hanada Bridge LLC, a national security and counterterrorism consulting firm. Retiring from the US Army in 2019 after 38 years of active duty in the US Army, with 34 years in US Special Operations, his final assignment was Director of Strategic Operational Planning for the National Counterterrorism Center.

A native of Virginia, he graduated from Georgia State University, and first enlisted in the US Army as an Infantry Private, later receiving his Commission as an Infantry Officer in 1982 from the US Army Officer Candidate School.

He served in the 2nd Infantry Division in Korea before volunteering for Army Special Forces in 1984. Assigned to the 1st Special Forces Group, he served in both 1st and 2nd Battalions. In 1990, he was selected for a Special Mission Unit, and deployed extensively over several assignments there on contingency and combat operations.

From 1999 to 2000, he commanded the Army's Special Forces Qualification Course. In 2000, he returned to a Special Mission Unit as a Squadron Commander, and was involved in the initial combat deployments after the 9/11 attacks.

After graduating from the National War College in 2003, he served in the Office of the Undersecretary of Defense for Intelligence. From 2005 to 2008, as a Special Mission Unit commander, he led multiple Joint Special Operations task forces across more than a dozen countries in Africa, the Middle East, and Southeast Asia.

He then served within the US Intelligence Community in Washington D.C. as a Military Deputy for Counterterrorism until 2009. He then deployed again until late 2011 to Pakistan as the Deputy Chief, Office of the Defense Representative at the US Embassy. Upon returning to the US, he served on the Joint Staff as the Deputy Director for Special Operations and Counterterrorism until 2013.

From 2013 to 2015 he commanded US Special Operations Command-Central, was responsible for Special Operations across the Central Command, and was heavily involved in the first two years of combat against the Islamic State.

LTG (R) Nagata is a graduate of the Infantry Officer Basic and Advanced Courses, the Special Forces Qualification Course, the United States Marine Corps Command and Staff College, and the National War College in Washington D.C.

He and his wife Barbara have five children, and one granddaughter, who are the lights of their lives.

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COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES  
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

**INSTRUCTION TO WITNESSES:** Rule 11, clause 2(g)(5), of the Rules of the House of Representatives for the 117<sup>th</sup> Congress requires nongovernmental witnesses appearing before House committees to include in their written statements a curriculum vitae and a disclosure of the amount and source of any federal contracts or grants (including subcontracts and subgrants), and contracts or grants (including subcontracts and subgrants), or payments originating with a foreign government, received during the past 36 months either by the witness or by an entity represented by the witness and related to the subject matter of the hearing. Rule 11, clause 2(g)(5) also requires nongovernmental witnesses to disclose whether they are a fiduciary (including, but not limited to, a director, officer, advisor, or resident agent) of any organization or entity that has an interest in the subject matter of the hearing. As a matter of committee policy, the House Committee on Armed Services further requires nongovernmental witnesses to disclose the amount and source of any contracts or grants (including subcontracts and subgrants), or payments originating with any organization or entity, whether public or private, that has a material interest in the subject matter of the hearing, received during the past 36 months either by the witness or by an entity represented by the witness. Please note that a copy of these statements, with appropriate redactions to protect the witness's personal privacy (including home address and phone number), will be made publicly available in electronic form 24 hours before the witness appears to the extent practicable, but not later than one day after the witness's appearance before the committee. Witnesses may list additional grants, contracts, or payments on additional sheets, if necessary. Please complete this form electronically.

26 March 2021

**Hearing Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Hearing Subject:**

Special Operations Culture and Climate: The Future of the Force

**Witness name:** Michael K. Nagata

**Position/Title:** Lieutenant General (Retired), US Army

**Capacity in which appearing:** (check one)

Individual       Representative

**If appearing in a representative capacity, name of the organization or entity represented:**

\_\_\_\_\_

**Federal Contract or Grant Information:** If you or the entity you represent before the Committee on Armed Services has contracts (including subcontracts) or grants (including subgrants) with the federal government, received during the past 36 months and related to the subject matter of the hearing, please provide the following information:

**2021**

Federal grant/ contract	Federal agency	Dollar value	Subject of contract or grant
Metis Solutions	DoD	0.00	Academic Instruction

**2020**

Federal grant/ contract	Federal agency	Dollar value	Subject of contract or grant

**2019**

Federal grant/ contract	Federal agency	Dollar value	Subject of contract or grant

**2018**

Federal grant/ contract	Federal agency	Dollar value	Subject of contract or grant

**Foreign Government Contract, Grant, or Payment Information:** If you or the entity you represent before the Committee on Armed Services has contracts or grants (including subcontracts or subgrants), or payments originating from a foreign government, received during the past 36 months and related to the subject matter of the hearing, please provide the following information:

2021

Foreign contract/ payment	Foreign government	Dollar value	Subject of contract, grant, or payment

2020

Foreign contract/ payment	Foreign government	Dollar value	Subject of contract, grant, or payment

2019

Foreign contract/ payment	Foreign government	Dollar value	Subject of contract, grant, or payment

2018

Foreign contract/ payment	Foreign government	Dollar value	Subject of contract, grant, or payment

**Fiduciary Relationships:** If you are a fiduciary of any organization or entity that has an interest in the subject matter of the hearing, please provide the following information:

Organization or entity	Brief description of the fiduciary relationship

**Organization or Entity Contract, Grant or Payment Information:** If you or the entity you represent before the Committee on Armed Services has contracts or grants (including subcontracts or subgrants) or payments originating from an organization or entity, whether public or private, that has a material interest in the subject matter of the hearing, received during the past 36 months, please provide the following information:

2021

Contract/grant/ payment	Entity	Dollar value	Subject of contract, grant, or payment
	CACI International	501526.09	Monthly Salary + Bonuses
			x 16 months

2020

Contract/grant/ payment	Entity	Dollar value	Subject of contract, grant, or payment

2019

Contract/grant/ payment	Entity	Dollar value	Subject of contract, grant, or payment

2018

Contract/grant/ payment	Entity	Dollar value	Subject of contract, grant, or payment

Testimony of Kate Germano, LtCol (Ret.), United States Marine Corps<sup>1</sup>

Before the Subcommittee on Intelligence and Special Operations, Committee on Armed Services  
U.S. House of Representatives

March 26, 2021

Thank you, Chairman Gallego, Ranking Member Kelly, and members of the subcommittee, for inviting me to testify on the mission critical topic of diversity challenges and opportunities in the special operations forces. I am honored to be with you.

In his message to the force of March 4, 2021, Secretary of Defense Lloyd J. Austin III laid out three priorities for the military: defend the nation, take care of our people, and succeed through teamwork.<sup>2</sup> Several of the Secretary's goals are centered around reexamining old ways of doing business to remove barriers to talent, build resilience, strengthen relationships, and increase leader accountability. But as General C.Q. Brown, the first African American to lead the Air Force, recently told CBS News about the stagnant growth of pilots of color in the service since the 1990s, when it comes to advancement in the military, including selection for service in special operations, "...ducks pick ducks."<sup>3</sup> Humans are indeed hard-wired to pay special attention to similarity, so senior military leaders must learn to deliberately override this natural tendency to "pick ducks" in pursuit of a more diverse, more united, and inclusive force. In a world where volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity reign supreme, we can no longer afford to think the old ways of leading and doing business are sufficient.

The conscious and unconscious preference of leaders to select those who most resemble themselves for membership in their tribe is reflected in a lack of diversity throughout the military, most glaringly in the special operations community and my former branch of service, the United States Marine Corps. The fact is that most positions of power and authority are held by white men. In addition to preserving the power status quo, "ducks picking other ducks" also reinforces covert and overt rules about who is *most respected and valued* in the organization. As sociologist Cecelia Ridgeway wrote, preserving the status quo and limiting the advancement of members of nondominant groups results in "cultural beliefs about who is 'better' or *presumed to be more competent or suitable for positions of authority*."<sup>4</sup> Thus the decision on who gets to serve and in what capacity is often predicated less on demonstrated ability and facts and more on

<sup>1</sup> The opinions and conclusions expressed in this testimony are the author's alone and should not be interpreted as representing any outside organization or entity, public or private. Per Rule 11, clause 2(g)(5) of the Rules of the House of Representatives for the 117<sup>th</sup> Congress, in the past 36 months, I have not been the recipient of any federal contracts, grants, or payments originating with a foreign government, nor have I received any contracts, grants, or payments from any organization or entity, public or private, with a material interest in the subject matter of the hearing.

<sup>2</sup> Secretary Lloyd J. Austin III, "A Message to the Force," Defense.gov, March 4, 2021 (<https://www.defense.gov/Newsroom/Releases/Release/Article/2525149/secretary-lloyd-j-austin-iii-message-to-the-force>).

<sup>3</sup> David Martin, "Race in the Ranks: Investigating racial bias in the U.S. Military," *CBS News*, March 21, 2021 (<https://www.cbsnews.com/amp/news/us-military-racism-60-minutes-2021-03-21>).

<sup>4</sup> Cecelia Ridgeway, "Why Status Matters for Inequality," *American Sociological Review*, Vol 79(1), 2014 (<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/0003122413515997>).



stereotypes and perceptions about who is more mentally and physically competent, and therefore more suitable, for positions of leadership.

On top of that, as diversity, equity, and inclusion experts note, “Barriers to inclusion tend to be invisible to those already succeeding in an organization.”<sup>5</sup> Based on their own unimpeded experiences as members of the dominant group, a majority of white male military members tend to believe barriers to advancement do not exist for minorities. As a result, many former and current majority group servicemembers are of the belief that the military is a fully actualized meritocracy and opportunities for advancement and selection for special programs exist for all who desire and are qualified for them. Despite the highest egalitarian ideals of our military, we have a lot of work to do to make this a reality.

Furthermore, the military community is becoming ever more insular and less representative of the demography of American society, with a disproportionate percentage of the force recruited from the conservative Bible belt in the South and from families with a direct tie to the military.<sup>6</sup> In essence, the military has become a “family” business, which translates into a predominantly white, male, and conservative Christian force. When it comes to diversity efforts, this presents significant danger of group think and a glaring “say/do” gap for members of nondominant/minority groups.

Minority servicemen and women regularly hear military leaders say diversity is important and see them develop strategic plans to direct diversity and inclusion efforts, but do not see corresponding increases in minority population numbers or experience positive changes in how they are perceived or treated. Thus, the targeted growth of minority populations (by gender, ethnicity, and race) and the elimination of racism, sexual harassment, assault, and retaliation in the military can only be achieved by eliminating say-do gaps between espoused values and contradicting behaviors and increasing accountability measures when members violate expectations for conduct.

Today, the military is experiencing a critical shortage of young men qualified to join the all-volunteer force at the very same time that public trust in the military is eroding for the first time in decades (“56 percent of Americans surveyed said they have ‘a great deal of trust and confidence’ in the military, down from 70 percent in 2018”).<sup>7</sup> Negative stories about racism and discrimination, sexual harassment, assault, and retaliation are prominent in news coverage of the military and have no doubt negatively impacted public perception. Competition amongst the services is high for the limited number of qualified males already, and a further loss of the public’s trust will no doubt have a negative impact on the propensity of young men and women to serve, further limiting the potential for new, more diverse accessions. Senior leaders could

<sup>5</sup> Frederick Miller and Judith H. Katz, “The Path from Exclusive to Inclusive Organization: A Developmental Process,” *The Pfeiffer Annual*, Volume 2, 1995, ([https://www.meds.org/uploaded/Campus\\_and\\_Community/CC365/The\\_Path\\_from\\_Exclusive\\_Club\\_to\\_Inclusive\\_Organization.pdf](https://www.meds.org/uploaded/Campus_and_Community/CC365/The_Path_from_Exclusive_Club_to_Inclusive_Organization.pdf)).

<sup>6</sup> Dave Phillips and Tim Arango, “Who Signs Up to Fight? Makeup of U.S. Recruits Shows Glaring Disparity,” *The New York Times*, January 14, 2020 (<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/01/10/us/military-enlistment.html>).

<sup>7</sup> Leo Shane III, “Trust in the Military is dropping significantly: new survey suggests,” *Military Times*, March 10, 2021 (<https://www.militarytimes.com/news/pentagon-congress/2021/03/10/trust-in-the-military-is-dropping-significantly-new-survey-suggests/>).

very well jeopardize the ability of Special Operations Command-- and the military more broadly-- to fulfill our national defense requirements if they fail to widen their apertures and challenge their existing views regarding the talent pool and who is “worthy” of entrance and inclusion in the organizational culture. As one expert notes about organizations that fail, “active inertia is an organization’s tendency to follow established patterns of behavior—even in response to dramatic environmental shifts.”<sup>8</sup> The transition of our military from two decades of counterinsurgency operations to preparing for conflict between great powers *while also* responding to nation-state threats represents just such a dramatic environmental shift. Meeting these complex global challenges will require not only cognitive diversity, but the unique talents, experiences, and abilities of young men and women from different backgrounds, ethnicities, and cultures.

There are **three diversity and health of the force issues** senior Special Operations Command leaders must face head on to change course, increase the public trust, and meet the imperatives the Secretary of Defense established in his message to the Force:

**1. Acknowledge that expanding the minority membership in the organization is an inherently emotional issue for dominant group members and tailor strategy, education, and training efforts accordingly.** Military leaders must understand that facts don’t drive human behaviors—emotions do. The high emotional sensitivity regarding diversity in special operations forces (SOF) was fully demonstrated by a 2016 RAND study on the subject, which states “Based on our survey of SOF personnel, opposition to opening SOF specialties to women is both deep and wide, with high levels of opposition across all SOF elements. This opposition is also deep-seated and intensely felt.”<sup>9</sup> Additionally, neuroscience research demonstrates that making diversity a compliance issue triggers autonomy and status threat states in the brain and actually *activates* bias, jeopardizing the success of the diversity strategy and potentially *increasing* levels of discrimination, harassment, and retaliation against members of nondominant groups.

Diversity strategies and education must therefore be grounded in an understanding of the brain science of change and the feelings of grief, loss, skepticism, and anger in dominant group members as a result of the focus on diversity, equity, and inclusion. Part of making the force stronger should also involve educating service men and women on how to become more emotionally intelligent so that they are able to name their emotions, challenge the related assumptions and beliefs which cause them, and deal with them in more productive ways. Additionally, diversity, equity, and inclusion should be tied not only to organizational values, which are inherently emotional, but embedded in every aspect of training and evaluation as

<sup>8</sup> Donald Sull, “Why Good Companies Go Bad,” *Harvard Business Review*, July-August 1999 (<https://hbr.org/1999/07/why-good-companies-go-bad>).

<sup>9</sup> Thomas S. Szayna, Eric V. Larson, Angela O’Mahony, Sean Robson, Agnes Gereben Schaefer, Miriam Matthews, J. Michael Polich, Lynsay Ayer, Derek Eaton, William Marcellino, Lisa Miyashiro, Marek Posard, James Syme, Zev Winkelman, Cameron Wright, Megan Zander Cotugno, and William Welser IV, “Considerations for Integrating Women into Closed Occupations in U.S. Special Operations Forces”, RAND 2016 (<https://dod.defense.gov/Portals/1/Documents/wisr-studies/SOCOM%20-%20Considerations%20for%20Integrating%20Women%20into%20Closed%20Occupations%20in%20the%20US%20Special%20Operations%20Forces.pdf>).

leadership imperatives. Without actually evaluating leaders on how inclusive and equitable they are, there is no measurement by which to hold them accountable.

Finally, servicemembers should also be taught from day one of their military experience that the less diverse an organization is at all levels, the less it can aspire to being a true meritocracy. This reasoning can also be extended to a national level in that societies that more equitably share resources, power, and responsibility for citizenship and governance are more stable than those that do not. America is truly stronger when resources, power, and responsibility are more equitably distributed, and the same is true for our military.

**2. Conduct comprehensive military/special operations specific research to clearly identify how diversity contributes to a more lethal and capable force relative to current future threats and global operations.** Up to this point, military leaders have relied primarily on case studies from private industry like the tech and finance sectors of the economy to provide rationale on how diversity makes the force stronger. Little if any independent research has been conducted to quantify how a more diverse, equitable, and military makes for a more lethal force or enhances the ability of the force to achieve success in global operations. Despite decades of female engagement teams being employed alongside special operations forces counterinsurgency operations, little to no quantifiable research exists to demonstrate the extent to which service women expand access to indigenous populations, enable the collection of actionable intelligence on the battlefield, or tangibly impact tactical mission success.

Additionally, 20 years into the global war on terror, the number of women employed in security forces remains negligible, further reducing their potential impact and reinforcing the notion that women on the battlefield are just “nice to haves.” As noted in a 2014 paper by The Joint Special Operations University’s Center for Special Operations Studies and Research, “There is very little research directly addressing the effect of gender on team performance.”<sup>10</sup> Little has changed since the study was conducted, and the lack of available data combined with the limited number of women serving with special operations forces continue to sow seeds of skepticism, doubt, and resentment about diversity, equity, and inclusion *and* the combat abilities of servicewomen. Without military case studies specific to the benefits women and other minorities bring to the fight, it will be difficult to reduce skepticism and instill faith in the hearts and minds of dominant group members that a drive towards a more diverse, equitable, and inclusive special operations force is not only fair and just, but of necessity to our national defense.

**3. Resolve existing gaps in the Headquarters Special Operations Strategic Diversity and Inclusion Plan to overcome diversity, equity, and inclusion inertia.**

Diversity programs fail or reach a state of inertia when leaders choose not to establish metrics and define who is accountable for achieving them. Without these two critical elements, “ducks will continue to pick ducks” for advancement and opportunity and it will remain abundantly

<sup>10</sup> Dr. Jessica Glicken Turnley, Dr. Dona J. Stewart, Dr. Rich Rubright, and Dr. Jason Quirin, “Special Operations Forces Mixed-Gender Elite Teams: Examining socio-cultural dynamics of SOFMET, The Joint Special Operations University’s Center for Special Operations Studies and Research, June 2014 (<https://dod.defense.gov/Portals/1/Documents/wisr-studies/SOCOM%20-%20JSOU%20Study%20on%20Special%20Operations%20Forces%20Mixed-Gender%20Elite%20Team3.pdf>)

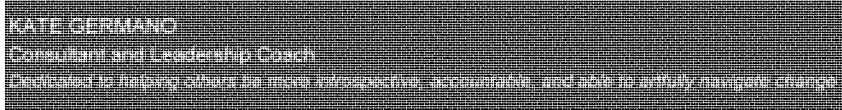
clear to members of nondominant groups that the strategic diversity and inclusion plan is nothing more than a mandatory check in the block. Establishing annual special operations specific diversity recruiting metrics and tying them to mission requirements and capabilities (like language or gender specific security requirements) and then creating a mechanism for accountability amongst the services for meeting the goals will be absolutely necessary to both quell resistance from dominant group members and increase feelings of belonging and inclusion for nondominant group members.

Most importantly, the current Headquarters Special Operations Strategic Diversity and Inclusion plan omits any mention of the word equity, which is foundational to the success of any diversity and inclusion initiative. According to one expert, "Equity kind of changes the dynamic where you create the opportunity for people from different backgrounds to be able to contribute at the same level, have power at the same level and be able to extract beneficial outcomes at the same level."<sup>11</sup> Since equity is about leveling the playing field for everyone through the identification and removal of systemic barriers to service and advancement, whether policies, equipment, practices, or behaviors, a strategy without a clear path to achieving equity for nondominant group members will likely doom the organization's diversity and inclusion efforts to fail.

I am grateful to have had the opportunity to provide my thoughts on this mission critical topic and am happy to answer any questions you have. Thank you.

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<sup>11</sup> John Joyce, "Diversity and Inclusion must be about equity, not buzzwords or an image," *Triad Business Journal*, January 24, 2020 (<https://www.bizjournals.com/triad/news/2020/01/24/diversity-and-inclusion-must-be-about-equity-not.html>)



**About Kate**

Kate is a retired military officer with broad experience as a public speaker, facilitator, and leadership coach who is committed to assisting others live the Marine Corps maxim, "Know yourself and seek self-improvement." At the pinnacle of her career in the Marines, Kate was chosen to lead the all-women 4<sup>th</sup> Recruit Training Battalion. After a tumultuous experience with some spectacular results and a very public firing, Kate left the military and embarked on a journey of self-reflection. Her thirst to learn how to improve her leadership and better serve people led her back to school, where she attained certifications from Georgetown University for change leadership and Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion program management, and Fielding Graduate University for leadership coaching. Kate is a fierce advocate for women in the military and is a sought-after speaker and thought leader on leadership, brain science, change, and gender issues.

Kate's exploration of her own emotional intelligence helped her understand that true leadership requires vulnerability, authenticity, empathy, and an appreciation for the perspectives of people from all different walks of life. Believing you can always teach an old dog new tricks, she uses her own experiences as powerful tools to help improve individual and team performance through the identification and removal of systemic blocks to communication and community.

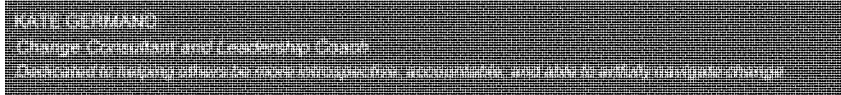
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<b>Education</b>	
Evidence Based Coaching Certificate Program, Fielding University, Santa Barbara, CA	2020
Strategic Diversity and Inclusion Management Certificate Program, Georgetown University, Washington DC	2019
Organizational Consulting and Change Leadership Certificate Program, Georgetown University, Washington DC	2018
Master of Military Science, Marine Corps Command and Staff College, Quantico, VA	2011
Bachelor of Arts, History, Goucher College, Towson, MD	1996

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<b>Professional Experience</b>	
<i>Chief Executive Officer, Consultant, and Coach</i>	2018 — Pres
Cassandra-Helenus Partners, LLC, Indian Head, MD	
Partners with individuals and organizations to improve their emotional intelligence, workplace culture and inclusion, and communication. Clients include (among others):	
- The United States Air Force (through the Executive Leadership Group)	- Center for International Policy
- Merck	- Kohler
- SRC (through TruEdge Consulting)	- Wells Fargo (through Jennifer Brown Consultants)
 <i>Director of Talent Acquisition and Management</i>	2017
Mark G. Anderson Consultants, Inc., Washington DC	
Led the project management consulting firm's efforts to develop and implement innovative recruitment, retention, and employee development strategies.	

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- Collaborated with key stakeholders to identify staffing shortfalls and needs, establish pay bands, and standardize position descriptions and responsibilities for staff to improve performance and profitability.
- Conducted stratified survey of all MGAC employees by position to determine their talent management and growth needs, assess shortfalls, and identify cultural problem areas and performance management gaps.
- Developed appropriate structure to enable the company to grow in the future.
- Developed communications strategy for the new talent acquisition program to generate buy-in from key stakeholders and improve trust and cohesion by the individual employees.
- Developed strategy and budget for the implementation of automated recruiting applicant tracking and performance management systems.
- Developed college recruiting and internship programs and budgets to expand the company's acquisition pipeline and attract the "best and the brightest" young employees to the organization.

*Volunteer/Chief Operations Officer*

2015 — 2017

Service Women's Action Network (SWAN), Washington, DC

Served as the public face for America's only national-level non-profit dedicated to serving active-duty military women and veterans and improving military diversity and inclusion results.

- Developed strategy, supervised day-to-day operations and Board requirements.
- Served as lead spokesperson. Conducted national-level media interviews. Authored numerous Op-eds. Represented SWAN at public speaking events. Raised the profile of the organization on issues affecting military women resulting in an increase in membership and individual donations.
- Nationally known as a subject-matter expert on issues impacting servicewomen.
- Coordinated member recruitment and outreach across key stakeholder communities.
- Briefed members of Congress and legislative staffs on Capitol Hill.

*Presiding Officer*

2015 — 2016

Naval Clemency and Parole Board, Washington Navy Yard, Washington, DC

Served as senior member of a review board responsible for criminal parole recommendations to the Secretary of the Navy.

- Reviewed, analyzed, and formed recommendations to the Secretary of the Navy for more than 225 individual cases.
- Directed an office of five in the development of briefing packages.
- Coordinated the appearance of witnesses and schedule for clemency and parole hearings.
- Re-wrote the Naval governing directive on clemency and parole for the Secretary of the Navy.
- Assisted in the recruitment of new board members from the Navy and Marine Corps.
- Served as the Commandant of the Marine Corps' direct representative for Marine cases.
- Coordinated the return of parole violators.

*Commanding Officer*

2014 — 2015

4th Recruit Training Battalion, Marine Corps Recruit Depot, Parris Island, SC

Board selected to lead and manage a training staff of 120 personnel and 3,200 trainees annually.

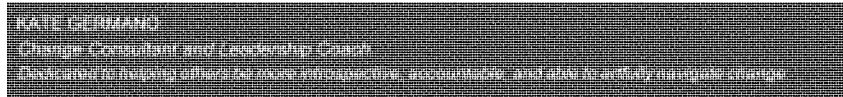
- Researched and analyzed historic trainee performance data, identified significant systemic problems, and designed and implemented innovative solutions producing demonstrably superior results over a short time period:
  - Increased female marksmanship qualification pass rate from 68% to 92% in less than 9 months.
  - Reduced incidences of recruit abuse and training staff misconduct.

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2



- Improved trainee physical fitness performance by 10% within 6 months.
- Reduced lower extremity injury rate by 20% in less than 9 months.
- Conducted quality control and performance analysis and communicated performance improvement trends to external recruiting operations staff to help increase physical and mental preparedness of female applicants.
- Conducted high-level distinguished visitor events to explain the need for higher level diversity and inclusion process improvements.
- Served as organizational spokesperson, delivered monthly speeches in front of audiences of 3,000+.
- Created an awards and recognition program to enhance morale and reward desired behavior.
- Developed a career progression plan to ensure only most qualified personnel were placed in leadership roles.

*Assistant Chief of Staff* 2012 — 2014

Marine Corps Installations Command, Pentagon, Arlington, VA

Excelled as head of manpower, diversity, and human resources for the largest command in the U.S. Marine Corps.

- Responsible for the oversight of three regions numbering 17,000 civilian government employees around the world.
- Managed \$820M salary and union contracted personnel budget.
- Developed a manage-to-payroll policy resulting in significant cost savings for the government.
- Served as senior human capital and diversity and inclusion advisor to organizational CEO and C-suite staff.
- Researched and designed policy and procedures for unplanned furlough of civilian employees during the government shutdown of 2014.
- Developed all human capital, talent management and career progression policies to increase diversity and promotion opportunities.

*Marine Aide to the Secretary of the Navy* 2011 — 2012

Office of the Secretary of the Navy, Pentagon, Washington DC

Hand selected to serve as first Marine Corps aide de camp and special advisor to The Honorable Ray Mabus, the 75th Secretary of the Navy.

- Collaborated with executive-level key stakeholders across the Department of the Navy to develop travel plans and align policy goals with U.S. Government national security objectives.
- Coordinated with high-level embassy and military staff in 21 foreign nations to support the Secretary's official travel. Planned and executed 17 domestic trips supporting the Secretary's outreach to communities throughout the US.

*Graduate Student* 2010 — 2011

Marine Corps Command and Staff College, Quantico, VA

Competitively selected to attend the Marine Corps' premier resident school for military strategy and planning.

- Researched, wrote, and defended thesis on the impact of corruption on failing states.
- Graduated with distinction.

*Commanding Officer* 2007 — 2010

Marine Corps Recruiting Station San Diego, San Diego, CA

Board selected to lead 135 recruiters in 13 offices covering 75,000 square miles in California and Nevada.

- Managed a budget of \$860K and saved taxpayers \$80,000 per year for three years.



- Led meaningful increase in quality improvement and diversity results. Recognized as "most improved" recruiting station in 2007-2008.
- Achieved 20% year to year increase in enlisted and officer acquisition without sacrificing quality.
- Achieved recognition as "highest quality" recruiting station in 2008-2010.
- Ranked best recruiting station in district for 2010.
- Conducted detailed analysis of recruiting data, implemented process improvement, and achieved historically low attrition rates for male and female applicants at recruit training (boot camp).
- Developed a career progression plan for key leadership positions and implemented incentive/awards program to reinforce desired behavior.
- Systemically improved recruit prospecting in target market to achieve monthly goals early while improving quality of life of recruiting staff.

Adjutant and Legal Officer, Marine Wing Support Group 17, Okinawa, Japan	2006—2007
Adjutant and Legal Officer, 31 <sup>st</sup> Marine Expeditionary Unit, Okinawa, Japan	2004—2006
Student, Expeditionary Warfare School, Quantico, VA	2003—2004
Operations and Executive Officer, Recruiting Station Orange, Irvine, CA	2000—2004
Adjutant and Legal Officer, Comms and Electronics School, 29 Palms, CA	1999—2000
Adjutant and Legal Officer, Headquarters Battalion, 29 Palms, CA	1997—1999

#### Notable Achievements

- Delivered TEDx talk on gender bias in how female Marines are recruited and trained, TEDx Tysons
- Three-time finisher of JFK 50-mile race, finishing in top 15% for age and gender
- Selected as HillVets 100 of 2018 Honoree
- Appointed to serve on VA Advisory Committee on Women Veterans

#### Publications

- Co-author, *Fight Like a Girl- The truth about how female Marines are made*, New York NY: Prometheus Publishing, April 2018.
- Contributing author, *Bullet Proofing the Psyche: Preventing mental health problems in our military and veterans*, Santa Barbara CA: ABC-CLIO/Praeger Publishing, May 2018.
- Contributing author, *Military Virtues*, Havant, Hampshire: Howgate Publishing, 2019.
- For a complete list of Kate's articles and opinion pieces, please visit [www.kategermano.com](http://www.kategermano.com)

#### Public Speaking

Since 2018, Kate's public speaking clients have included Société Générale, Allstate, Merck, Amazon, PayPal, Kohler, the FDIC, Princeton University, the University of North Carolina at Greensboro, the City of York, PA, and the University of Southern Illinois at Carbondale, among others.

#### Additional Certifications

NeuroLeadership Institute- Brain Based Coaching, 2020  
 Brain Based Conversations, 2020  
 International Coaching Federation- Leadership Coaching, 2020



**DISCLOSURE FORM FOR WITNESSES  
COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES  
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

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March 26, 2021

**Hearing Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Hearing Subject:**

Special Operations Culture and Climate: The Future of the Force

**Witness name:** Kate I. Germano

**Position/Title:** LtCol, United States Marine Corps (Retired)

**Capacity in which appearing:** (check one)

- Individual       Representative

**If appearing in a representative capacity, name of the organization or entity represented:**

\_\_\_\_\_

**Federal Contract or Grant Information:** If you or the entity you represent before the Committee on Armed Services has contracts (including subcontracts) or grants (including subgrants) with the federal government, received during the past 36 months and related to the subject matter of the hearing, please provide the following information:

**2021**

Federal grant/ contract	Federal agency	Dollar value	Subject of contract or grant

**2020**

Federal grant/ contract	Federal agency	Dollar value	Subject of contract or grant

**2019**

Federal grant/ contract	Federal agency	Dollar value	Subject of contract or grant

**2018**

Federal grant/ contract	Federal agency	Dollar value	Subject of contract or grant

**Foreign Government Contract, Grant, or Payment Information:** If you or the entity you represent before the Committee on Armed Services has contracts or grants (including subcontracts or subgrants), or payments originating from a foreign government, received during the past 36 months and related to the subject matter of the hearing, please provide the following information:

**2021**

Foreign contract/ payment	Foreign government	Dollar value	Subject of contract, grant, or payment

**2020**

Foreign contract/ payment	Foreign government	Dollar value	Subject of contract, grant, or payment

**2019**

Foreign contract/ payment	Foreign government	Dollar value	Subject of contract, grant, or payment

**2018**

Foreign contract/ payment	Foreign government	Dollar value	Subject of contract, grant, or payment

**Fiduciary Relationships:** If you are a fiduciary of any organization or entity that has an interest in the subject matter of the hearing, please provide the following information:

Organization or entity	Brief description of the fiduciary relationship

**Organization or Entity Contract, Grant or Payment Information:** If you or the entity you represent before the Committee on Armed Services has contracts or grants (including subcontracts or subgrants) or payments originating from an organization or entity, whether public or private, that has a material interest in the subject matter of the hearing, received during the past 36 months, please provide the following information:

2021

Contract/grant/ payment	Entity	Dollar value	Subject of contract, grant, or payment

2020

Contract/grant/ payment	Entity	Dollar value	Subject of contract, grant, or payment

2019

Contract/grant/ payment	Entity	Dollar value	Subject of contract, grant, or payment

2018

Contract/grant/ payment	Entity	Dollar value	Subject of contract, grant, or payment



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**QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY MEMBERS POST HEARING**

MARCH 26, 2021

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### QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY MR. GALLEGO

Mr. GALLEGO. While you were at the Pentagon, how did the Preservation of the Force and Family program extend to those who were no longer in the special operations community, such as SOF enablers who had returned to the conventional force, or veterans?

Mr. MITCHELL. [No answer was available at the time of printing.]

Mr. GALLEGO. The House Veterans Affairs Committee is currently conducting an investigation into the prevalence of white supremacy in the veteran community. What questions should we specifically be asking regarding current and former members of the special operations community?

Mr. MITCHELL. [No answer was available at the time of printing.]

Mr. GALLEGO. The House Veterans Affairs Committee is currently conducting an investigation into the prevalence of white supremacy in the veteran community. What questions should we specifically be asking regarding current and former members of the special operations community?

Ms. ROBINSON. [No answer was available at the time of printing.]

Mr. GALLEGO. I recently introduced the “Commission on LGBTQ Servicemembers and Veterans Act”, which would establish a commission to investigate the historic and ongoing impacts of discriminatory military policies and practices on LGBTQ service members and veterans. For Dr. Robinson—what obstacles do you believe exist for LGBTQ SOF operators and enablers?

Ms. ROBINSON. [No answer was available at the time of printing.]

Mr. GALLEGO. The House Veterans Affairs Committee is currently conducting an investigation into the prevalence of white supremacy in the veteran community. What questions should we specifically be asking regarding current and former members of the special operations community?

General NAGATA. Regrettably, I am compelled to reply that the formulation of effective questions to illuminate the scope, nature, and volume of “white supremacy” in the US Military is directly inhibited by the absence of a common or consensus definition across the US Government over how to define this form of ethnic/racial supremacy. Without a commonly agreed upon definition, I believe the formulation of effective and reliable questions is today not achievable. During my three years as the Director for Strategic Operational Planning at the National Counterterrorism Center, I focused heavily on seeking to understand the growing problem of domestic violent extremism in American society. Violent white supremacy was always prominent within such efforts, but I was also struck by the absence of consensus, among Federal, State, and Local leaders, as well as among our Citizens, regarding what constitutes “white supremacy”? And if we cannot commonly define it, I do not believe it possible to sufficiently understand its origins or trajectory. Most importantly, I doubt we can substantially reduce this phenomenon without this common/consensus understanding. Also, though Armed Services do not consistently succeed in recruiting adequately across all elements of American society, it is still reasonable to assume that, given domestic extremism increases in the US general population for several decades, it has also grown within DOD, and this probably applies US Special Operations Forces. However, there is also a large strategic deficit of genuine scholarship or empirical research devoted to illuminating the exact nature, volume, incidence, or trends of such extremism within DOD, above and beyond whether we have a consensus definition of a movement such as “white supremacy”. I urge the Subcommittee to consider how best to resource and foster the scholarship and research necessary to address the foregoing. Also, as the Congress and DOD work to improve the military’s ability to identify those that are unacceptable for service in our Military because of association with violent extremism, I recommend this Subcommittee also ensure that DOD develops, and is adequately resourced for, new forms of Training and Education designed to prevent a recurrence of this problem in the future.

Mr. GALLEGO. The House Veterans Affairs Committee is currently conducting an investigation into the prevalence of white supremacy in the veteran community. What questions should we specifically be asking regarding current and former members of the special operations community?

Ms. GERMANO. Thank you for your question, Chairman. The issue of white supremacy and extremism in the military is concerning, but I have faith in Secretary Austin's leadership and ability to address this issue since the Department of Defense is a known and definable ecosystem with multiple layers of leadership and a system of accountability (e.g. Uniform Code of Military Justice). The veteran community is an entirely different matter. At +18 million strong, geographically distributed, and unaccountable, extremism in the veteran community is a much larger and more challenging problem to address. To answer your specific question, I'd recommend addressing the issue beginning with the 48 large, legacy, membership-based 501.c.19 veteran service organizations and the 14 large other veteran service organizations and military associations and ask them the following questions:

1. As a Congressionally-chartered Veteran Service Organization or other veteran service organization or military association, what was your organization's public response to the January 6, 2001 insurrection?
2. What action strategies has your organization deployed since January 6 to communicate with your members about the event?
3. In light of the rise of extremism and anti-democracy efforts in America, what expectations has your organization communicated to your members about their duties to support the Constitution as engaged citizens?
4. What expectations does your organization have for members in terms of their duties as engaged citizens following their military service?
5. Have any of your members been arrested in connection with the January 6 attack on the Capitol of the United States?
6. If so, how many?
7. If so, what action has your organization taken?
8. What is your organization doing to support Department of Defense efforts to address extremism in the military?
9. What is your organization doing to address extremism or extremist views within your membership?
10. What is your organization doing to address extremist views within the broader veteran community?
11. What should Congressionally chartered 501.c.19 veteran service organizations be doing to counter extremist and anti-democracy views in American society?
12. What is your organization doing to help veterans—especially recently transitioned veterans—understand their continued duty to support the Constitution as engaged citizens?
13. What is your organization doing to promote civic literacy—especially with children in grades K–12?

While the number of veterans arrested in connection with the January 6 insurrection is regressing to the norm, the fact that any veterans participated is cause for concern. I believe the discussion around how many veterans participated or how many per capita participated is a red herring. It only takes one Timothy McVeigh or one Lee Harvey Oswald to change the course of American history in a negative way. I strongly recommend the committee engage with the standing VSOs, ensure their public positions on extremism are made clear and on the record, and partner with them to improve norms and expectations within the veteran community nationwide.

