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UNITED STATES SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND'S EFFORTS TO SUSTAIN THE READINESS OF SPECIAL OPERATIONS FORCES AND TRANSFORM THE FORCE FOR FUTURE SECURITY CHALLENGES

HEARING
BEFORE THE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON EMERGING THREATS AND
CAPABILITIES
OF THE
COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES
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UNITED STATES SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND'S EFFORTS TO SUSTAIN THE READINESS OF SPECIAL OPERATIONS FORCES AND TRANSFORM THE FORCE FOR FUTURE SECURITY CHALLENGES

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 27, 2022

UNITED STATES SENATE,
SUBCOMMITTEE ON EMERGING,
THREATS AND CAPABILITIES,
COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES,
Washington, DC.

The Committee met, pursuant to notice, at 2:36 p.m. in room SR-232A, Russell Senate Office Building, Senator Mark Kelly (Chairman of the Subcommittee) presiding.

Committee Members present: Kelly, Kaine, Peters, Ernst, Fischer, Scott, Blackburn, and Tuberville.

OPENING STATEMENT OF SENATOR MARK KELLY

Senator KELLY. Good afternoon, everybody. Thank you for being here. The Emerging Threats Subcommittee meets this afternoon to receive testimony from the leaders of the U.S. Special Operations Command service components. We look forward to hearing how you are shaping our special operations forces in line with the priorities laid out by the National Defense Strategy (NDS) and what more we can do, what we can do, to ensure the readiness of your forces for the range of missions they may be asked to conduct in coming years.

First I would like to welcome our witnesses today: Lieutenant General Slife, Commander of U.S. Air Force Special Operations Command (AFSOF); Lieutenant General Braga, Commander of U.S. Army Special Operations Command; Rear Admiral Howard, Commander of Naval Special Warfare Command; and Major General Glynn, Commander of U.S. Marine Forces Special Operations Command. I also hope you will pass along our sincere appreciation for the service and sacrifice of the approximately 74,000 men and women of U.S. Special Operations Command (SOCOM) and their families.

The special operations community has achieved so much for the Nation in the last 20 years, but it has also borne a significant burden in doing so. As our strategic priorities evolve, we must never forget the people that make our special operations capabilities so effective. As SOCOM commander General Clark stated during his posture hearing earlier this month, "Special Operations Forces

(SOF) creates strategic, asymmetric advantages for the Nation across a spectrum of conflict. Their enduring value resides in the ability to adapt and to combat asymmetric threats, including in the gray zone, employ precision and surprise to achieve strategy effects in conflict or crisis, build access, placement, and influence through sustained partnership with foreign forces, and support allies and partners' resilience and resistance efforts, all providing discreet options when conventional action is impractical or not desired.”

General Clark’s testimony builds upon the recently released Special Operations Forces Vision and Strategy that lays out an ambitious, 10-year roadmap for realigning special operations capabilities to support the National Defense Strategy.

The threat posed by violent extremists remains present and our SOF will remain at the forefront of keeping pressure on terrorist networks to prevent them from conducting attacks against our Homeland and interests overseas. Successive National Defense Strategies have rightly emphasized a more resource-sustainable approach to counterterrorism, and long-term strategic competition has become the primary strategic focus. Our special operations forces have a central role to play across the spectrum of competition, crisis and, if necessary, conflict, with our strategic adversaries, even when U.S. forces are not directly involved in hostilities.

As has been widely reported, the persistent engagement of U.S. special operations forces with their Ukrainian counterparts, over a period of years, has undoubtedly contributed to their success in degrading the larger and more heavily armed Russian invasion forces. Without going into details of our current support to the Ukrainian forces, I hope our witnesses today will discuss the lessons learned from our engagement with Ukraine and how they can be applied to shaping our special operations forces for the future.

As agile as our SOF community is, adjusting to the demands of long-term strategic competition will not be easy after more than 20 years of sustained counterterrorism and stability operations. Our SOF will require not only new skills and capabilities, but also new operating concepts to make best use of their limited capacity and ensure their activities are fully integrated with conventional and interagency partners, a concept described by the new National Defense Strategy as “integrated deterrence.”

During today’s testimony I hope you will address how your commands are preparing our special operations forces to support the requirements of the geographic combatant commands while balancing the high demand for special operations capabilities around the world. I hope you will also address our efforts to ensure that our special operations forces remain a respected and trusted force by reinforcing a culture of accountability.

Last, but most certainly not least, I hope you will update us on efforts to support special operations families as they manage the stress resulting from the frequent and demanding deployment of their loved ones.

I will now turn to our Ranking Member, Senator Ernst, for any opening comments that she may have.

STATEMENT OF SENATOR JONI ERNST

Senator ERNST. Yes. Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you, gentlemen, for being here today. I apologize for my tardiness. A number of us will have other committeees. We will pop in and out as we can. But again, I appreciate you appearing in front of our subcommittee, and also thank you for your continued service, not just to you but to your command teams as well. We want to recognize those Non-Commissioned Officers (NCOs) and leaders that participate in your roles as well.

So, of course, the testimony that you provide today will play an important role in this Committee's work on the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA), and the men and women of Special Operations Command have been at the forefront of our national security over the last two decades and have undertaken some of the Nation's most challenging missions. They have inflicted serious damage to al Qaeda, to ISIS, and other terrorist groups that want to harm us.

While the counterterrorism mission will remain an enduring requirement for our special operators, the force must transform itself to deal with the growing threat posed by China, by Russia, and other state actors. This will require modernizing the force, updating training and tactics, and employing innovative operational concepts. That is why I included in last year's NDAA a provision requiring a special operations joint operating concept for competition and conflict. I look forward to that being developed and delivered to this Committee this year.

In order to support efforts to modernize the force we need to provide them with the resources they need to fight and win in a future fight. President Biden's budget request is woefully inadequate in this regard. The fiscal year 2023 topline request for SOCOM is the same as it was last year, despite a significant increase in threats.

As we all know, a flat budget equals a budget cut. This reality is only exacerbated by the rising inflation. SOCOM estimates that its fiscal year 2023 budget request is actually \$1.3 billion, or 9 percent, less than its fiscal year 2020 budget, using constant dollars. This represents a significant decrease in SOCOM's buying power and hampers its efforts to modernize the force.

That is why this Committee needs to look at SOCOM's unfunded requirements list and do what it can to help address these shortfalls. I hope our witnesses will tell us where they are facing the most pressing shortfalls and describe the impact on their ability to accomplish the mission.

Lastly, and most importantly, I want to talk about the greatest capability in SOF, our special operations men and women. As the first SOF truth says, "Humans are more important than hardware." That is why I have been so supportive of the Preservation of The Force and Families Initiative (POTFF), created after Admiral Olson's testimony in 2011, that the force is, "beginning to show some fraying around the edges." POTFF has been instrumental in taking care of the physical, mental, and spiritual needs of our operators and their families. POTFF truly is a readiness-builder for the force. I look to our witnesses to describe how they are using POTFF and other programs to ensure our troops and their families get the support they need.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator KELLY. Thank you, Senator Ernst.

We will now begin with witness statements. We will start with Lieutenant General Slife, Commander of U.S. Air Force Special Operations Command. General Slife.

**STATEMENT OF LIEUTENANT GENERAL JAMES C. SLIFE,
USAF, COMMANDER, AIR FORCE SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND**

Lieutenant General SLIFE. Good afternoon Chairman Kelly, Ranking Member Ernst, distinguished Members of the Committee. I am honored to appear before you today as the Commander of your Air Force Special Operations Command (AFSOC), and I would like to thank you for the opportunity to speak about the employment of our Nation's special operations forces in the future operating environment.

On behalf of myself and our Command Chief, Chief Master Sergeant Cory Olson, and the 21,500 airmen we serve together, thank you for the support and resources provided by this Committee since our last testimony last year.

The National Defense Strategy describes the strategic environment substantially different from the one in which we have operated for the last two decades. AFSOC, like the other SOF components, finds itself at a strategic discontinuity, a moment in which the future should not be considered a linear extension of the past but rather as something different altogether.

Such inflection points require transformation, and my goal today is to describe in greater detail some of the changes we are implementing to ensure our airmen, the disciplined professionals who represent our competitive advantage, remain relevant in the emerging operating environment.

As the Department embraces integrated deterrence as the framework concept of our defense strategy, the AFSOC of the future will have to balance among five focus areas to compete with our pacing adversaries.

First, AFSOC will generate advantage by campaigning in the gray zone, operating across the spectrum of visibility and attribution. We will use our force to create the dilemmas and uncertainty, and present cost-imposing problems for our adversaries. For instance, the development of an amphibious capability for our MC-130 transport aircraft will enable runway-independent operations, extend the global reach and survivability of the aircraft, and provide access to the enormous portions of the Earth's surface covered by water that does not currently exist.

Secondly, we will engage as part of the broader Joint Force employing our unique and sensitive capabilities to create windows of advantage and sap adversary strength. In order to do this effectively, we are transforming our training and force presentation models. Our force generation process is made up of four phases, each 5 months in length. The phases include a reset phase, individual unit training, as well as joint and collective training prior to commitment as part of the Joint Force.

We are pathfinding a new capability that we refer to as "mission sustainment teams." These 58-person teams are comprised of 22

different specialties and allow our airmen to operate out of austere regions with the agility the future operating environment requires. Our airmen will spend the 15 months of the force generation cycle training in skills above and beyond what their normal tasks might entail. The end result is a team of multifunctional airmen integrated into our tactical formations that can provide limited force protection, air transportation services, bed down, subsistence and operational contracting support, and aircraft and personnel safety, to include explosive ordnance disposal. By building these small, agile teams capable of operating in disaggregated fashion in austere sites, we will create dilemmas and uncertainty for our adversaries.

Third, AFSOC will remain poised to respond to global crises and contingencies, wherever and whenever required, in increasingly contested environments. We are employing our force generation model to produce mission command echelons at a higher state of readiness than previously has been possible. Our force generation model will prepare, train, certify, verify, and validate our airmen and their command teams are ready for alert and deployment taskings. These airmen will be trained to respond to short-notice taskings while employing and maneuvering in militarily and politically contested environments. This will reduce the current risk to mission and risk to force by providing continuity of leadership.

Fourth, AFSOC will more efficiently disrupt violent extremist organizations to ensure they are unable to mount external attacks on the U.S. Homeland, and do so in a cost-effective manner. Our Armed Overwatch program's light footprint, rapid deployability, multi-mission utility, and much lower operating costs per flight hour will enable AFSOC to do more missions with fewer aircraft than had previously been possible.

Finally, AFSOC will remain focused on the specific tasks and missions assigned to SOCOM under the Unified Command Plan and the Joint Strategic Campaign Plan.

Chairman Kelly, Ranking Member Ernst, distinguished Members of the Committee, the Nation, the Air Force, and U.S. Special Operations Command appreciate your time today in giving me the opportunity to talk to you just a little bit about the AFSOC of the future.

[The prepared statement of Lieutenant General Slife follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT BY LIEUTENANT GENERAL JAMES C. SLIFE

Chairman Kelly, Ranking Member Ernst, and distinguished Members of the Committee, I am honored to appear before you as the Commander of Air Force Special Operations Command (AFSOC). I would like to thank you for the opportunity to speak before you today about the employment of Special Operation Forces (SOF) in the future operating environment. AFSOC is responsible for developing forces with the skills, resilience, and relevance we need to put the Nation in a position of strategic advantage in today's competitive environment. On behalf of myself, Chief Master Sergeant Cory Olson, AFSOC's Command Chief, and the 21,566 Airmen we serve together, I would like to express our gratitude for the support and resources provided by this committee since our last testimony in 2021.

The National Defense Strategy describes a strategic environment substantially different from the one in which we have operated for the last two decades. AFSOC, like all of the SOF components, finds itself at a strategic discontinuity—a moment in which the future should not be considered a linear extension of the past but rather something altogether different. Such inflection points require transformation, and my goal today is to describe in greater detail some of the changes we are imple-

menting to ensure our airmen—the disciplined professionals who represent our competitive advantage—remain relevant in the emerging operating environment.

As the Department embraces integrated deterrence as the cornerstone concept of our defense strategy, the AFSOC of the future will balance among five focus areas to compete with our pacing competitors. First, AFSOC will generate advantage by campaigning in the gray zone. We will operate across the spectrum of visibility and attribution to create dilemmas, uncertainty, and cost-imposing problems with which our adversaries must contend while simultaneously placing the U.S. and our allies and partners in positions of continued advantage. Second, AFSOC will employ SOF-specific capabilities as part of the joint force.

We will use our unique and sensitive capabilities to create windows of advantage for the joint force, most often acting in a supporting role to a broader joint campaign. Third, AFSOC will remain poised to respond to global crises and contingencies, prepared to respond whenever and wherever required in increasingly contested environments. Fourth, AFSOC will more efficiently disrupt violent extremist organizations to ensure they are unable to mount external operations against the U.S. homeland. Finally, AFSOC will remain focused on the specific tasks and missions assigned to United States Special Operations Command in the Unified Command Plan and the Joint Strategic Campaign Plan.

Generate Advantage by Campaigning in the Gray Zone. Our command is committed to developing forces and capabilities capable of campaigning in the gray zone. While the term “gray-zone” is not precisely defined, the DOD has generally accepted the concept of gray-zone operations as those which take place with ambiguous attribution and in space between peace and declared war. From the “little green men” used in the Russian invasion of Crimea to the Chinese maritime militia, our pacing competitors are developing creative ways to obscure their activities and intentions under a veneer of plausible deniability. SOF are uniquely suited to understand, identify, and expose such activities while providing our decision-makers with more proactive options of their own.

THEATER-AIR OPERATION SQUADRON

As our command works to transform into the AFSOC we will need, a new operational unit, the Theater-Air Operations Squadron (T-AOS), will help us campaign in the gray zone. Each regionally aligned T-AOS will apply all-source intelligence analysis; multi-domain space, cyber, information, and special operations integration; and a robust planning capability to enable Geographic Combatant Commanders and their Theater Special Operations Commands to fully leverage the unique capabilities AFSOC provides. Working in concert with the Theater Special Operations Commands and coordinating with sister SOF services, these squadrons will develop a deep understanding of the environment and develop integrated campaign options for operational commanders.

GENERATE ADVANTAGE

To generate advantage, SOF needs to be able to shape conditions on the ground and create dilemmas and uncertainty for our adversaries. Our reveal to deter and conceal to win approach captures this strategy. The development of an amphibious capability for the MC-130J would enable runway-independent operations and extend the global reach and survivability of the aircraft and the joint force. It offers nearly unlimited water landing zones to enable seaborne operations, allowing us to operate at a time and a place of our choosing, inserting and extracting any number of capabilities, personnel, or devices. Additionally, palletized munitions provide a viable, affordable, near-term means of airdropping long-range precision fires from existing airlift platforms, such as the C-130 and C-17. As a roll-on roll-off capability, the possibility that any airdrop-capable cargo plane in the U.S. inventory could employ munitions, domain awareness, or electronic attack payloads will create dilemmas for our adversaries by, introducing uncertainty in our approach and sowing doubt in the confidence they have of understanding our procedures. In conjunction with the Air Force Research Laboratory, AFSOC pioneered this capability for the joint force with a successful live-fire of an air-launched cruise missile from an MC-130J this past December.

Employ SOF Peculiar Capabilities as Part of the Joint Force. The creation of SOCOM in 1987 and AFSOC in 1990 represented a rare opportunity to build a new kind of fighting force. Habitual joint training and deliberate acquisition of specialized, interoperable equipment enabled us to create a highly trained and capable force postured for short-term crises and contingency responses while also supporting the broader joint force. This concept paved the way for SOF’s unprecedented oper-

ational tempo and strategic impact in the fight against violent extremist organizations over the past 20 years.

But now, in 2022, the Nation's SOF are once again standing at an inflection point, albeit one not yet defined by a catastrophic event such as those which characterized prior inflection points in April of 1980 and September of 2001 and forced us to make major changes. As we look to the future, AFSOC will need to be postured to deploy to remote locations, create options to sustain and protect operators for multiple days, yet be able to move quickly in contested and austere environments. AFSOC is leading the way in developing concepts and forces required to operate under these conditions.

MISSION SUSTAINMENT TEAMS

AFSOC is currently pathfinding a new concept called Mission Sustainment Teams (MSTs). The 58-person teams are comprised of 22 different specialties. These Airmen spend 15 months in a deliberate force generation cycle, learning skills above and beyond their normal tasks, before a five-month deployment window. For example, the food services Airmen learn to drive the forklift, while the heavy equipment operator learns to set up the communication equipment, and the radio operator learns to operate a crew-served weapon. The MSTs will be integral to AFSOC's tactical formations with limited force protection, air transportation services, bed down, subsistence, operational contract support, and aircraft and personnel safety including explosive ordnance disposal. Teams will complete the Special Operation Forces' Force Generation model (SOFFORGEN) in four phases, each made up of 150 days of training. Training includes individual, unit, and joint, collective blocks which build high-functioning teams prior to their deployment in the fourth, or "committed" phase of their cycle. By building small, agile teams capable of operating in a disaggregated fashion, we will provide skilled teams capable of creating dilemmas and challenges for our adversaries.

Respond to Crisis in Increasingly Contested Environments. The current and future operating environment is characterized by the re-emergence of peer competitors, disruptive technologies, weaponized information and disinformation, and direct and indirect challenges to the global norms of the last 75 years. Our challenge will be to transform AFSOC, which has evolved over the last two decades to sustain long-term counter-violent extremist operations in relatively permissive environments, into a force structured for success in the emerging operating environment. We are moving out aggressively to this end.

COMMAND AND CONTROL/ ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE

This year, AFSOC began implementing a new force presentation model to replace the ad hoc Joint Special Operations Aviation Component (JSOAC) structure. JSOACs were comprised of individual augmentees from disparate organizations that had not trained together as a unit prior to deployment. Our new force generation model uses a four-phase cycle to prepare, train, certify, verify, and validate our Airmen for alert and deployment. The construct is required to take us from the AFSOC we have to the AFSOC we need. It will maximize preparation and planning for enduring counter-violent extremist organization threats while also posturing the force for success in competition and conflict. In all instances, our new approach will reduce the current risk to mission and risk to force resident in JSOAC.

The framework calls for expeditionary forces organized as Special Operations Task Groups (SOTGs) and Special Operations Task Units (SOTUs). Task Groups will be squadron-based O-5 led elements focused on integrating Air Force special operations capabilities into joint special operations units. Task Units will be led by O-4s and senior O-3s, and will reside under the task groups as the tactical units of action for a given capability (e.g., AC-130 gunships, U-28 intelligence platforms, or Special Tactics ground forces). Incorporating this new model will align our processes with other USSOCOM components and provide a more agile and ready force. In the future, our adversaries will apply more pressure to our physical security, communication networks, and our logistics supply lines. The fact that our Airmen will arrive on the battlefield as high-functioning teams will be critical to their success and survivability. Additionally, the predictability of our force-generating cycle combined with a robust certification, verification, and validation processes will now allow deliberate oversight of deployment preparations, which ultimately increase capability and reduce the risk to mission while addressing the central finding of the SOCOM Comprehensive Review of SOF culture and ethics.

SPECIAL TACTICS NEXT

Within AFSOC-and the Air Force writ large-no group paid a greater human toll and carried a heavier deployment burden for the last two decades than AFSOC's Special Tactics force. Our Airmen achieved remarkable tactical and operational effects, primarily by calling in devastating, and often lifesaving, airstrikes on the enemy-often in close proximity to friendly forces. However, the Special Tactics force of the future will have to reorient and focus their air and space power expertise to generate and leverage global access, integrate and deliver multi-domain effects, and provide options for personnel recovery in support of the joint force. The air and space-centric perspective of the Special Tactics force will provide unique opportunities to understand and affect adversary activity below the level of armed conflict; project forces, capabilities, and effects into contested environments; and expand relationships and interoperability with both traditional and non-traditional partners. We think this force will be integral to helping solve some of the joint force's toughest challenges—such as outflanking adversary Anti-Access/Area Denial capabilities and enabling joint force long-range kill chains.

HIGH-SPEED VERTICAL TAKEOFF AND LANDING

To remain poised for global crises and contingencies, AFSOC is prepared to respond whenever and wherever required. Highly contested environments require pulsed operations, providing short windows of opportunity to conduct multiple missions, due to the reduced probability of sustained, theater-wide air superiority. To create those windows of opportunity, the joint force needs air capabilities that are runway independent and operate at speeds beyond what current rotary-wing and tilt-rotor technology can provide. High-Speed Vertical Takeoff and Landing (HSVTOL) capabilities will support a range of missions including tactical mobility; autonomous intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance; and kinetic and non-kinetic strike. HSVTOL technology will provide the joint force with vastly increased speed, range, and survivability.

Efficiently Disrupt Violent Extremist Organizations. The reemergence of strategic competition, tightening fiscal constraints, and the accelerating rate of technological change demand significant adjustments to ensure that AFSOC continues to be successful in counter-violent extremist organization operations. In this new environment, AFSOC must disrupt violent extremist organizations, rendering them incapable of mounting effective external attacks on the U.S. homeland and do so in a cost-effective and sustainable manner. These operations will be conducted in more austere environments, demanding smaller logistical footprints and fewer air platforms; AFSOC envisions Armed Overwatch as the centerpiece of our approach to addressing this problem.

Historically, special operations forces have relied on an “air stack,” a composition of 5 to sometimes more than 20 aircraft that combine to provide an array of specific capabilities costing the taxpayer upwards of \$150,000 per flight hour. Armed Overwatch’s light footprint, rapid deployability, multi-mission utility, and approximately \$5,000 per flight hour operating cost will enable AFSOC to “collapse the stack” while providing the necessary air support.

Chairman Kelly, Ranking Member Ernst, and distinguished Members of the Committee, The Nation, the Air Force, and U.S. Special Operations Command face a strategic inflection point, and the challenge for AFSOC is clear. The threat and environment have shifted, and today’s challenge is to remain a step ahead. It will undoubtedly be challenging, but the men and women who comprise AFSOC have never shied away from complex challenges in ambiguous environments. Our command will provide forces ready to generate an advantage in competition, enable the joint force in the conflict, and respond to crisis, all while remaining engaged in countering violent extremist organizations. The focus areas outlined in this testimony will unleash AFSOC’s competitive advantage-our people-on this challenge. On behalf of all AFSOC Airmen and their families, thank you for the opportunity to address you today and for your continued support. I look forward to your questions.

Senator KELLY. Thank you, General.

Lieutenant General Braga, Commander of U.S. Army Special Operations Command. General.

**STATEMENT OF LIEUTENANT GENERAL JONATHAN P. BRAGA,
USA, COMMANDING GENERAL, UNITED STATES ARMY SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND**

Lieutenant General BRAGA. Chairman Kelly, Ranking Member Ernst, and distinguished Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to represent the 36,000 exceptional men and women of the United States Army Special Operations Command, 2,800 of which are deployed right now across 77 countries. I am proud to accompany my teammates, seated to the left and right of me, that I have had the honor and privilege to serve in combat. Senator Blackburn, on behalf of the entire command I would like to thank her and express our gratitude for her support in upgrading Jeremiah Johnson's Silver Star for his valorous actions in Tongo Tongo, Niger. Thank you.

Joining me today is Command Sergeant Major Michael Weimer, USASOC's senior enlisted advisor. Mike really represents our people. Mike has served the Nation for 29 years, deployed to combat 19 times since September 11, 2001. He has carried with him a New York City Fire Department (FDNY) patch as a reminder of our solemn responsibility to protect the Nation. On the 20th anniversary of 9/11, we were fortunate to stand with hundreds of our Army special operations teammates while Mike returned that same patch that he carried on multiple objectives around the world, to the men and women of FDNY, on the crowded and emotional streets of Manhattan, as a symbol of our solidarity.

It is an honor for both of us to serve with the brave men and women of the Army special operations community who were the first in and the last out of Afghanistan.

As we approach Memorial Day, we are reminded of the selfless sacrifices made by our soldiers and their families over the last 20 years, especially the more than 1,700 Gold Star family members. This year we will inscribe Staff Sergeant Ryan Knauss, one of our psychological operations warriors, as the 378th name on our wall, and we will never forget.

Every component of the Army Special Operations Command contributed in Afghanistan. From our special operations aviators infiling (infiltrating) Rangers in the dark of night to our civil affairs teams operating in austere conditions to Green Berets riding on horseback through the mountains, your Army special operations had an impact and protected the Homeland without fail.

I assure you we remain vigilant in protecting the Homeland as we weight our efforts, the priorities outlined in the National Defense Strategy. USASOC supports the Joint Force through irregular warfare campaigning for integrated deterrence, while simultaneously preparing for high-end conflict. It is vital that we address these challenges with strong interagency, international, and joint relationships to preserve our advantages over our Nation's adversaries.

Russia's invasion of Ukraine demonstrated President Putin's determination to impose his will in blatant disregard of international norms, rules, and behaviors. Our existing partnerships and forward presence in the region demonstrated strategic value when options were needed. Following the invasion of Crimea over the last 7 1/2 years, Army special operations deployed to assist our fearless

Ukrainian partners in support of building their resistance capability and resiliency.

As we apply lessons from this crisis to train, organize, equip, deploy, and campaign, we remain resolute in our resolve to address our Nation's most consequential strategic pacing challenge, the People's Republic of China. There is no sanctuary from the scope and scale of the threat. We remain steadfast in our confidence that this generation of Army special operations soldiers will build upon the legacy of those who preceded them and uphold our promise to protect the Nation without equal.

We are committed to maintaining your trust and continuing our complete transparency with Congress and the American people. I thank you for this opportunity and look forward to answering your questions.

[The prepared statement of Lieutenant General Braga follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT BY LIEUTENANT GENERAL JONATHAN BRAGA

INTRODUCTION

Chairman Kelly, Ranking Member Ernst, and distinguished Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to represent the 36,000 men and women of Army Special Operations Forces (ARSOF) and to update you on the posture of the United States Army Special Operations Command (USASOC). I am proud to accompany my fellow Joint Force special operations component commanders here this morning.

USASOC supports the Joint Force worldwide through irregular warfare campaigning for integrated deterrence, while preparing for high-end conflict. ARSOF is vital to the Nation because of our capability to provide asymmetric options with tailororable solutions and a unique mindset to prevail in any conflict.

It is an honor to serve with the brave men and women of ARSOF who were the first in and the last out of Afghanistan—exemplifying 20 years of selfless sacrifice. The heroism and transformative leadership of those who were there at the beginning and those who sustained the fight made a difference. Our people learned the importance of strong interagency, international, and Joint Service cooperation necessary to build enduring advantage over our Nation's adversaries—a lesson we carry into today's and tomorrow's challenges.

Russia's further invasion of Ukraine demonstrated both the acute threat that Russia continues to pose as well as the unique role of SOF in this context. The strategic value of our existing partnerships—built over the past eight years particularly with our Ukrainian partners—quickly became apparent.

Success depends on strong relationships with Allies and Partners that require deliberate investment and cannot be built overnight. USASOC contributes to integrated deterrence through multi-partner, multi-domain convergence, and synchronization of transregional operations. We are applying these same lessons to our Nation's most consequential strategic pacing challenge, the People's Republic of China (PRC).

The strategic environment is dynamic. The US Special Operations Command (USSOCOM) and Assistant Secretary of Defense/Low Intensity Conflict (ASD-SO/LIC) have recently released the SOF Vision and Strategy to guide the future for our entire SOF enterprise. As we refine the SOF Future Operating Concept 2040 and assess force design considerations over the coming months, we remain convinced of the first SOF truth that, "Humans are more important than hardware."

USASOC is operationally minded with responsibilities to man, train, and equip formations. We are organized to conduct irregular warfare across the continuum of campaigning, crisis, and conflict. USASOC's persistent forward presence, flexibility, and relationships provide the Nation with enduring asymmetric advantages.

We are building a concept referred to as the SOF-Space-Cyber Triad. This is a convergence of trans-regional, multi-domain, and joint capabilities to exponentially increase the holistic strategic effects of each capability across the spectrum of conflict now and in the future. Our increasingly complex strategic landscape requires innovative approaches that fuse and integrate all our expertise to maximize our collective impact.

We are committed to maintaining your trust and continuing our complete transparency with Congress and the American people. I look forward to sharing our recent progress, along with our assessment of the evolving challenges we face.

THE USASOC ENTERPRISE

USASOC generates special operations forces, validates, and certifies headquarters for deployment, and modernizes for the future. We serve as the Center of Excellence and proponent for three Army branches and are the force provider for all Army SOF operational requirements. Our people are uniquely assessed, organized, trained, and equipped. Our partnerships, cultural understanding, diversity of thought, and enduring relationships enable the current presence of more than 2,800 Soldiers in 77 countries.

The U.S. Army John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School (USAJFKSWCS) generates forces for USASOC. The school is responsible for assessing, selecting, and training Soldiers in special operations competencies. USAJFKSWCS consists of two Special Warfare Training Groups and a Special Operations Medical Training Group, and serves as a Center of Excellence and proponent, they represent the Special Forces, Civil Affairs, and Psychological Operations branches. Each year, USAJFKSWCS trains more than 13,000 Army, Joint, and foreign military personnel in basic and advanced SOF skills. The school teaches 115 courses and 12 languages at 180 training locations in 22 different states. As a standards-based organization, this is where we forge our expectations, culture, and values.

First Special Forces Command (1st SFC) is task organized to conduct irregular warfare campaigning with a trans-regional focus on Chinese and Russian malign activity. First SFC provides regionally aligned, culturally attuned forces consisting of eleven subordinate headquarters: Five Active Duty Special Forces Groups, two National Special Forces Groups, two Psychological Operations Groups, a Civil Affairs Brigade, and a Sustainment Brigade. These forces develop deep regional understanding and maintain persistent focus on National Defense Strategy (NDS) priorities. First SFC provides a steady state campaigning headquarters with transregional Continental United States (CONUS)-Based Operational Support (CBOS) to the Theater Special Operations Commands (TSOC) and Geographic Combatant Commands (GCC). First SFC also is responsible to provide a deployable two-star Special Operations Joint Task Force—Contingency (SOJTF-C) on behalf of USSOCOM.

The U.S. Army Special Operations Aviation Command (USASOAC) provides precision rotary wing aviation and Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAV) for SOF worldwide. Our aviators and crewmembers are highly trained to maintain and operate the most advanced helicopters and UAV systems. The 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment (160th SOAR) is the DOD's premier tactical denied area penetrating force. They fly in high-risk and politically sensitive areas where others cannot go. They also provide advisory support to enhance the aviation capabilities of our Allies and partners.

The 75th Ranger Regiment (75th RR) is the Nation's premier light infantry force. They take great pride in their ability to deploy painfully light yet, profoundly lethal. Rangers maintain a fighting force capable of rapidly deploying, on short notice, anywhere in the world. The 75th RR remains postured for critical, over-the-horizon counterterrorism missions and Joint Forcible Entry operations.

IRREGULAR WARFARE

When Russia annexed Crimea in 2014, we were not forward postured in Ukraine. In response to this unprovoked aggression, we invested time and talent campaigning in support of Ukrainian territorial defense. In Ukraine we built enduring relationships, provided logistical support, and began training with the intent to increase societal resilience to bolster their resistance posture. As it became evident that a Russian invasion of Ukraine was imminent earlier this year, many believed that the Ukrainian capital of Kyiv would fall within 72 hours. Today is day 62, and Kyiv remains under Ukrainian control.

As Russia continued to escalate, U.S. European Command (USEUCOM) led the contingency response. ARSOF's forward presence provided a foundational understanding of the operating environment and played a role in humanitarian assistance, and information operations, while providing on-the-ground daily assessments for senior leaders.

As armed conflict broke out, our regionally aligned forces led a Coalition Planning Cell of 17 nations to coordinate information with international SOF partners and Allies. CONUS-based forces established an irregular warfare transregional cam-

paigning headquarters to synchronize SOF approaches. This builds on the enduring legacy of 10th Special Forces Group's 1952 activation and their subsequent employment in Europe supporting strategic competition with the Soviet Union.

Ukraine is imposing great cost on Russia in the information space and USASOC is USSOCOM's lead for military support information operations. Our teams gain and maintain contact with our Partners transregionally to maintain information advantage, but we must evolve to challenge the speed, scope, and scale of our adversaries' information operations capabilities.

The people of Ukraine deserve all the credit for fighting back the Russian aggressors. Our Partners are displaying undaunted determination as they fight for their homeland, reaping high returns on investment to their resistance movement. These irregular warfare tenets are being applied as we expand our focus to PRC activities in alignment with the NDS.

PRC influence is increasing in scope, scale, and velocity without regard for international norms or boundaries. Just as we demonstrated in Ukraine, irregular warfare investments are required now in preparation for the PRC's stated intentions to challenge the global order.

INNOVATION AS A MINDSET

There is no sanctuary at home or abroad. We must change how we think about protecting and projecting our forces. Advancements in unmanned platforms challenge our legacy systems and programs. Our digital signature exposes individual and collective patterns of life. We must understand our critical vulnerabilities and challenge all assumptions. We must consider every space and domain contested. Innovation requires us to rapidly apply lessons learned to modernization. We need industry, academia, warriors, and policy makers to come together in a Whole-of-Nation approach to innovate against future threats. Innovation must be creative, unconstrained, collaborative, and forward focused. There is no end-state to innovation.

In 2019, we established the USASOC Force Modernization Center (FMC) to accelerate our ability to change and outpace our adversaries. Comprised of a diverse group of talented thinkers and partnered with academia and industry leaders, FMC nests priorities with USSOCOM SOF Acquisition Technology & Logistics and Army Futures Command to provide world-class support to our Warfighters.

The seven modernization priorities for USASOC are: Irregular Warfare, Information Advantage, Multi-Domain Operations Interoperability, Next Generation Precision Effects, Unmanned Systems/Robotics/Artificial Intelligence, Next Generation Mobility, and Enhanced ARSOF Soldiers. We synchronize within these priorities while remaining a bottom-up driven organization. We have men and women on the ground identifying problems and providing requirements. Whether we lead or support, USASOC serves as a catalyst for innovation through our continued experimentation and operational use. We are deliberate with our selective disclosure, knowing our initiatives drive adversary decision cycles.

Last month, 44 organizations participated in a USASOC exercise focused on the intersection of SOF–Space–Cyber Triad capabilities leading to a series of upcoming experiments. Lessons learned allow us to test our assumptions and solutions in Service (Army Project Convergence 2022) and Joint Force exercises (Unified Pacific 2022). Hardware solutions are important, but people remain our primary focus.

PEOPLE

People solve our most complex challenges and create strategic impacts through cohesive and disciplined teams. Our Human Performance and Wellness (HPW) program deliberately advances the intellect, understanding, agility, and lethality of the people who form the foundation for our success. Investments in our Soldiers, civilians, and families set conditions for programs and policies that attract, retain, and sustain our force.

The Preservation of The Force and Family (POTFF) program provides essential health services. We want to thank the Committee for expanding the POTFF program to the immediate family members of soldiers who are killed in combat or combat related training accidents. With these POTFF resources we can respond to the needs of our force quickly and flexibly. We hope you will continue your sponsorship of this crucial program and recognize that the challenges outlined in the NDS increase the requirements on our force.

USASOC is an excellent place to serve the Nation. We have high expectations and standards, but we are not without flaw. We continue to battle suicide and domestic violence. Misconduct has our full attention. Engaged leaders proactively address these concerns with the full support of our mental, physical, emotional, and spiritual

professionals. During last year's testimony, USASOC acknowledged that it needed to increase its inclusivity by supporting the specific needs of women in uniform.

In January 2021, my predecessor, LTG Fran Beaudette, commissioned the Women in ARSOF Study to identify barriers female Soldiers encounter in ARSOF units and establish lessons learned and best practices to recruit, integrate, and retain extraordinary Soldiers.

A total of 5,010 participants completed the Women in ARSOF Survey to help identify unique challenges women encounter throughout their service. Subsequently the research team conducted focus groups of women from fourteen subordinate commands. This was followed by numerous command team interviews at the group, battalion, and company levels. We take the results of this study seriously and are actively addressing the findings.

We are humbled by the immense sacrifices of our ARSOF families. As Americans we are indebted, and we thank this Committee for continuing to support them. We will never forget our fallen heroes and the sacrifices of our beloved Gold Star families. Please never forget the over 1,700 Gold Star Mothers, Fathers, Spouses, Grandparents, and Children we hold dear in our USASOC family of our 377 fallen since 9/11.

We are proud of the three Medal of Honor recipients that continue to serve in USASOC. It speaks volumes that they all fought to remain in operational leadership positions. I want to highlight this year's two recipients: MSG Earl D. Plumlee from 1st Special Forces Group and SFC Christopher A. Celiz, who posthumously received the Medal of Honor while serving in the 75th Ranger Regiment.

MSG Plumlee served as a weapons sergeant assigned to 1st Special Forces Group, when insurgents attacked his base. He instantly responded to an explosion. Ten insurgents wearing Afghan National Army uniforms and suicide vests poured in through the breach. MSG Plumlee and five other special operations Soldiers, mounted vehicles and raced toward the detonation site. Using his body to shield the driver from enemy fire, MSG Plumlee exited the vehicle while simultaneously drawing his pistol and engaging insurgents. He repeatedly placed himself in extreme danger to protect his team and the base, and to defeat the enemy.

SFC Christopher Celiz was the leader of a special operations unit comprised of partner forces and members of the 1st Battalion, 75th Ranger Regiment. SFC Celiz gave his life leading an operation to clear an area of enemy forces in Afghanistan. His selfless actions saved the lives of others and almost certainly prevented further casualties. Throughout the engagement, SFC Celiz significantly changed the course of the battle by repeatedly placing himself in extreme danger to protect his team and defeat the enemy.

Finally, I want to express my gratitude to Members of Congress for supporting the award upgrade for SFC Jeremiah Johnson. SFC Johnson was mortally wounded during an ISIS ambush in Tongo Tongo, Niger. He was awarded the Bronze Star Medal with Valor for his conduct during the battle, but thanks to your support, SFC Johnson's award was upgraded to a Silver Star when new video footage was recovered showing his complete disregard for his own safety while charging through enemy fire to provide additional support for his fellow Soldiers. On behalf of SFC Johnson's family and the men and women of USASOC, we thank you for honoring our heroes.

CONCLUSION

The global threat landscape is as complex and challenging as it has been in decades. USASOC is fully committed to selecting, training, and equipping a formation of experts in the art and science of irregular warfare *Without Fear*.

USASOC is conducting irregular warfare across the continuum of campaigning, crisis, and conflict alongside our SOF partners, the Joint Force, and with our inter-agency counterparts. Partners and Allies remain critical to our success. Today's challenges are truly a team sport, and USASOC will be ready for the PRC pacing threat and acute Russian threat. They will challenge us, technology will evolve, and USASOC will continue to adapt and build an enduring advantage *Without Fail*.

We are ever mindful of the high expectations and trust that this Committee and the American people demand from our formation, and we assure you they will continue to protect the Nation and free the oppressed *Without Equal*. That is our promise to the Nation.

I want to express my sincere thanks and appreciation to the Committee for continuing to support the men and women of USASOC. I look forward to answering your questions.

Senator KELLY. Thank you, General.

Rear Admiral Howard, Commander of Naval Special Warfare Command. Go ahead, Admiral.

**STATEMENT OF REAR ADMIRAL HUGH W. HOWARD, III, USN,
COMMANDER, NAVAL SPECIAL WARFARE COMMAND**

Rear Admiral HOWARD. Chairman Kelly, Ranking Member Ernst, and distinguished Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to report on the mission readiness of Naval Special Warfare. I am honored to update you and the American people and humbled to do so alongside Force Master Chief Bill King, who I have served with for 31 years.

My report to the American people is shared with humility, a humility sharpened through the complexity and risk of our mission. The threats that face our Nation give us urgency to accelerate distinctive and irregular capabilities from the maritime flanks of our adversaries, for integrated deterrence in our Nation's defense. I am confident that we are delivering the disruptive and necessary change to be ready for what the Nation will ask of our force.

Our comparative advantage is our people, this Nation's greatest treasure. Our SEAL operators, combatant-craft crewmen, warfighting support teammates, and families who, alongside our Gold Star families, form a highly reliable team, a team fused together and enrolled with a common purpose, trust, and candor, creativity, and resilience. We fortify the culture of continuous assessment and development and design new character, cognitive, and leadership attribute assessments across the career continuum. We have implemented and improved a more rigorous selection for all leaders, officers and senior enlisted, a process that includes psychometric testing, peer and subordinate assessments, and a double-blind selection panel leveraging data science and counter-bias approaches to increase precision and objectivity of leader selection and assignment decisions.

We recognize diversity as one of our greatest sources of strength to solve the hardest problems, and we are making significant investments with the Navy to directly engage communities that are underrepresented in our formation.

We built the sustainable architecture to proactively seek out candidates that may not have historically thought of joining our ranks. Since my last report we graduated our first female combatant-craft crewman and tripled female cadre across all phases of the assessment and selection pathway to bolster development of women in Naval Special Warfare.

Delivering a more lethal and survivable force requires that we evolve and adapt faster than our adversaries. Over the past year, we developed a plan to substantively increase investment in the modernization of exquisite, cross-domain capabilities that provide the access and effects we must have as a Nation to persistently hold peer adversaries' critical targets at risk. We are now holding approximately one-third of our force in reserve to more agilely respond to emerging global missions, and critically to conduct the urgent experimentation with innovative mission concepts for step changes and tactics and advanced technologies. Technologies that include artificial intelligence, autonomous, multi-domain unmanned systems, and cyber electronic warfare, and kinetic effects.

As the Navy's commandos, we are tightly linked with fleet commanders, allies, partners, and U.S. Government agencies to create irregular warfighting advantage for the Joint Force, and generate uncertainty in adversary confidence, escalation offramps, and greater leverage for our civilian leadership in crisis.

Master Chief King and I are proud of our force and their service to protect and defend our great Nation. We will continue to be humble stewards of the incredible trust that you and the American people place in us, and we thank you for your continued support of our team and Naval Special Warfare's families. I look forward to your questions.

[The prepared statement of Admiral Howard follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT BY REAR ADMIRAL H. W. HOWARD III

Chairman Kelly, Ranking Member Ernst, and distinguished Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to report on the mission readiness of Naval Special Warfare. I am honored to update you and the American people and humbled to do so alongside my fellow Special Operations service component commanders.

Over 10,000 strong, Naval Special Warfare includes 3,034 Sea, Air, Land operators, our SEALs; 784 Special Warfare Combatant-craft Crewmen, commonly referred to as SWCCs; 4,602 combat support and combat service support personnel; 727 reservists and 1,245 civilians. Our active-duty force accounts for 2.4 percent of the Navy's overall personnel and 14.3 percent of U.S. Special Operations Command's (USSOCOM) personnel. With the decisions before you in the President's Fiscal Year 2023 Department of Defense (DOD) budget, we can accelerate distinctive maritime special operations capabilities to expand United States irregular deterrence options that create decisive opportunities for the Joint Force and extend the reach of the Nation's intelligence enterprise to inform policymakers of emerging threats.

Our Nation faces unparalleled security challenges and increasing geopolitical risk that include the rise of near-peer powers that aspire to undermine global stability, increased economic and social disruption, and lower technological barriers for non-state actors to access new informational, biological, chemical, and improvised nuclear weapons. The threats to the homeland and those of our allies and partners are evolving in scope, scale and existential potential. Authoritarian states conduct irregular statecraft and warfare in the gray-zone to coerce nation-states, normalize corruption of democratic societies and open markets, and subvert the international system of norms and laws that have made possible an unprecedented era of global stability and human advancement. They challenge individual freedoms, fundamental human rights, and threaten freedom in the global commons that provide for trade and the exchange of ideas. They leverage technology to erode the United States' margin of advantage that underwrites deterrence and geopolitical stability. We are seeing this today in the destabilizing and unprovoked Russian invasion of Ukraine and tensions in the Indo-Pacific. These new strategic threats demand we urgently evolve Naval Special Warfare in substantive and creative ways.

As the Nation's Naval Commando force that solves hard problems, Naval Special Warfare initiated a deliberate, comprehensive, and urgent transformation in 2020 to meet these new threats and create irregular warfare options that strengthen and complement deterrence. We are working to bring together the right mix of technology, operational concepts and capabilities for a force that is enrolled, assessed, selected, trained, developed, led, and networked together to deliver strategic effects along the maritime flanks of the Nation's adversaries. As we do this, the uncertain and complex operating environment ahead requires that we continuously reinforce the bedrock principles and values that make our team timeless and authentic—a humble and fully accountable team.

Naval Special Warfare's standard remains—the relentless pursuit of excellence in the defense of the Nation and to be trustworthy stewards of the incredible trust that the Nation places in our force. This posture statement is an update on our people, our activities, and our distinctive capabilities in support of the Nation's defense. I present the report to the committee and the American people with confidence that we are implementing the substantive changes to be ready for a higher complexity and higher risk operating environment. This statement incorporates guidance from the Department of Defense, Special Operations Command, the Chief of Naval Operations' Navigation Plan, the USSOCOM Comprehensive Review findings, and a continuous environmental scan of global threats to core United States interests.

STRENGTHENING OUR FORCE AND FAMILY

Naval Special Warfare's competitive advantage is our people—our SEAL operators, Special Warfare Combatant-craft Crewmen, combat support personnel, civilian teammates, reserve force, and our families and Gold Star families: a highly reliable team fused together and enrolled with a common purpose; trust and candor; creativity and resilience. While our fighting formations embody unparalleled warfighting grit and determination, our families represent the highest levels of self-sacrifice and commitment, with none more representative of this selfless behavior than our Gold Star families. Above all, we continue to acknowledge their sacrifice, express gratitude for their continued support, and underscore our commitment to always stand with them. We especially honor the Gold Star family sacrifices with our mission focus and stewardship—they will never be forgotten.

Building a Culture of Continuous Assessment and Development

The critical findings of USSOCOM's 2019 Comprehensive Review inform our innovative approaches to evolve recruitment, assessment, selection, and training that underpin Naval Special Warfare's transformation. We continue to engage at every level across our formation to identify and proactively address corrosive behaviors—from intolerance and extremism to sexual assault and harassment. These behaviors are inconsistent with our service oath and the core values of the Naval Special Warfare Ethos and Creed and undermine the unity and strength of the Nation.

We are undertaking rapid and comprehensive institutional changes to create a sustainable culture of continuous assessment and development focused on character, cognitive and leadership attributes. We are learning from Service-unique career courses and becoming more deeply involved in Navy and Joint education opportunities.

Foundational to continuous assessment and development, the Continuum of Leader Development (CLD) Program initiative serves as a platform for candid individual assessments that integrate peer, subordinate, leader, and training cadre evaluations of leadership, character, and tactical competence. These assessments begin during Basic Underwater Demolition/SEAL (BUD/S) and Basic Crewman Selection (BCS) Assessment and Selection pathways throughout every phase of a Naval Special Warfare operator's career progression. In its second year of Force-wide use, the CLD effort is two-fold: 1) provide the individual with objective data and analysis to facilitate self-improvement through reflection, and 2) inform leadership of high performers and latent risk through consistent rubric-based performance assessments, peer and subordinate evaluations, and leadership observations.

We adopted cutting-edge assessment best practices from across DOD and industry to create an enterprise leader selection initiative—the Naval Special Warfare Leader Assessment Program (NLAP). Through a double-blind interview process, SEAL leaders are assessed by a panel that leverages data science, counter-bias training, and operational psychology assessments to increase precision, objectivity, and fairness of selection decisions before every milestone level. The added data from psychometric testing, writing and physical evaluations, and directed peer and subordinate assessments give us greater selectivity and assignment precision for critical leadership roles—in ways that substantively mitigate risks to mission and force. Officer and senior enlisted leaders that complete NLAP receive executive coaching and counseling from the panel for development. We expect to see the biggest returns from NLAP at the front-line Platoon Commander and Platoon Chief level where we will focus on developmental opportunities to institutionally engineer processes that mitigate risk of leadership failure.

Since my last report to you, we significantly reengineered our recruitment and assessment model to proactively identify candidates and conduct more rigorous candidate pre-assessments through the creation of the Naval Special Warfare Assessment Command—a sequential O-5 command where experienced Active Duty SEAL and SWCC operators conduct targeted external outreach and candidate assessments that allows for greater precision and insight for candidate identification. With the support and reinforcement of Navy Recruiting Command, we are transforming candidate outreach to contact diverse candidates across America to deepen and broaden the future force. These are two examples of how we are following through with our commitment to identify and enroll candidates in the opportunity to serve with the Naval Special Warfare team. Our outreach model is scalable and repeatable, and as we pioneer increased use of data and technology, we expect promising results in growing diversity within Naval Special Warfare.

We also recently established a new Naval Special Warfare Enlisted Assessment and Selection (NEAS) process to ensure our candidates—from their first contact until they start assessment and selection at BUD/S and BCS—meet our high stand-

ards. Modeled after the pre-assessment rigor we already apply to all SEAL officer candidates to select for an opportunity at BUD/S, we intend to evolve NEAS to mirror this same level of rigor for enlisted candidates before they receive final approval to begin formal assessment, selection and training at BUD/S and BCS.

Building Strength through Diversity

We recognize diversity as one of our greatest sources of strength, and we are making significant investments in initiatives that create a foundation for cultural understanding, empathy and respect for diverse perspectives and experiences, which ultimately strengthen the force's problem-solving capabilities.

Naval Special Warfare is constantly learning and evolving across the spectrum of recruitment, assessment, selection, training, and inclusion. We have increased outreach efforts to 24 new geographic locations across the Nation where diverse and underserved candidates live. With our Assessment Command team, I recently conducted an outreach event at the NROTC unit of Morehouse College, Spelman College, and Clark Atlanta University—three Historically Black Colleges and Universities in the Atlanta region. We also engaged with over 100 female Midshipmen at the U.S. Naval Academy earlier this year where we made it clear our standard is an achievable standard and we are investing in the foundation for future female candidates. We are collecting and assessing real time analytics for refinement of outreach efforts alongside the Navy Recruiting Command team. In expanding Naval Special Warfare efforts to increase candidate diversity, our Outreach and Assessment Detachment and Navy Parachute Team executed the first iteration of the Naval Special Warfare Insert Challenge, an event combining a tandem freefall insert of diverse “athlete influencers” into a physical evolution highlighting Naval Special Warfare's core character, cognitive and leadership attributes.

Our Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) initiatives are framed by three lines of effort: climate and culture, talent management, and education and training. Our focus on climate & culture aims to decrease bias through DEI representative and leader engagement at all levels. Our talent management efforts aim to increase equitable opportunities that strengthen operational effectiveness through the enrollment, assessment, selection and retention of diverse talent, while maintaining standards, accountability and mission-readiness requirements. Finally, our focus on education and training aims to increase understanding of DEI as an operational imperative by developing increased capacity, character, competence and connectedness through enterprise engagement and education. Training environments must reflect and reinforce DEI outcomes. To ensure these efforts have proper visibility, leadership and resourcing, we launched a Naval Special Warfare DEI Task Force that is aligned with CNO and SOCOM DEI initiatives.

Over the past year, and in close coordination with the Navy, we disestablished the separate and isolated Warrior Challenge Rate recruit rifle division at the Navy's Boot Camp to fully integrate SEAL and SWCC Sailor Recruit candidates within the diverse Navy accession cohort. SEAL and SWCC candidates now begin their careers by completing the standard Navy Boot Camp program, solve their first problems in the Navy with teammates that reflect the diversity of the Republic we serve, and establish closer connections to the Navy we serve in. In parallel, we transferred the Naval Special Warfare Preparatory School from Great Lakes, Illinois to Coronado, California and have significantly increased the degree of coaching and mentorship that Naval Special Warfare candidates now receive directly from Active Duty SEAL and SWCC cadre.

Naval Special Warfare continues to make progress transforming our outreach efforts for Women in SOF (WISOF) as well. We achieved a significant milestone this year as the first female SWCC graduated Basic Crewman Selection and joined a Special Boat Team, setting the example for future women to serve as operators in Naval Special Warfare. To build on this positive momentum, I also directed an increase in WISOF cadre billets from four to eleven and distributed them across each phase of the SEAL/SWCC assessment, selection, and training pathway to increase female leadership to assess candidates with Naval Special Warfare's gender-neutral character, leadership, cognitive, and physical attributes; foundational and distinctive attributes that combine to make possible the complex and high-risk missions the Nation asks of our force. We also launched an enterprise-wide Women's Professional Network, with the mission of supporting personal and professional development through networking, presentations, and mentoring.

Building a Resilient Team

Operator Health and Resiliency remains a primary focus for our formation. While Naval Special Warfare suicide rates remain low compared to other force and national averages, we recognize any suicide in our formation is one too many, and we

continue to use Human Factors Councils to identify and proactively treat personnel with elevated risk factors of suicide or suicide related behaviors. Over the past year we accelerated investment in our Human Performance Task Force. This Task Force works with mental and physical health experts to move beyond the treatment paradigm of performance enhancement and issue prevention, collecting measures of performance and effectiveness to continually refine our efforts. This holistic approach has become a regular battle rhythm penetrating the Naval Special Warfare formation and reaching across assessment, selection, human factors, strength, conditioning & rehabilitation, and cognitive, non-cognitive & spiritual health. Ultimately, these efforts ensure a successful transition beyond service in the Navy.

An exemplar of these efforts is our Warrior Transition Program, focused on ensuring a positive return home after deployment. Every servicemember deploying has an in-person meeting with a psychologist who tailors a family plan and facilitates transition from deployment to garrison, screens for psychological risk and provides support resources. Following austere deployments, Warrior Transition takes place in a third country location that allows for additional “decompression” time. Transition meetings and resources are offered to significant others and family members to facilitate an optimal reunion. Since inception, this program has identified 10–15 percent of our operators for follow-up treatment including health and adjustment issues that would have otherwise gone unidentified.

Our holistic performance model makes special efforts to address the brain health of our operators. In 2021, the Naval Special Warfare cognitive program completed more than 10,000 encounters with servicemembers to preserve brain health, including novel equipment and procedures to limit blast exposure during training as well as teaching strategies to manage attentional control. More than just preserving brain health, the team also leads special operations efforts in optimizing cognitive performance. Naval Special Warfare intends to continue breaking new ground in protecting and optimizing the mental performance of our warfighters.

INNOVATE FOR RELEVANCE

We continue to aggressively innovate for military advantage, decision dominance, and expand edge in all aspects of our enterprise. Naval Special Warfare’s modernization strategy intends to deliver step changes in capabilities through advanced technologies including artificial intelligence, autonomy and interoperable multi-domain unmanned systems, and next-generation communications. These technologies combine to increase in access, mass and precision, and effects.

We are accelerating innovation through hard target mission imperatives that create opportunity for high strategic leverage options. We are prioritizing innovation in defining missions that only we can do for the Nation in the maritime domain—on and under the sea—and into the littorals. Naval Special Warfare’s distinctive maritime access and placement and ability to deliver effects in denied areas depends on continuous innovation in maritime platforms and technologies, such as the next generation Combatant Craft Heavy and next generation Dry Combat Submersible. This focus on innovation is critical as we drive to outpace and outmatch our adversaries’ rapidly improving capabilities. These planned investments will enable maritime SOF to close on some of the Joint Force’s highest priority targets and reduce the cost per effect, risk to mission, and risk to forces.

Capability Development

Over the past year, we continued to invest in exquisite, cross-domain capabilities to increase advantages in the gray zone where SOF’s forward footprint provides effective access for holding adversaries’ critical targets at risk. Through kinetic strike and non-kinetic effects against littoral targets, our objective is to invest in capabilities that can provide all domain effects from maritime access vectors to solve the Joint Force’s hardest problems.

Every investment we make is anchored on expanding distinctive competitive advantage—accessing contested and denied areas. These investments cover an array of capabilities from enhancing undersea range to delivering strategic effects to extending long-range targeting and strike for the Joint Force. We are in deep collaboration with national, joint, and Navy Warfare Centers to develop technology advancements in unmanned platforms launched from maritime craft. These capabilities will extend Joint Force AI-infused reconnaissance reach and act as a force multiplier in contested spaces, reducing risk to our personnel, providing real time battlespace awareness and decision dominance, and increasing the number of targets we can hold at risk.

Digital Modernization

Delivering a more lethal force requires the ability to evolve faster and be more adaptable than our adversaries. We are committed to artificial intelligence and machine learning capability development. From recruitment to training and operations, we continue to evolve how we work, optimizing for efficiencies that bring capability to the battlefield faster.

Led by our Chief Technology Officer we are investing our brightest talent and resources together with DOD and industry leaders to aggressively implement a “build a little, test a little, learn a lot” model that accelerates our adoption of artificial intelligence for warfighter advantage. Bringing together advanced national efforts in AI with pragmatic experimentation by well-trained, combat-experienced operators will help ensure that the highest-impact innovations are rapidly selected and accelerated to transition and fielding.

Our NAVSOF AI Task Force—partnered within the Navy, USSOCOM and DOD AI initiatives—is developing and infusing data advantage across our formation, from personnel to workforce and warfare systems. In collaboration with the Navy, we recently launched the Unmanned Task Force Sprint focusing on Naval Special Warfare’s multi-domain Manned Unmanned Team concept for scalable effects via resilient, autonomous, and interoperable unmanned platforms that close the kill chain, hold adversary targets at risk, and reduce risk to our own force.

CAMPAIGNING FOR IRREGULAR DETERRENCE

As the U.S. Navy’s Commandos, we are tightly linked with Fleet Commanders, allies, partners and U.S. Government agencies to create warfighting advantage for the Joint Force. We are energetically innovating to create asymmetric advantages across the spectrum of conflict. We are postured to respond rapidly in support of crisis and to apply an unconventional maritime approach that enables the Joint Force and our allies and partners to compete and win. We are executing a deliberate and urgent transformation to expand irregular deterrence options, which we view as complementary to traditional nuclear deterrence as an integrated approach to deterrence, with a team capable of solving problems of the highest complexity and military, strategic and political risk.

Optimizing Warfighting Capabilities for What’s Next

Over the last twelve months, Naval Special Warfare Command established a flag-level task force that is a forward-looking and operational level command and control (C2) deployable headquarters for Combatant Commanders for the highest complexity and highest risk maritime access missions that require integration of component resource authorities and operational level C2 accountability to identify and mitigate risk. Recognizing the critical nature of this level of C2 capability in support of the evolving nature of Naval Special Warfare’s role, we invested in the people, billets and C5ISR infrastructure and facilities that enable preparation for and execution of the Joint Force’s hardest targets.

Naval Special Warfare continues to increase its asymmetrical advantages and orient distinctive and irregular capabilities on strategic targets and hard operational problems with the Fleets and Joint Force. A renewed emphasis on the maritime environment and the undersea focuses Naval Special Warfare’s transformative initiatives and ensures the United States can rapidly gain, maintain, and extend access in conflict to win if deterrence fails. Over the last year, I have continued an aggressive and comprehensive strategic engagement program, meeting with Joint and Interagency leaders to develop the most integrated, capable, and credible Naval Special Warfare force in our history. As an ‘inside force’ looking to create dilemmas for the adversary and advantage where the enemy perceives superiority across all domains, I am concentrated on maritime access vectors to solve hard problems. To present the Secretary of Defense and the President with scalable options, we have a trans-regional focus, campaigning on the edge that is lower cost and lower risk for escalation.

In leveraging U.S.-based large-scale exercises to certify our warfighting readiness, Naval Special Warfare’s integration and participation in Fleet and Marine exercises are yielding mutually beneficial dividends, from enhancing interoperability and facilitating alignment against adversary threats, to fostering innovation and increasing lethality through our shared understanding of capabilities and experimentation. Deepening Fleet and Joint partnerships is crucial to sustaining and expanding capability and the future vectors that can be expanded from it, including non-kinetic effects. Through Fleet exchanges and Joint exercise training, Naval Special Warfare demonstrates emergent capabilities that increase operational and strategic advan-

tage, fleet survivability and provide Fleet and Joint Commanders options from a ready force against emerging strategic threats.

Naval Special Warfare's role in war games is another area we are informing Cabinet-level policy makers while learning their priorities, and then translating that experience in tactical level war games where our foundational formations can develop their own military concepts to increase idea sharing from the bottom-up. The success of Naval Special Warfare's war game series is particularly noteworthy, having generated numerous concepts for integrated deterrence and justifications for further research, development, test and evaluation funding.

Force Re-design for Greater Lethality, Innovation and Resiliency

We are now holding approximately one-third of our combat ready forces in ready reserve, an unprecedented adjustment that increases USSOCOM flexibility globally for deliberate deploy for purpose NAVSOF missions that we will proactively shape in support of Combatant Command campaign objectives. Critically, this design provides our forces the time and space to experiment with concepts that drive step changes in capability advancement, experimentation, and concept development that we can conduct at lower training risk because these forces are combat ready and have already mastered core mission essential tasks.

We are urgently implementing changes across our tactical formations while aligned with the Joint Warfighting Concept. At the core tactical maneuver element level, we re-shaped our force from 72 to 48 platoons and reinvested SEAL combat power within the remaining platoons to increase their survivability and lethality. This one change increased tactical leader selectivity by over 33 percent, another contributing factor to solve for leadership failure risk. Realigning end-strength savings as we evolve the platoon of the future for relevance, we added a maneuver element for reconnaissance and the capacity to integrate new technologies within the platoon, including leveraging non-kinetic effects and multi-domain unmanned systems. We are driving the next evolution as we experiment and operate with this new force design model.

As a core force design imperative, we integrated two O-6 level Major Commands—Naval Special Warfare Groups THREE and TEN—to form Naval Special Warfare Group EIGHT, aligning undersea capabilities for distinctive maritime access with the ability to fuse various sensor capabilities, non-kinetic effects, and multi-domain unmanned systems. This shift also provides a greater command and control capability, warfighting function depth, and unity of command for the highest complexity missions ahead. We continue our Force Design initiatives within intelligence and sustainment warfighting functions as well.

Balancing Enduring C-VEO Mission with Integrated Deterrence

Naval Special Warfare capabilities are essential to defending the nation against both peer adversaries and extremist threats. Counterterrorism (CT) and Countering Violent Extremist Organizations (CVEO) remain core missions as these threats endure and possibly accelerate with the proliferation of scalable, lethal technologies. We are leveraging lessons learned from the last 20 years and applying cutting edge technologies to advance our strategic advantage in the direct-action mission set, with applications to both CT and nuclear peer adversary threats. We continue to expand objective certification exercises to sustain CT/CVEO capabilities and deliver step changes in combat readiness with the integration of peer-level opposition forces and detection technologies. These adjustments and innovations—with the modernization of our ranges—make our force more survivable, lethal and precise. We will never underestimate non-state threats and acknowledge that Naval Special Warfare will continue to provide critical contributions to the defense of the homeland from terrorism.

Developing Critical Partnerships

Naval Special Warfare is actively expanding our integration with the Nation's intelligence enterprise and research and development partners. We are prioritizing international and trans-regional relationships with reliable global partners for combined operations where our nations' interests align. Since my testimony last year, we initiated efforts to strengthen our relationships with select partners where we can achieve maximum effect in support of evolving threat profiles. I have personally engaged with SOF leaders across our most critical partner nations within the Indo-Pacific and European theaters. Continuing our shoulder-to-shoulder work with allies and partners expands options to ensure access for the Joint Force. We are continuing to invest to build critical relationships, develop combined tactics, techniques, and procedures, define logistics and facility support requirements, and posture for rapid execution and mutual support in time of crisis.

Together, Naval Special Warfare leaders and our critical allies and partners will identify the next actions and initiatives we must take to prepare for an uncertain future—including optimizing our enterprise intelligence support for strategic targets, expanding all domain unmanned system investments, investing in expeditionary sustainment depth, acquiring resources for research, development, test and evaluation, and employing authorities and permissions to rapidly prototype in-house solutions to deliver what the Nation needs to win over its adversaries.

CONCLUSION

Naval Special Warfare remains a team of common purpose—trust and candor—creativity and resilience. A team with a diverse set of roles, responsibilities, experiences, and perspectives—a diversity and inclusivity that we embrace as we seek to solve the hardest problems—a diversity fused together by an unyielding pursuit of excellence and an ironclad commitment to the Nation and all who selflessly serve. Naval Special Warfare's grit and gallantry are a powerful testimony to the attributes of a highly reliable, bold, and resolute team, testimony to the attributes we relentlessly develop—the attributes that make possible the incredibly complex and high-risk operations our Nation asks of us. We demand individual, unit, and community accountability to uphold our standard.

As Force Master Chief Bill King and I engage with our force, we express gratitude for their service and personally present a United States Constitution to every member with a letter inside from us that emphasizes humility and authenticity—and the criticality of remaining apolitical and non-partisan. This tangible reminder of the oath we all took to protect and defend our great Nation—and serve all Americans—reinforces what it means to be stewards of Naval Special Warfare and always mission ready.

We will continue our relentless drive to advance distinctive maritime and irregular options that increase national leverage and expand the ways we deter the Nation's adversaries. We remain grateful for the support of the American people, and we will continue to be stewards of the incredible trust that you and our Nation place in us. Thank you for your continued support of and care for all our Sailors, Civilians and Naval Special Warfare families.

Senator KELLY. Thank you, Admiral.

Major General Glynn, Commander of U.S. Marine Forces Special Operations Command.

STATEMENT OF MAJOR GENERAL JAMES F. GLYNN, USMC, COMMANDER, UNITED STATES MARINE FORCES SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND

Major General GLYNN. Thank you, Chairman Kelly, Ranking Member Ernst, and other distinguished Members of the Committee. Thanks for the opportunity to update you on the status and posture of Marine Corps Forces Special Operations Command (MARSOC). It is an honor for Sergeant Major Loftus and I to join you again this year, alongside my fellow SOF component commanders and their senior enlisted leaders.

Since we met last year, MARSOC maintains a persistent forward-deployed presence in support of six named operations across the globe, and Marine Raiders conducted operations in Indo-Pacific Command, Central Command, and Africa Command, while episodic deployments in support of European and Southern Commands.

Our mission-tailored forces continue to maximize efficiency while remaining faithful stewards of resources and continue to account for significantly more of the missions performed than the size of the force, 3,500, and slice of the budget would predict.

As you have heard from the geographic combatant commanders, they are increasingly challenged in the uncertainty of semi-permissive environments as our adversaries seek to gain and maintain influence in the gray zone. MARSOC is leveraging our organizational agility, predominantly our size, to maximize the effectiveness of the

force and provide immense benefit to the SOF enterprise and our parent service. Competition requires special operations forces that can be active in the gray zone and win in conflict, for which your Marine Raiders are postured and focused. In fact, it is our quest to bring transparency to the gray in gray zone.

Over the past year we have further developed our innovative operating concept that provides the Nation with a unique capability. Strategic shaping and reconnaissance encompasses a wide range of capabilities, from cooperation with partners and allies to increasing costs to adversaries to deter, disrupt, and deny their objectives.

The operational art of SSR, Strategic Shaping and Reconnaissance, seeks to connect the joint, interagency, intergovernmental, and multinational communities as they develop persistent networks that can enhance strategic intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance. The concept supports multi-domain campaigning for long-term shaping and influence in support of SOCOM, the Joint Force, and the Nation in strategically critical locations.

As one example over the course of the last year, MARSOC provided SOF-peculiar capabilities to the theater Special Operations Command for AFRICOM while connecting the combat power of the Marine Corps 15th Marine Expeditionary Unit to provide capability and capacity in support of current operations off the coast of Africa. This demonstrated the possibilities in a domain approach that includes forward-based SOF operating in the littorals that can connect air, maritime, and cyber elements, in this case of a Marine Expeditionary Unit, off the coast of Somalia, to maintain pressure on violent extremists while supporting our regional partners.

As we experiment with emerging and next-generation capabilities, operations against violent extremist organization networks continue and provide our forces the placement and access with partners and allies against priority threats. We pursue missions in littoral regions that facilitate close ties to the naval force that include fleet marine forces. Our ability to leverage these characteristics is integral to our expanding impact as part of what our Commandant calls the “Stand in Force,” necessary at the persistent forward edge of deterrence.

We recognize that the current and future operational capabilities rest upon a foundation that we all have in common—outstanding Marine Raiders and their families. To maximize continued excellence and enable new operational concepts, we must continue to safeguard and sustain our most valuable resource through programs we discussed in some detail last year, specifically Preservation of The Force and Family, sexual assault and prevention, and diversity and inclusion initiatives. Each are at a different point of maturity, yet they contribute to a collective organizational culture of physical, mental, spiritual, and family excellence to enhance mission success and strengthen family resilience.

In closing, we remain committed to providing the Joint Force with Marine Raiders that possess unique special operations capabilities, who are threat focused, devoted to force modernization, and whose actions continually demonstrate our motto, “Spiritus Invictus,” or “unconquerable spirit.”

On behalf of the men and women of MARSOC, I thank the Committee for your continued support to those in uniform and their

families and for your commitment to our national security. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Major General Glynn follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT BY MAJOR GENERAL JAMES F. GLYNN

INTRODUCTION

Chairman Kelly, Ranking Member Ernst, and other Distinguished Members of the Subcommittee, thank you for this opportunity to update you on the status and posture of the Marine Forces Special Operations Command (MARSOC). I am honored to testify alongside my fellow Special Operations Forces (SOF) Component Commanders and extremely proud to be in command as we celebrate the 16th anniversary of MARSOC.

You have my gratitude for the exceptional support for our warfighters from this committee and from the rest of Congress. We continue to uphold the Marine legacy and forge the path of Marine Raiders providing the Nation and Geographic Combatant Commanders a Marine Special Operations Force capable of strategic impact that is dynamically shifting to meet the demands of the future. As you have heard from the Geographic Combatant Commanders, they are increasingly challenged in the uncertainty of semi-permissive environments as our adversaries seek to gain and maintain influence. MARSOC concurrently seeks opportunities to leverage our organizational agility to maximize the effectiveness of the force and provide immense benefit to the SOF enterprise and our parent Service. Global engagement amongst Great Powers requires Special Operations Forces that can be active across the continuum of cooperation, competition, and conflict, for which your Marine Raiders are postured and focused. In essence, those who seek to compete with us want to avoid direct confrontation and have created a 'gray zone' that MARSOC intends to help make less opaque.

Over the past year we have advanced our development of an innovative operating concept that provides the nation with a unique capability. Strategic Shaping and Reconnaissance (SSR) encompasses a wide array of capabilities to deter, disrupt, deny, adversaries' activities, or increase their incurred costs. These operations, activities, and investments (OAI) provide shaping and influence effects to increase Joint Force awareness of adversarial interest and influence. We are prepared to challenge adversaries in critical geographical regions across the globe, and your Marine Raiders are expanding this capability now and continue to compete through an all-domain approach that preserves U.S. influence and keeps our adversaries on their back foot.

ENDURING MISSION

Since we met last year, MARSOC maintains a persistent forward deployed presence in support of six named operations across the globe. Reinforced Marine Special Operations Companies (MSOC), remain deployed to conduct full spectrum operations in the Indo-Pacific Command, Central Command, and Africa Command, with elements also episodically deployed in support of the European and Southern Commands. Additionally, MARSOC maintains a LtCol-led headquarters, Special Operations Task Force (SOTF), ready to deploy and, when required, can repeatedly generate an O-6 level headquarters as a Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force (CJSOTF).

Inherent in all deployable MARSOC formations is the ability to collect and fuse information that illuminates adversary actions and networks. Further, each formation can conduct activities to shape and influence the environment, from expanding partner resilience through training, advising, and assisting, to supporting combat operations when needed. These units also connect the larger Joint Force to inter-agency partners, designed to utilize their organic capabilities and leverage unique or exquisite capabilities that make forces more effective in counter violent extremist organization (C-VEO) operations and bolster our approach to integrated deterrence.

As we experiment with next-generation capabilities, we continue operations against C-VEO networks that provide our forces the placement and access against priority threats. We pursue missions in littoral regions that facilitate close ties to the Naval Forces, to include Fleet Marine Forces. Our ability to leverage these characteristics makes us an impactful part of the 'Stand in Force' necessary at the persistent forward edge of deterrence.

ENDURING SUPPORT TO THE FORCE

MARSOC maintains a high, but sustainable, operational tempo in support of our nation's global initiatives. We pride ourselves on being a premier example of an effective and efficient force, providing outsized return on investment. Over the past 16 years, the continual assessing of the effectiveness and efficiencies of our structure, employment, development, and design, led us to remain good stewards of the resources provided to the command. MARSOC continues to account for approximately 1.6 percent of the Marine Corps end-strength, utilizing approximately 0.6 percent of the Service's annual budget (MFP-2). Similarly, MARSOC accounts for 4.5 percent of USSOCOM's manpower, operating on less than 2 percent of the MFP-11 budget, while executing approximately 10 percent of USSOCOM's missions.

To generate the highly trained Raiders required to execute these missions, over the last year, the Marine Raider Training Center (MRTC) conducted three Assessment and Selection courses and graduated two Individual Training Course (ITC) classes that produce our Special Operations Officers (SOO) and Critical Skills Operators (CSO). MRTC conducted fifteen advanced skills courses which enhanced our direct operations skills, intelligence collection capabilities, discreet capabilities in technical surveillance, cyber enabling skills, advanced Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD), Sensitive Site Exploitation (SSE), Survival Escape Resistance and Evasion (SERE), and advanced communications. MRTC has evolved its instruction by incorporating lessons learned from the operating forces, experimentation, wargames, and the Unit Readiness Exercise (URX) known as RAVEN.

RAVEN maintains pace with the changing global operating environment involving strategic threats capable of trans-regional effects. These threats, often asymmetric, are encountered across multiple domains by U.S. power projection in highly contested spaces. Through steady engagement with Geographic Combatant Commanders and TSOCs, RAVEN provides relevant pre-deployment training for ongoing operations in support of multiple Combatant Command Operation Plans and Theater Security Cooperation Plan requirements. The exercise iteratively incorporates operational commands' guidance, After Action Reviews, and joint lessons learned to implement the latest trends, threats, and tactics. We hold this exercise twice annually, in the fall and spring, and invite members of the subcommittee to attend, at your convenience.

A MODERN OPERATING CONCEPT

The operational art of Strategic Shaping and Reconnaissance (SSR) connects the Joint, Interagency, Intergovernmental, and Multinational communities to develop persistent networks that enhance strategic intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance. The concept supports campaigning with long-term shaping and influence in support of SOCOM, the Marine Corps, and the nation in strategically critical regions. We are currently competing with adversaries in new domains, both geographic and virtual. All-domain targeting and influence campaigns will illuminate and inform the national security enterprise.

SSR operationalizes the tasks and requirements found in the national strategy, Higher Headquarters Guidance, and an analysis of the pacing threat. This approach provides the Joint Force a Special Operations capability by evolving a traditional tactical activity, Special Reconnaissance, and transforming it into a strategic capability that can scale as events and the environment requires.

At its core, SSR is the fusing of special operations with intelligence across all domains. Strategic shaping takes place during all phases of an operation and throughout, cooperation, competition, crisis, and conflict. It is conducted through a variety of options that may range from security cooperation relationship building to precision direct action against strategic and priority targets. These actions are carefully crafted to achieve the desired effects while managing escalation, and provide policy makers with a wider range of options. Through globally synchronized special operations, SSR is applied against the threat threads of an adversary that cross traditional boundaries and borders. This approach supports the Joint Force to maintain deterrence and preserve access to key areas of interest.

Over the past two decades, national priorities required us to focus on the global counterterrorism fight. As a result, we concentrated our efforts on the skills required to be successful in the military fight against VEOs. As a result, we will continue to maintain this prominent capability to fight tonight and win in these arenas, and we will also harness this competency to further our development of SSR to address current and emerging challenges.

In our role as a connector between United States Special Operations Command and the Marine Corps, MARSOC remains prepared to leverage its small size and agility to create conditions that enable our SOF sister services and the Marine

Corps in competition and conflict. As a complementary force in the contact layer, Marine Special Operations Forces are poised to assess strategic locations and operational imperatives, while also working as part of the Stand-In Force to trade time and space for Joint Force maneuver in all domains. All aspects of multi-domain operations will require enablement by SOF, which MARSOC is prepared to support. These capabilities, integrated into our operations, facilitate actions SOF can take to support the resilience of our partners, support resistance movements against adversaries, influence populations to align with U.S. ideals, and conduct precision direct operations as required.

TRANSFORMATIVE SUPPORT

SOCOM outlines areas that the SOF enterprise will focus its modernization efforts. Working within this guidance, our Combat Development and Integration directorate continues to aggressively pursue modernization. Our efforts define the investment resources required to lead enterprise development and employment of irregular warfare and special reconnaissance capabilities while highlighting the operation and maintenance (O&M) resources to adapt our force and accelerate the realization of a new operating concept. Our submissions account for risk to current readiness and take a measured approach to near-term risk tolerance by recognizing opportunities to divest to invest in modernization. However, people remain our critical platform. As such, we have made noteworthy investment in exercises and training to develop new and refined capabilities.

Moreover, MRTC is also adjusting to the needs of Marine Raiders. As the SOCOM proponent for littoral Special Reconnaissance, new training requirements are emerging, and we continue to adapt our courses of instruction to excel in the contemporary operating environment. For example, this past year MRTC added a new course, MARSOF ISR Tactical Controller, to the Special Operations Capability Specialist (SOCS) formal training pipeline to organically certify our Geospatial Intelligence Marines. Later this year, MRTC will conduct an additional Multi-discipline Intelligence Operator Course (MDIOC) to increase the production of Intelligence SOCS, a Maritime Mobility Course to increase organic maritime capabilities, finally with Marine Corps Education Command's support, Special Operations Officers will all be completing Captain (O-3)-level Service PME immediately following ITC alongside their Marine Air-Ground Task Force peers.

Outside of personal development, and in partnership with other SOF elements, the Service, and a broad array of government and industry partners, MARSOC Combat Development and Integration directorate continues to pursue intelligent unmanned, automated, and robotic technologies across the force. At the forefront of these development efforts is the pursuit of a technological fusion of unmanned systems technologies with advancing cognitive Raiders, Broadband Tactical Edge Communications, and Organic Precision Strike efforts. Further, we have submitted requests for transformative investments in our force tied to each capability area that will ensure we are properly resourced to certify, validate, and verify SSR required capabilities across the force generation cycle. One such example is our Cloud, Machine Learning, and Artificial Intelligence capabilities. These tools support operations in the information environment, increase battlespace awareness and strengthen C2 through enterprise-level data management and governance.

TAKING CARE OF OUR RAIDERS

In the spirit of the first SOF Truth, we embrace the concept of "Who First, then What." We know Raiders can expertly develop, adopt, and implement innovative operational concepts that serve National Security requirements. Given the changing operating environment, protecting Raiders requires continued analysis and adjustment. While conducting operations, we are professionally capable of traditional risk mitigation and force protection, but new risks have emerged as we pursue innovative doctrine and operations.

New environments and operations require that we adjust our posture. As an example of innovative protection, our communications directorate has pioneered the deployment of spectrum guard protection, which uses commercial off-the-shelf technology to monitor our electronic signature and devise methods to preclude adversarial collection. We remain active in pursuit of excellence in cyber operations in accordance with designated coordinating authorities, while assessing new avenues of both offense and defense in an all-domain approach. Protecting the force abroad and at home remains a top priority.

We clearly recognize that current and future operational capabilities rest upon a foundation of outstanding Raiders and their families. To maximize capabilities and readiness to enact new operational concepts and continued excellence, we must con-

tinue to safeguard and sustain our most valuable resource. The MARSOC Preservation of the Force and Families (MPOTFF) program continually delivers responsive and effective support, and remarkably continues to evolve with the changing demands and needs of our force. The MPOTFF program provides resourcing that facilitate holistic physical, cognitive, emotional, and spiritual well-being. Fully utilized, the MPOTFF lines of effort of Human Performance, Medical Care, Spiritual Fitness, and Readiness (Unit, Personal, Family), coalesce and optimize physical and cognitive performance, and increase the resiliency of our families. This strategy, as part of a greater USSOCOM effort to capture longitudinal exposures, aims to proactively sustain and extend the longevity of the force and ensure optimal healthcare during, and after, service.

We are currently expanding the SOCOM Assessment Baseline Readiness Evaluation System (SABRES). The comprehensive assessment and monitoring protocol assists leaders with decision making by providing data for the early assessment and treatment of cognitive performance. With your continued support, MPOTFF will remain the standard for improving the endurance, effectiveness, and resilience of the force by using best practices across SOCOM, the Marine Corps, and Naval medical community. The result is a command-driven, organizational culture of physical, mental, spiritual, and family excellence to enhance mission success in career, family, and other life areas.

To maximize capabilities and readiness to enact new operational concepts and continued excellence we must continue to safeguard and sustain our most valuable resource. The MARSOC Preservation of the Force and Families (MPOTFF) program continually delivers responsive and effective support, and remarkably continues to evolve with the changing demands and needs of our force. The MPOTFF program provides resources that facilitate holistic physical, cognitive, emotional, and spiritual well-being. Fully utilized, the MPOTFF lines of effort of Human Performance, Medical Care, Spiritual Fitness, and Readiness (Unit, Personal, Family), coalesce and optimize physical and cognitive performance, and increases the resiliency of our families. This strategy, as part of a greater USSOCOM effort to capture longitudinal exposures, aims to proactively sustain and extend the longevity of the force and ensure optimal healthcare during, and after, service. We are currently expanding the SOCOM Assessment Baseline Readiness Evaluation System (SABRES). The comprehensive assessment and monitoring protocol assists leaders with decision making by providing data for the early assessment and treatment of cognitive performance. With your continued support, MPOTFF will remain the standard for improving the endurance, effectiveness, and resilience of the force by using best practices across SOCOM, the Marine Corps, and the Naval medical community. The result is a command-driven, organizational culture of physical, mental, spiritual, and family excellence to enhance mission success in career, family, and other life areas.

At the same time, we continue to expand inclusion and diversity. MARSOC is more than managing diversity; we are leveraging diverse backgrounds to build integrated teams capable of broader and deeper problem solving. We appreciate that diversity and inclusivity are operational imperatives, and we are engaged at all levels to expanding inclusivity across the force. We are proud of advancements in the past year and continue to recruit, assess, select, and train this elite force, cognizant that it is representative of the best of our Service.

Concurrently we remain consistent, effective, and improving in the Sexual Assault and Prevention Response program, as well as the Suicide Prevention Program. We continue to work within the guidelines set forth by Congress and the Department of Defense regarding prevention, and consistently support victims while lawfully prosecuting cases. Leadership, training, information, and consistency are paramount in eliminating sexual assaults within our ranks, and these efforts remain critical to retention and recruiting.

From the perspective of deployment-to-dwell, the force continues to get healthier due to internal recruiting efforts and the modernization initiative you have supported over the past few years to better balance our force ratios, specifically our Special Operations Capabilities Specialist (SOCS) and Combat Service Support (CSS) personnel. As a result, our deployment to dwell ratio is in line with Secretary of Defense guidance and continues to trend positively for our Special Operations Officers, Special Operations Capability Specialists and Critical Skills Operators.

Our diverse Recruiting and Advertising Branch works closely with Marine Corps Recruiting Command to leverage service efforts and enhance mutual endeavors to attract and retain quality Marines. We have increased efforts by providing information to every recruit that attends Marine Corps Recruit Training regarding the different career paths available at MARSOC. By doing this, we continue to attract a talented and qualified pool of Marines. Thanks to our professional reputation and

continued operational employment, there has not been a shortage of highly qualified Marines applying to attend our entry level courses.

Our retention success is evident as MARSOC has routinely achieved and surpassed reenlistments goals. In fiscal year 2021, MARSOC exceed the larger Service first-term reenlistment rate by 11 percent. For subsequent term reenlistments MARSOC achieved a healthy 82 percent, reflecting a high sense of overall job satisfaction and continued commitment. We continue to maximize support to USSOCOM, TSOCs and Fleet Marine Forces over the long term while we carefully ensure the welfare of our servicemembers.

CLOSING

In closing, we remain committed to providing our Nation with Marine Raiders that possess superior special operations capabilities, are devoted to modernization, and whose actions continually demonstrate the motto *Spiritus Invictus*, or ‘unconquerable spirit.’ Your Marine Raiders will remain always faithful, always forward, and on behalf of the women and men of MARSOC, I thank the Sub-Committee for your continued support to those in uniform and their families, and for your commitment to national security. *Semper Fidelis.*

Senator KELLY. Thank you, General, and thank you to all of you for your statements. I will begin our first round of questions for 5 minutes here. This first question is for all four of you, and since we only have 5 minutes we will have to keep it brief.

For much of the last 2 years, the Department has been refining a joint warfighting concept that finds a credible theory of victory should deterrence fail with a near-peer adversary. However, our long-term strategic competitors continue to make gains through hybrid warfare and coercion below the threshold of traditional armed conflict.

As you all have pointed out in your statements, our SOF have a key role to play in this type of warfare. So as you look at what will be asked of our special operations forces for the next, say, 10 to 15 years, what do you believe will be the most important skill sets and capabilities, and which of these will be the most difficult to develop?

We will start with General Slife.

Lieutenant General SLIFE. Thank you, Senator. As integrated deterrence is the framework concept, one of the things that we talk about in AFSOC is that “deterrence” is the noun and “integrated” is the adjective. Deterrence is the thing we are trying to do but integrated is how we are going to do it.

I think when you think about what integration means there is no force in the DOD [Department of Defense] that is more integrated than SOF. We are jointly interoperable at much lower levels. All four of us have operated with one another in combat since we were much, much more junior in our careers, and so SOF is integrated internally.

Furthermore, SOF has a set of relationships around the globe, both with partner militaries and also with embassy teams that is unrivaled. AFSOC was present in 74 countries since the last time we had the opportunity to speak to this committee.

Finally, across the U.S. Government, no part of the DOD force is more connected to the interagency and the intelligence community than our Special Operations Forces. So I think that is going to be where our competitive advantage lies is our ability to integrate internally, across the U.S. Government, and also with our partners.

Senator KELLY. Thank you. General Braga?

Lieutenant General BRAGA. Senator, I would echo the critical importance of making sure we work with our international partners and intel community and interagency. It is even more important as we face strategic challenges of China and Russia. We have to rethink everything we do, how we live in a contact layer and look to seek to provide options, both during competition, and should it transition to high-end conflict, how do you survive, how do you shoot, move, and communicate, how do you live in a different electromagnetic spectrum that our adversaries are invested very heavily in.

So we are relooking at everything from our capabilities to how we train people to ensure their survivability, still maintain a focus on smaller units of action having an outsized effect, being able to operate, though, in austere locations with those partners in the contact layer.

Senator KELLY. Admiral?

Rear Admiral HOWARD. Our contribution to integrated deterrence is principally the irregular ways and means that we deter our peer adversaries. We are prioritizing irregular partners, irregular global partners, irregular denied access capabilities for hard targets, irregular and scalable effects.

In terms of capabilities that support this effort, lethal and survivable access platforms, both on the surface and the subsurface domains, unmanned systems that are increasingly autonomous and interoperable, and then cyber and electronic warfare.

Senator KELLY. Thank you. General?

Major General GLYNN. Senator, as you are aware deterrence and deterrence theory can get pretty complicated. But the biggest thing, the most significant thing in deterrence that we find, as has been alluded to, comes from our allies and partners and their perspective of risk, and what is most risky to our adversaries, be they China or Russia?

The most important part of deterrence is going to remain the relationships and the allies and partnerships that we specifically invest in in the special operations community.

To the other half of your question, the hardest part, I believe, is going to be the technical aspects. We have all already alluded to information operations and cyber capabilities, and there has been one allusion to space thus far. That is going to take education and training over time, that is a substantial investment on all of our parts.

Senator KELLY. Thank you. When General Slife mentioned the MC-130 amphibious operations I thought that might be on the list. An Air Force guy potentially landing on an aircraft carrier might be a skill set that would be hard to develop.

[Laughing.]

Lieutenant General SLIFE. I have done it. It is easy.

Senator KELLY. It is easy?

Lieutenant General SLIFE. It is overrated.

[Laughing.]

Senator KELLY. Well thank you for that, and I will now recognize Senator Ernst for 5 minutes.

Senator ERNST. Thank you so much, and, of course, as we all sat down and visited during your office calls we talked extensively

about POTFF. Maybe in my second round of questions I can ask each of you a little bit more about POTFF and your specific programs.

But General Slife, there was something that you brought up in your office call that I would love to hear a little bit more about, your efforts within POTFF to address the moral hazard. It is something that I had not put a lot of thought into, but if you could explain to the Members of our Subcommittee what your intent would be as you continue to delve into this area.

Lieutenant General SLIFE. Thank you, Senator. I am happy to do it. The conversation that Senator Ernst and I had yesterday, we talked about the three types of invisible wounds that many of our servicemembers suffer from because of their experiences over the last 20 years. The first one is neurocognitive injury. So this is really Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI), concussive effects. It is a physical damage to the brain. We understand that and we are focused on that. SOCOM has a DOD-leading program around neurocognitive health.

The second invisible injury is psychological injury, and this manifests as post-traumatic stress. It is the manifestation of witnessing or being part of a significantly traumatic event and the long-term effects that has on you.

But I think there is a third type of invisible injury, and it is moral injury. These are the injuries that are incurred when we act in a way that is contrary to our moral system, and we do damage to ourselves as we reflect back on the things that we have done over the last 20 years. I have experienced some of this myself, having made decisions in the moment to take people's lives that I then, afterwards wonder, was that the right decision. It seemed like the right decision at the time, but what does that mean to me now?

As we have looked at moral injury as a third type of this invisible wounds kind of triad, we have been engaged directly with the Air Force to invest in that leg of our POTFF program that would attend to these moral injuries. We have gotten commitment from the Air Force to embed a religious support team, a chaplain and a chaplain assistant NCO, into every squadron-level formation in Air Force Special Operations Command. This does not exist anywhere in the Air Force. I had to work hard with the Air Force to get there. But we do have that program coming down in the pike.

That is a big win for us in the POTFF front, and coupled with some of the other things that we may talk about, Senator, that is really the answer to your question.

Senator ERNST. No, thank you, General Slife, and I am anxious to hear more about that as you continue to develop that.

General Braga, thank you so much again. During the office call you had the opportunity to visit with me and my team about the Ukrainian forces that you have been able to train and work with over 7 years or so. It was an investment that now we see is paying large, large dividends.

What are the follow-on risks from the invasion, in particular when we look at Moldova and Kosovo, and just in your judgment where do we need to expand our footprint and presence in European Command (EUCOM)?

Lieutenant General BRAGA. Well, ma'am, certainly I do not want to speak for EUCOM and their current prioritization, but I would say we have had longstanding, generational relationships in some places across Eastern Europe, both in NATO and non-NATO countries, that I think pay huge dividends and return on investment, for, honestly, small amounts of physical footprint on the ground, as we expand their capabilities.

We mentioned resistance and resiliency but it is also interoperability, and I believe Senator Kelly mentioned that, expanding the access presence and influence.

When I mentioned the scale and scope of the threat of Russia and China, we will not be able to do this alone. That is why I talk about the international partners and increasing their capacities and their capabilities is so critical. That is from information operations. That is unconventional warfare. That is asymmetric tactics, techniques, and procedures that you are seeing unfold right now in the Ukraine. I will not go into it in this forum but would be absolutely willing to go into it in perhaps a closed-door session of other partnerships we are expanding right now, and certainly the world is paying attention to what is unfolding in Ukraine that is adding emphasis to that.

Senator ERNST. Wonderful. Thank you, gentlemen. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Senator KELLY. Thank you, Senator Kaine.

Senator KAINES. Thank you to all of you. To your testimonies, a couple of points that I find interesting and just kind of want to underline. General Glynn, you talked about, when you were asked about deterrence you said the lead deterrence that we have is our network of alliances and partners, and it truly is an edge where Russia and China, they are just not really in the same ballpark with us on that. They do not have that network, and now they are seeing how powerful a network of alliances can be, so that is a takeaway.

Then, General Braga, I like the fact that you started with talking about your enlisted leader colleague carrying the FDNY patch for 20 years, because it has been 20 years where I think we have leaned really heavily on special forces. Sort of disproportionate to your slice of the budget or the size of the manpower component, we leaned very heavily on you.

So I have really one question that would take much longer than 5 minutes to answer, and maybe I will start with General Glynn and go right to left around the table, from my side. During these 20 years where we were leaning very heavily on you, largely in missions against non-state terrorist organizations, they have had a lot of lethal capacity but they have not had the ability to like challenge us in the air, challenge our communications dominance, challenge some other just strong areas of expertise we have.

As we are now looking at a National Defense Strategy, that focus is on peers that do have the ability to, you know, not have a permissive air environment or challenge us on the communications side. I suppose, as special operations leaders, you have to think about new strategies and make new investment decisions too, to recognize the reality of that kind of a challenge.

Talk a little bit about how, within your commands, you are sort of looking at the battle against great-state competition and how that affects the planning and investment decisions you make.

Major General GLYNN. Thank you, Senator, for that question, and I think I will tee it up and then as we go around the horn we can probably expand on it.

The notion of the gray zone is I guess where I will start, and it is defined as gray for a reason, because it is where, if we looked at ourselves for 20 years and decided how we would want to combat the strengths that the United States brings in the manner in which we have for the last 20 years, we would probably come to many of the conclusions that our strategic adversaries have as well.

So to your question, the choices that we are having to determine right now is, what of the counterterrorism skill sets, the stuff that we have invested and developed very well over the last 20 years, how much of it translates, how well does it translate, and what else do we need to be able to do?

In sitting alongside these gentlemen in the past, I think I will conclude for the moment with our examination of cyber capabilities, our examination of space capabilities, and the integration with special operations going forward to narrow that gray zone. If you will allow me to stop there.

Senator Kaine. Admiral Howard, you and I have talked about the cyber dimension of this before, but I would love to hear your answer on this as well.

Rear Admiral HOWARD. We have, and with cyber and electronic warfare, with our proximity to access to hard targets we see ourselves as a part of that kill chain, in extending the reach of the cyber and electronic warfare enterprises.

But we are clearly at an inflection point nationally. I think within special operations we are entering, I call it the fifth modern era of special operations. For Naval Special Warfare, we over-rotated on counterterrorism clearly, and we lost some ground in the distinctive things that only we can do. We are moving with urgency to make the main thing the things that only we can do in the maritime domain.

I would also say that we are investing in time and space to conduct experimentation and concept development with combat-validated forces, and that is important to embrace what is in front of us, put pressure on ourselves, and deliver step changes. Move faster. Learn faster. We can do that at lower training risk with combat-ready forces.

Then, finally, the fleet integration, using the fleet and the Joint Force to red-team ourselves in terms of survivability and lethality.

Senator Kaine. Great, General Braga.

Lieutenant General BRAGA. Senator, I will just mention two to add on there. First, information advantage and information operations. I think we are watching it daily, the strategic impact this has. I cannot envision a future where that does not increase in importance, affecting targeting audiences, general populations, governments, armies, morale, and eroding their overall effectiveness.

Secondly, we have started a campaign of learning. The other component commanders mentioned it. But I really look at SOF, space, and cyber as the modern-day triad. I think we owe you best

military advice and options and national command authority for flexible deterrent and flexible response options that involve and optimize those three legs of the triad for options, both in deterrence but also maintaining dominance in the domains for high-end conflict and supporting the Joint Force.

Senator Kaine. I am out of time but can I let General Slife answer? Are you okay, Coach? Thank you.

Lieutenant General SLIFE. Thanks, Senator. I will just briefly highlight one other thing. You know, I believe that the service components of SOF are most effective when we are closest to our parent services, and I think you have heard some of that from Admiral Howard talking about his relationship with the fleet. It is no different for us.

I think one of the places where we see a value proposition for SOF is enabling, particularly in conflict-type scenarios, enabling our broader service, you know, parents, to be effective. I think for AFSOC there is a lot of work to be done in the integrated air defense area as well as the counter-space mission area. There are a lot of very critical capabilities that our adversaries rely on in those areas that I think SOF brings unique capability to effect. Thank you, Senator.

Senator Kaine. Thanks, Mr. Chair.

Senator KELLY. Senator Tuberville.

Senator TUBERVILLE. Thank you very much, gentlemen. Thanks for being here today. Thank you for your service. It is such a tough time for the world that we live in.

This is for all of you. What resources, if any, have you asked for but not have been provided? I am asking it for this reason. In November 2020, Acting Secretary of Defense Chris Miller enacted the fiscal year 2017 NDAA requirement to elevate the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operation/Low-Intensity Conflict ASD (SO/LIC) position to be on par with other service secretaries. But last May, Secretary Austin reversed this decision, burying SO/LIC back under the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy. SO/LIC is still understaffed and is not getting the routine direct access to the Secretary the Deputy Secretary it should, as directed by the NDAA.

So just any comments any one of you have on that? General, I will start with you.

Lieutenant General SLIFE. Senator, thank you. So each year I we find ourselves trying to balance our budgeting recommendations among modernization, readiness, personnel programs, these types of things, and every year we come up short. I think we could all find additional areas where we would like to invest in order to reduce risk.

The budget that was submitted—I think Senator Ernst described some of the fiscal realities of it—but it represents a balance of risk among those areas. To directly answer your question, I think each of us have contributed to the SOCOM Commander's unfunded priority list, which reflect those areas where if additional resources were available those would be the things we would recommend that Congress might consider investing in.

Senator TUBERVILLE. Thank you, General?

Lieutenant General BRAGA. Senator, I would echo. We have submitted that in the congressional unfunded priority list and it touch-

es upon a lot of some of the capabilities we were talking about previously. But there is absolutely an impact if you just take inflation alone. Inflation alone has certainly affected our supply chain, no different than any other facet of society right now. I mean, the average increase in parts, when you are talking for our helicopter fleet, has gone up 31 to 35 percent, and that comes at a tradeoff.

So there are always tradeoffs and prioritization decisions to be made where you balance risk to force, risk to mission, training readiness, or deploying through operations, activities, and investments. So that is continual, but just like the rest of the world, we are dealing with that impact of inflation right now, with, as Senator Ernst said, the flat budget.

Senator TUBERVILLE. Thank you, Admiral?

Rear Admiral HOWARD. What is before the Congress now is an opportunity within Navy Special Warfare to make some additional investments, in denied area access, across the maritime flank, where we maintain comparative advantage with peer adversaries, irregular and scalable kinetic and non-kinetic effects, so a suite of effects across a range of attribution options there, and the survivability and lethality of our sub-sea and surface platforms.

So we are given the opportunity to make some growth in our community, pending the congressional judgments there, we are on the right trajectory for what I outlined before, in terms of what we are aiming for, for irregular deterrence.

Major General GLYNN. Senator, thanks for the opportunity to comment on it. I would say that the most acute area, the place where we face the hardest choices, and they are well-known at ASD(SO/LIC) and at the SOCOM level, that is a good team. It is a good relationship that supports all of us, I believe.

But where it really comes down to a hard choice is when we have to make choices between equipment and people. I think you heard that in our opening statements. What do I mean by that? Modernization, the investment in the technology that is required to compete with the likes of Russia and China, while taking care of current operations and supporting the force and the family. I think that is somewhat where we are at now, in terms of how will we pay for modernization going forward.

Senator TUBERVILLE. Thank you. Just one more quick question here. A recurring theme here in the Senate is that our commanders in the field do not have enough Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance (ISR). Just your quick thoughts, you know, commercially, the available options such as Maxar. What capabilities do they bring? As anybody got any thoughts on that?

Lieutenant General SLIFE. Senator I would offer to you that commercial capabilities are growing at a rate that rivals organic military capabilities, and I think a key part of our ISR enterprise going forward is going to be leveraging the various modalities of intelligence collection available from orbit. So I am interested in pursuing every one of those as part of a holistic air- and space-based ISR architecture.

Senator TUBERVILLE. Anybody else got a thought on Maxar or any other capabilities?

Lieutenant General BRAGA. Senator, as the world becomes more connected we need to rethink modern-day ISR, so it is not just from

things in orbit, obviously Low Earth Orbit (LEO), Medium Earth Orbit (MEO), and space, but also just how the world becomes more connected and rethink and experiment with ways to have better situational understanding out there. Again, I think SOF can be part of that solution, with our innovation-type mindset of employing commercial capability as well as Government-procured capability.

Senator TUBERVILLE. Admiral Howard, have you heard of Saildrone?

Rear Admiral HOWARD. Yes, I have.

Senator TUBERVILLE. What do you think about it?

Rear Admiral HOWARD. Unmanned capabilities are absolutely critical for autonomous systems that give us situational awareness, decision dominance, and in the case of that platform specifically, maritime domain awareness.

Senator TUBERVILLE. General Glynn, have you got anything to say about it?

Major General GLYNN. I would offer, Senator, that I think when we think ISR we typically think of that vehicle, and really General Slife is the one who has educated me over the course of the last year that really the way forward we need to think about the manner in which those vehicles are controlled, rather than a single operator with a single control system on a single platform, often referred to as "swarming," but how will a single operator, through a control system, have access to any number of platforms that can do what is needed, when it is needed.

Senator TUBERVILLE. Thank you.

Senator KELLY. Thank you. We will go through our next round of 5-minute questions. I want to start with Admiral Howard and talk a little bit about undersea capabilities here.

It is pretty much understood that our undersea capability, we have got a comparative advantage to Russia and China in the ability to operate under the ocean. I understand this is one of SOCOM's priority investment areas for fiscal year 2023 is the development of a new undersea insertion and exfiltration capability.

So, Admiral, can you just kind of step through us here how the development process is going, how you are working with SOCOM to extend the undersea reach of naval special operators, and also a little bit about integration with the regular Navy. You know, often as you are developing a system and you are trying to get it to work with something you might not—it is not part of the development program but it needs to work with existing hardware, that can be a challenge. So if you can comment on that as well.

Rear Admiral HOWARD. Thank you. Our relationship with our submarine force has never been closer. We learn from working with our submarine force. You know, they are an exemplar of a highly reliable organization, which we always strive to be. We also have an advantage as a country in the undersea with our allies and partners. I was recently in Europe with several of our allies, where we are collaborating on new capabilities and combined operations.

For acquisition and oversight and execution and due diligence of these programs we are investing with SOCOM and SOCOM's Acquisition, Technology, and Logistics (AT&L) inside of my own command so that we bolster the workforce around the execution of the

program. The integration, we have a dependency with the Navy. There is a great alignment with Admiral Gilday's staff and OPNAV N9 under Admiral Conn, and then, of course, at Naval Sea Systems Command (NAVSEA). I am confident that we are on a trajectory to deliver the Nation capabilities that are distinctive and access the denied targets in a way that is survivable and persistent.

Senator KELLY. Can you talk a little bit about some of the requirements that, unclassified, what you are looking for in this system and how the integration with the Navy is going? I know in prior systems we have had difficulty integrating hardware onto submarines, and I want to make sure that that is not something we encounter here with this program.

Rear Admiral HOWARD. We are on the right course in that regard with the Navy to expand the kinds of capabilities that we can integrate onto our submarine posts. With future capabilities we are looking at extended ranges, increasing payloads, teaming with unmanned systems. That is generally our strategy. We see the undersea as absolutely critical to deterrence. I think that it is a place that we maintain advantage, and it is a place where we must maintain advantage to critically deter our peer adversaries.

Senator KELLY. Thank you. Senator Blackburn.

Senator BLACKBURN. Thank you, and thank you all. We appreciate your time so incredibly much.

General Braga, thank you for your time yesterday. We appreciate that. We talked a lot about China and the Chinese Communist Party. I want to talk a bit more about that because, as you know, when we look at what is happening with this new Axis of Evil—Russia, China, Iran, and North Korea—and look at the way that Russia and China, and North Korea also, with hypersonics, the way they are looking at space and nuclear and cyber, hypersonics and autonomy, there are concerns that have arisen.

So talk to me a little bit about how you are leveraging early research in emerging technologies to prevent some of the technological surprises across different warfighting domains, and how are you drilling down on that? Because it is going to require an intentionality that sometimes may not have been required in other disciplines.

Lieutenant General BRAGA. Thank you, Senator, for the opportunity to discuss that. I think one of the transferrable lessons learned from the last couple of decades is the power of network analysis and network defeat in identifying critical vulnerabilities, whether it is supply chain or high-end weapons systems, as really the whole Joint Force is looking at maintaining dominance, whether it is JADC2 or the joint warfighting concept.

SOF's role in that is, I think, clearly to seek out some of those vulnerabilities, work amongst our Joint Force partners, and specifically in support of the geographic combatant commands, but leveraging perhaps the other strengths of, I mentioned earlier about cyber and space, for more holistic effect to hold at risk some of their critical vulnerabilities and nodes, be it in C5-ISR&T, their mission command platforms, or weapon systems. We would absolutely appreciate the opportunity, in a closed-door session, to go into more detail at some of the operational aspects that we are looking at, but have confidence that we are continually experi-

menting and looking at and analyzing how to best take advantage of those—learn more first and then look how to take advantage of those possible vulnerabilities in support of the Joint Force.

Senator BLACKBURN. I think it would be helpful to here from each of you, and you can just give this to us in a written response. I think it is probably a bit too much for here, and then we can dig a little deeper on that in a closed session at some point. But hear from each of you where you feel like there are shortfalls in capacity and capabilities and then how we need to change. Each year we are working on the NDAA, and as we change that focus to look at what we are going to do in the future, how we are going to utilize new capabilities, hypersonics, how we are going to utilize some of the technological innovation that is coming our way, I think it would be helpful to us as we go through to figure out, where you all see, where the differences in what we perceive and what you are dealing with every day as you are going about your task. So if I could ask you all for a written response I would appreciate that.

I also want to turn a little bit to AI and assisted decision-making. We have, I would say, probably at this point, because of ISR we have volumes of data and video feeds that could be used to establish really kind of a routine and also an abnormal activity line. I think it is important for us to know how you all are using big data analytics to look at this and how you are going to expand the utilization of big data in order to accommodate and backfill limited personnel, and knowing what you are going to do with those analytics and how you are going to utilize AI would be helpful to us.

I guess I have got five pages of questions here and I am out of time. So, Mr. Chairman, I will send it back to you and will have some things for the record. Thank you all.

Senator KELLY. Thank you, Senator. Senator Ernst.

Senator ERNST. Yes. Thank you so much. I am going to go right back to POTFF. I think as we all have sat down and visited about the things that are important for our forces, especially in the realm of SOCOM, it does come back to Preservation of The Force and Family. So I know, General Slife, we had started with you. You talked a little bit about moral injury and what you are doing to combat those effects. What I would like for each of you to do as well is talk a little bit about POTFF, and if you have any special initiatives that you have started we would love to hear about those, as well as other avenues that you would like to see adopted throughout your forces.

General Slife, do you have any additional that you would like to add, and then we will go to General Braga.

Lieutenant General SLIFE. Briefly, Senator. So POTFF resourcing is appropriately spread a little unevenly across AFSOC. Some of our units have greater demands for one aspect than another. But one thing that we have generally seen is the units with POTFF resources embedded at the unit level have lower incidences of ill discipline, they have lower instances of sexual assault and sexual harassment, they have lower instances of suicidal ideation or attempted suicides. So based on some of this there is certainly a correlation. We are not yet sure about causation. We continue to collect data to be able to draw that.

But based on the very positive results we have seen out of our POTFF program there is an increase in AFSOC's POTFF investment. We have taken internal offsets in order to increase our POTFF resourcing across more of our units inside of AFSOC because of the very positive results we have seen.

Senator ERNST. That is good. Go where they are. Yes, thank you. How about USASOC?

Lieutenant General BRAGA. Senator, first of all, thank you for your stalwart support of POTFF over the years. The men and women of USASOC absolutely thank you.

I think it has been easy to sell when you show the physical manifestation of someone who has had a grievous physical wound, and we have those types of vignettes, but I do think we need a better job on the data collection phase of it. So we are starting different initiatives, from baselining our incoming students—again, we have about 3,000 at any one time at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, going through our school system—and identifying a digital profile of them to help them be the best possible person they can be, across all pillars of POTFF.

We are investing and trying to be more data-driven, even on spiritual and falling in line with the Army's lead for spiritual assessment tool, which is at least in the academic research proven to increase resiliency and lower rates of depression and suicide and the like. I am a personal huge believer of the behavioral health impact that both our operational psychologists and my clinical workers have just made an untold amount of impact. When we even look at our formation from suicidal ideations and the like we have a lower rate of usage rate for acute care for those coming into the formation who have been specifically assessed and selected and those who have just been assigned to United States Army Special Operations Command.

But we need to do a better job on the data collection, get that to really everyone to tell the story, the good-news story of POTFF. So we are making efforts in that, to not only to smarter-base the SOCOM solution but also human factors dashboard that we are working on at the USASOC level.

Senator ERNST. Thank you. Admiral?

Rear Admiral HOWARD. Thank you. One of our data advantage initiatives is around POTFF and seeing the data in a way where we can more accurately articulate measures of effectiveness, understand needs. I would just say a tremendous effort on our team to destigmatize mental health issues. The care that we have embedded is transformation from our ops psychologists to our chaplains, with emphasize on neurocognitive health as well.

Then lastly I will just say that veteran health, and thinking about POTFF into our veteran population. This is where we are partnering with outside-of-government entities and bringing those best practices to our veteran teammates.

Senator ERNST. Yes, great. Thank you, Admiral. General Glynn?

Major General GLYNN. Senator, I will likewise thank you for your continued support of POTFF. I think I will take a different tack and just flag an area where I think all of us should pay attention, with the shift in the future of what military health care is likely to be. We find ourselves focused on potential gaps between POTFF

as we have known it and the areas where it has extended that and our need to walk it back, if you will, to fill in gaps that seem to be created. I will give you an example.

You have heard several references to mental and behavioral health. That specialty care is an area that we are paying very close attention to going forward. You can see that that is going to be a persistent need, and access to that is—I know it is challenging across the enterprise, not just military health care, but that is an example of an area.

On the plus side, we talked about this in your office call but for wider awareness, SOCOM's investment and our opportunity to work on the cognitive performance side, our ability to baseline folks who join MARSOC, and now we can watch them over time is already interesting. I think it is going to become fascinating over the course of 5 to 10 years.

Senator ERNST. Absolutely. Thank you so much. Mr. Chair.

Senator KELLY. Thank you, Senator. I just returned from visiting our allies and servicemembers, a couple of stops in Poland and Germany. It is clear that U.S. Special Operations Forces can act as a significant force multiplier for our strategic partners, including when facing off some well-armed adversaries. I think nowhere is this more apparent than in what is going on in Ukraine today.

As I mentioned, and I think General Braga mentioned during our opening remarks, reports have indicated that Putin's army here has stalled in Ukraine because of the direct support in training special operations forces of the Ukrainian military since the invasion of Crimea in 2014.

General Braga, I know that you cannot comment on the specifics in this training but can you discuss some of the lessons learned from Ukraine regarding the use of Army special operations capabilities as the United States military continues in this pivot towards great power competition with Russia?

Lieutenant General BRAGA. Senator, thank you for the opportunity. I think there are lots of lessons learned that can be applied elsewhere, although other parts of the globe are not certainly the same, from our information ops and psychological operations, civil affairs teams on the ground right now working with the multitude of international non-governmental organizations supporting the people of Ukraine, and certainly our special forces teams who have been there, again, for multiple years now, helping them. I mean, the credit really goes to the Ukrainian people and the Ukrainian military. We just helped them a little bit along that journey.

But I do think what is an untold story is the international partnership with the special operations forces of a multitude of different countries. I will not name the number right now but they have absolutely banded together in a much-outsized impact to support Ukrainian SOF and Ukrainian military in their efforts right now that I think is a great new story. I think that really bore out from the last 20 years of working together, sweating together, bleeding together in different battlefields, on different continents. Some of these partners are new. There has been a coalescence and a joining of that unity of effort. It is absolutely inspiring to see. That, itself, is—I think you mentioned earlier—is something that our adversaries desire to have, that we have, and that is really a

gold standard, those international partnerships, that can be part of the solution moving forward.

Certainly we are taking tactical lessons learned and immediately trying to apply them to our schoolhouses and our other foreign partners for everyone to learn as this unfortunate conflict continues to unfold.

Senator KELLY. Yes. Sometimes it is not ideal to share those lessons learned. Do you have any examples that you are comfortable—

Lieutenant General BRAGA. Well, it is impressive to see, just in open press, you see the impact that manned and unmanned drones and teaming is having. I think that is an absolute critical growth area for United States Army Special Operations Command. It is one of our modernization priorities, one of our seven modernization priorities. I cannot envision a future battlefield without ever-increasing manned, unmanned robotics and the application of artificial intelligence (AI) to maximize their effect and impact across all warfighting functions. That is something we are looking at extremely closely and only seeing growth in future prioritization, resources, training, and even possibly we are experimenting what type of MOS or branches or specialties are inside the Army Special Operations Command, so it is not just an additional duty. It is an actual specialty.

Senator KELLY. Can you comment on a little bit about how the cultural and language, training that Army special operators receive and how that has helped in training our special operations partners in other countries?

Lieutenant General BRAGA. Senator, it is imperative that we are both culturally attuned and speak the language. Now, do we speak the language of every country we go to? We cannot really match that up, but we try, and we put a lot of effort into it. It is a baseline requirement, coming out of the special forces pipeline. It is maintained throughout, through sustained training, and perhaps most importantly, as we geographically align—I mean, our special forces groups and their civil affairs and psychological operations (PSYOPS) teams, they stay regionally aligned.

We are working in all geographic combatant commanders (GCC) to this day, and many of them have not taken their eyes off the ball to support the GCC commanders' priorities there, be it Civil-Military Support Element (CMSE) teams, military information and support teams, our special forces Operational Detachment Alpha (ODA), or even aviation detachment, advisories detachments. They are operating around the globe in support of every GCC commander's priorities, but language is absolutely critical to being part of that interoperability. It is not just equipment, and it also shows that you care.

Senator KELLY. Before I turn it over to Senator Ernst here for the third round of questions, and I know this has been a focus that the Army has had for decades, this language capability, but for General Slife, Admiral Howard, and General Glynn, is this something that your special operators are also focused on, or is it a capability you would like to integrate into the force in the future?

Lieutenant General SLIFE. Senator, specifically for AFSOC, because most of our operations deal either directly with aviation or

with the integration of air and ground capabilities through Joint Terminal Attack Control and things of that nature, English is the international language of aviation, as you know, and so what we have found is that our partners generally prefer to do those security force assistance type activities in English because it is what they deal with in the aviation world.

We do not see a demand signal for increased language capability, although to General Braga's point about cultural training, cultural awareness, and those types of things, that is an area of investment for us as we think about security force assistance.

Rear Admiral HOWARD. Thank you, Senator. We have a modest investment, I think it is calibrated the right way, and we also make an effort to increasingly identify candidates that are coming in with natural language capability.

Major General GLYNN. Senator, language and culture have been part of our training pipeline since inception, and so every critical skills operator that is created, or has been created over the course of the last 15 years, goes through a language unique to the theater in which we intend, or they are most likely to deploy. So as you would hope, like we have recently shifted to some of the more significant languages in the United States Indo-Pacific Command (INDOPACOM) Area of Responsibility (AOR), to include Mandarin Chinese.

Senator KELLY. Thank you. Senator Ernst.

Senator ERNST. Yes. Thank you, Mr. Chair, and I know our vote has been called so I will just be brief, and if you can provide brief answers as well.

I did mention a little bit in my opening statement the fact that SOCOM's budget is flat for this year in what the President has submitted. So we know that that is less buying power with the rate of inflation out there.

If you can, talk through the impact that that will have on your ability to train and resource and mobilize then your forces. I also noted that SOCOM submitted \$650 million in unfunded requirements to buy down risk and to accelerate modernization, which really further reinforces the inadequacy of the budget as presented by the President.

So if you can, just very briefly again, General Slife we will start with you, if you could talk about the impacts and what that will have on training modernization resourcing.

Lieutenant General SLIFE. Yes, Senator. Briefly, it delays any resource shortfall delays our ability to modernize. It delays our ability to maintain the force at the highest state of readiness. These are all balances. They are part of the risk calculus. So I think you see, as you characterized it, the SOCOM unfunded priority list are those things that SOCOM believes will buy down that risk to a lower level than where we are carrying it right now.

Senator ERNST. Great. Thank you.

Lieutenant General BRAGA. Senator, I echo, obviously, the unfunded priority list will help buy down that risk by accelerating some of the capabilities we are looking to expand upon that we have been talking about. I mentioned briefly that inflation is absolutely having an impact. It affects our flying hour programs, repair parts, repair engines, and that certainly has an impact, and what

that ultimately results in is at the other end, reduced readiness if you do not have the way to keep your aircraft maintained and your crews up to speed, just from an aviation type aspect.

So it certainly has an impact, and at the ultimate end of the day can you put forward less into the theater to support the geographic combatant commanders if there is less resources, and I would say that would be something we have to look at as we maintain and restack our prioritization between training, readiness, modernization, and employment.

Senator ERNST. Yes. Thank you. Admiral?

Rear Admiral HOWARD. Where I have a concern is really in readiness and the ability to—what we are seeing with the focus on experimentation and concept development for step changes to be ready for what is ahead. You know, we are seeing an increase in requirements for that experimentation and concept development, and to get ready.

Where I see concern going forward is in unmanned systems, multi-domain with an emphasis on software, not hardware. That gets to the autonomy and interoperability. We have to win as a Nation in that capability space.

Senator ERNST. Thank you. Major Glynn, or General Glynn? Excuse me. Major Glynn. Sorry. I demoted you horribly. I am so sorry. General Glynn.

Major General GLYNN. I would go back and do that all over again.

Senator ERNST. A better day and age, maybe.

Major General GLYNN. Senator, as a component without major platforms it boils down to people in our case. So what the choice is in modernization, investments in modernization, how quickly can we go after the technological capability and expertise to understand our electromagnetic signature and our digital footprint, and to have an awareness of our adversaries? That would be one.

The pace at which change will occur is going to be impacted by resourcing. The alternative is to maintain a less—as has been alluded to by the other commanders—a less-ready force or present a smaller force offering around the globe, which is obviously not what we want to do because we have longstanding relationships with allies and partners that we want to sustain. But that is where we are at, as a component, when it comes to that budget situation.

Senator ERNST. Thank you. So I think all of your statements just further emphasized that we do need to have growth within this component, within SOCOM, and the budget, to make sure that you are able to modernize, to make sure your readiness does not suffer, to make sure that we are able to fill the ranks and continue to fill the ranks in the future.

You know, I have always had it hammered in my head to assume prudent risk, but at what point does that risk no longer present itself as prudent? I think we need to continue to move forward with a robust budget, and it is something that I will be pushing for as we move into our budget cycle through appropriations and with this National Defense Authorization Act.

With that I will have no more questions, and so I will turn it back to you, Mr. Chair. Thank you.

Senator KELLY. Thank you, Senator Ernst. I have got a few more. I want to try to get through them briefly so we can get to this vote. At 30 minutes people start to get nervous.

General Slife, SOCOM is nearing a contract award for maybe up to 75 Armed Overwatch airframes, and this would provide reconnaissance and strike capabilities to small, geographically disaggregated teams of special operations forces. Can you articulate the requirement for the Armed Overwatch program and explain why a new platform is more affordable and effective than existing platforms, including certainly for ground attack the A-10 but also for reconnaissance, something like the MQ-9, and just a little bit about on the requirements and the affordability effectiveness aspect of this.

Lieutenant General SLIFE. Thanks for the opportunity to talk about it, Senator. So a couple of aspects of that. First of all, our methodology for supporting our forces on the ground over the last several decades has really boiled down to the development of what we call an air stack over objective areas. You will typically have single-role, specialized platforms, AC-130s, A-10s, MQ-9, U-28s. You have this stack of airplanes over an objective, each platform providing a niche capability to the force on the ground. That averages, in terms of cost per flying hour, over \$150,000 an hour is what it costs to generate kind of the typical stack for that.

As we look at having a multi-role platform in the Armed Overwatch concept, that kind of multi-role set of capabilities comes down to something less than \$10,000 a flight hour. So it is a much more efficient way to do that. Further, it allows us to push those platforms further forward into more austere areas where they can operate co-located with the ground teams that they are partnered with.

So not having them have to fly from hundreds of miles away but rather being partnered with the ground team that they will be supporting in places that have very austere aviation support with a very light logistics footprint is really what we are after, Senator.

Senator KELLY. How do you resolve the issue of something like an AC-130 gunship being able to lay down a massive amount of fire to the ground with something like an AT-6 with a limited? Has that been well planned and thought out?

Lieutenant General SLIFE. Senator, I think I would say it depends on the mission that is being contemplated. Clearly there will be missions that require more deep magazine fire support than what an Armed Overwatch platform might have. But the idea of the Armed Overwatch platform is it is a modular capability, and so you can outfit the aircraft with a robust suite of sensors that will exceed what is available with most dedicated ISR platforms today, or you can outfit the platform with a robust suite of precision munitions. It really depends on the mission.

Clearly the Armed Overwatch platform is not a panacea for every tactical situation that a ground force might find themselves in, but for what we envision the enduring counter-violent extremist organization (VEO) mission looking like we think it is prudent investment.

Senator KELLY. When do you feel that the contract award will be made?

Lieutenant General SLIFE. Senator, I think in months, so this summer I expect to see a contract award. All the back-and-forth with industry, the proposals have been received, all the questions have been answered. At this point the source selection team is going through their deliberations and is going to make a recommendation to the milestone decision authority at SOCOM here in the coming weeks, and then a contract will probably be awarded prior to the end of the summer.

Senator KELLY. Thank you. I have one final question for General Braga. At present sometimes obtaining approval to drop a bomb is a lot easier than getting the permission to send a text message. So have you seen any improvement in the ability of your psychological operators to gain the authorities and permissions necessary to operate effectively in the information environment, and if you have not, what more do you think we need to do?

Lieutenant General BRAGA. Senator, I have seen some improvement. In my professional opinion, in order to match the sheer capability and capacity of adversaries, collectively all of us need to expand that capability, and we need to be able to move at the speed of the information environment, which is faster than perhaps we have been used to in the past. So I think it requires new relationships. Certainly we are investing our own resources into expanding that capability in information ops to support our psychological operations forces. It is new ground for all, but it is what we need to do in order to succeed, both in competition and I actually see it for a role in high-end conflict as well.

So we have a long way to go. We are on a journey. We have seen some improvements. We are dedicating resources, time, effort, and training towards it, but I absolutely look forward to working with the leadership at the Pentagon and our interagency partners to inform you of any recommended changes moving forward.

Senator KELLY. Please do, and my door is always open to all of you. I know Senator Ernst's as well. So anything you need we want to help.

I also want to thank you, Generals, Admiral, for participating in this hearing today, and I look forward to continuing to support you and all the men and women at SOCOM, all 74,000.

This hearing is adjourned. Thank you.

[Whereupon, at 4:03 p.m., the Subcommittee adjourned.]

[Questions for the record with answers supplied follow:]

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR JONI ERNST

UNITED STATES SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND SPECIAL OPERATIONS FORCES
LEADERSHIP

1. Senator ERNST. Lieutenant General Braga, Lieutenant General Slife, Rear Admiral Howard, Major General Glynn, understanding the importance of robust transition support to our warriors as they exit service, what are the unique needs for our special operators as they make this transition?

Lieutenant General BRAGA.

Transition Support: USASOC Transition initiatives promote and enable access to resources for Army Special Operations Forces (ARSOF) servicemembers (SM) transitioning from our formation to other military service, private sector employment, retirement, or other unique opportunities. We do not seek to replace transition support from the Army or the Department of Veteran Affairs, but to enhance those services through public-private partnerships.

USASOC Perspective on Successful Transition: USASOC has identified a successful transition as the culmination of career-long accumulation of proper professional, physical, psychological, educational, and financial preparation. Thus, a successful military-civilian transition starts with the Soldiers' entrance into the force, not in the final year of their service. Since USASOC is composed of decentralized elements with distinct needs, transition programs have been traditionally managed by Commands Service Units (CSUs). USASOC seeks to lend staff support to these decentralized efforts to optimize transition success across the USASOC enterprise, while still allowing the CSUs to focus on their distinct needs.

USASOC intent for Transition Approach: People are our No. 1 priority, that doesn't end when they leave our formations, which is why we are studying the potential to extend their eligibility and access to key Preservation of the Force and Family (POTFF) resources for 2 years after retirement. Our transition program will focus on casting a wide net to keep our population healthy and continuing to make our country better.

ARSOF Veteran Engagement and Transition Support (ARSOF VETS): Seeking to establish a collaborative community that connects with and engages the Service Member and Family upon entry into ARSOF throughout service in uniform, into and through post-separation for 24 months; topics and areas of investigation of interest to the Command include:

Creation of Transition Coordination Cell at USASOC-level: Composed of a transition coordinator and nurse case manager, in conjunction with adjacent staff elements (Judge Advocate General, Comptroller, and Surgeon's Office).

- Analysis, program evaluation, and implementation of effective engagement, information and messaging campaign to ARSOF senior Service Members, veterans, and supporting peer and service organization networks.
- Support to SMs while in uniform, into transition, and 24 months post-separation
 - Landscape review of trends, behaviors, and Veterans and their transition post-uniformed service
 - Review and analyze the trends of transition through service, the effect upon transition post service, and implementing interventions earlier in ARSOF operators' career span to support and enable a healthy transition post-service
- Fill SOF-peculiar gaps in Army Transition Assistance Program (TAP)
 - Understanding the support network for ARSOF Veterans through peers, public, and private organizations, and veteran access to Army Transition Assistance Program (TAP) and Veterans Affairs (VA) programs and care
- Thicken the Support network to connect to VA and benevolent Veteran Service Organizations (VSOs)
- Equip ARSOF veterans with the right knowledge, processes, and tools to thrive after their service to the nation
 - Travel to and audit all CSU-level programs and identify gaps
 - Work with financial and legal staff directorates to facilitate appropriate support to CSU-level programs
 - Coordinate with all educational-assistance programs to support ARSOF Soldiers' pursuit of undergraduate and graduate-level degrees
 - Leverage internship programs and private industry corporations to provide an iterative transition experience (i.e. Skillbridge Program)
- Execute deliberate engagement with ARSOF Soldiers to promote proper individual success at the proper milestones
 - Regular robust transition seminars covering all aspects of military to civilian transition
 - Executed with ardent Command emphasis
 - Education on transition processes and common obstacles
 - Tutelage in mind-set obstacles
 - Review, documenting, and treatment of medical issues
 - Introduction to Veteran and Benevolent Organizations
 - Introduction to Army Transition Assistance Program (TAP) and USSOCOM Warrior Care Program
 - Introduction to and assistance in accessing educational resources
 - Introduction to family assistance programs to aid in family transition

- Introduction to spiritual and wellness resources to aid in personal transition
- Assistance in personal preparation at individual level (financial planning, job searching, interview preparation)
- o Leveraging program-of-record information to track ARSOF Soldiers' physical, cognitive, professional, and wellness measures from the time they enter the schoolhouse to the day they transition from military service (SMARTABASE)
 - Provides iterative documentation and treatment over the course of several years, as opposed to trying to fill gaps in the final 24 months of a career

Lieutenant General SLIFE. Our people perform their best both in and out of the military when they are healthy. We are proud of the care we provide our airmen for physical wounds, but the last 20 years have taught us that not all wounds are visible. We have made significant progress in addressing neurocognitive and psychological trauma, but we have work to do in dealing with moral injury. We have recently received a commitment from the Air Force to embed a religious support team, a chaplain and a chaplain assistant, NCO, into every squadron level formation in AFSOC. This does not exist anywhere else in the Air Force. Our chaplains are working to understand and address moral injury, and their physical proximity to our airmen aims to ease access, reduce stigma, improve overall health, and ease the transition into civilian life.

Rear Admiral HOWARD. Over the course of their service careers, Naval Special Warfare (NSW) operators experience intensive operational training and numerous deployments in challenging environments. As a result, the unique needs for our special operators as they make the transition from service include:

- *Focused and intensive medical preparation for transition and post-military care*—Due to their higher operational tempo, in uniquely hazardous environments, NSW personnel frequently sustain greater incidences of traumatic experiences. This trauma can create complex medical concerns that require additional time, attention, documentation, and preparation to effectively address prior to transition. Additionally, there is an increased need to connect our personnel to specialized medical services that can continue to treat these conditions beyond their transition from the military.
- *Transition services personnel*—Special operators spend many years serving in high-functioning organizations that rely on a tight-knit culture of trust and performance. In addition, traditional (non-SOF) transition assistance programs provided by the military services do not provide relatable experiences for NSW's operators and do not provide a timely, or tailored approach to holistically address the special operator's transition.
- *Connection and purpose beyond the military*—Research shows military transition and psychological performance issues, particularly in the phases leading up to transition, create susceptibility to negative outcomes, including suicidal behavior. For NSW's special operators, where a specific identity, unique culture, and team focus is integral to the organizational construct, these feelings can be acute.

Major General GLYNN. The baseline needs are consistent with every servicemember who has served their country and deployed numerous times to austere environments in defense of our freedom. However, to your point, there are some unique benefits and issues related to a career in special operations. Our Care Coalition network and onsite specialist continuously strive to improve the support that connects them to the opportunities and available care from both the government and civilian sectors. MARSOC recognizes based upon the small size of the component and the deployment tempo of the command there are individuals that required additional attention in a compressed separation or retirement timeline. We look to support those marines and sailors with traditional capabilities, and emerging technical opportunities for both in person and virtual career placement opportunities, education opportunities at all levels ranging from graduate degrees to fellowships, and detailed transfer of health care and benefits to the servicemember and family.

2. Senator Joni ERNST. Lieutenant General Braga, Lieutenant General Slife, Rear Admiral Howard, Major General Glynn, is there a gap between conventional forces and our special operators in this regard?

Lieutenant General BRAGA. The nature of Army Special Operations Forces formation presents unique transition obstacles.

ARSOF soldiers are specially selected and trained personnel from the greater conventional Army. Additionally, ARSOF units are smaller, more flexible entities than conventional Army counterparts. When combined with an ever-growing demand to

apply ARSOF capabilities globally, it is imperative to maximize the availability of every ARSOF member possible. Losing one person on a twelve-person team leaves an exponential hole. Consequently, commands under the USASOC umbrella struggle to negotiate the annual “train, man, equip” cycles to deliver the elite capabilities that the Nation expects.

When a soldier needs to remove himself/herself from an operational role to transition, it leaves a gap that will drastically need to be filled. Unlike conventional forces, there is a significantly smaller pool of replacements that are produced after a significantly longer training curriculum at the JFK Special Warfare Center and School. Thus, the unit is either faced with asking the soldier to sacrifice much needed time to transition at the end of a career or sacrifice readiness capability due to the loss of a highly trained individual. This can be mitigated by changing the perspective on transition from something done at the end of a military term of service to something done throughout the trajectory of a term of service. Periodic health assessments, talent and personality evaluations, family services, financial services, and education can all be addressed at regular intervals of an ARSOF member’s career (prior to their final 24 months in the Army). This will enable them to accomplish their vital post-military preparation and still provide operational capability. The HQDA Transition Assistance Program does not offer these services because conventional military units can afford to dedicate time to soldiers at the end of their careers. Replacements are more available.

Additionally, the caliber of soldier within ARSOF, on average, has a higher level of experience and ambition. The majority of ARSOF soldiers are seeking (and are qualified for) executive level or near-executive level positions in the civilian realm. They are abstract, educated thinkers that have expertise in concept development, program management, human resources, negotiating obstacles, and working with multiple entities. The job opportunities offered within the HQDA TAP resources do not provide these types of opportunities. Job placement services and internship prospects are offered for pre-approved companies that are mostly entry level administration or trade-specific opportunities. Although there is nothing wrong with these types of offers for transitioning soldiers, they do not provide the requisite amount of job satisfaction, stimulation, and quality of life ARSOF soldiers establish during their military service.

Additionally, TAP has a large spectrum of military specialties that transition to the private sector differently. In contrast, a conventional Army Infantry Unit, for example, has a large majority force that is Infantry. Tailoring transition programs to a homogeneous group, such as an infantry division, is more tenable than creating a modular transition program to help Special Forces, Rangers, Aviators, Psychological Operations soldiers, and Civil Affairs soldiers alike. Thus, more resources and capability are needed to ensure that each of these military specialties and demographics are adequately escorted through the military to transition experience.

Lastly, USASOC units are decentralized across the continental United States, Europe, and Asia. Thus, as USASOC struggles to provide services to multiple specialties, it also needs to navigate transition shortfalls present at each installation across the continental United States, Europe, and Asia. Each geographic location has its own unique opportunities and obstacles that require nimble transition services to establish effective systems to address these geographic peculiarities and the specific ARSOF military specialties that reside on each post.

Lieutenant General SLIFE. The past 20 years saw Air Force Special Operations Command, the smallest of the ten major commands in the Air Force was the most deployed and the most decorated. It is noteworthy that in spite of the high operations tempo, AFSOC has the highest retention rate in the Air Force. The investment in POTFF has created a resilient and ready force.

Rear Admiral HOWARD. While we can’t accurately compare our special operator transition to conventional force transition, our force is committed to strengthening our focus on unique interrelated health and functional impairments such as traumatic brain injury effects; vestibular and vision impairments; endocrine dysfunction; sleep disorders including obstructive sleep apnea; chronic joint/back pain and other orthopedic problems; substance abuse; depression, anger, worry, and stress reactivity; marital, family, and community dysfunction; problems with sexual health and intimacy; and hypervigilance. In addition, higher operational tempos often prevent adequate transition time for our special operators.

Major General GLYNN. There is not so much as a define gap between conventional and special operations transition support. The service opportunities are available to all members, including SOF. Some of the SOF peculiar transition issues are created by the deployment tempo that simply does not permit as planned a transition as SOF would benefit from. Likewise, there are health issues, like exposure to repeated blasts, which occurred in the line of duty, and USSOCOM has created programs and

networks to bridge that gap to take care of all servicemembers assigned to a SOF component. These resources require continuous management to ensure they adapt with the size of the force, the types of services required and the cost of those services to ensure the benefits are available to each transitioning servicemember, taking into account that each case is different and requires dedicated and tailored support.

3. Senator Joni ERNST. Lieutenant General Braga, Lieutenant General Slife, Rear Admiral Howard, Major General Glynn, would the force benefit from some additional help tailored to their experiences?

Lieutenant General BRAGA. Yes, USASOC believes SOF Forces could benefit in general from a more deliberate approach by expanding the purview of POTFF / Human Performance and Wellness (HPW) Programs to include:

- Making more programs available that address Post Traumatic Stress and Traumatic Brain Injuries our SOF Operators incur while serving and must deal with as Veterans
- Codifying ARSOF Specific Transition Programs with Coordinators that enable transitioning Service Members to build a “one-of-one” approach to addressing individual career needs (credentialing, certifications, education) and assistance in building empowered ARSOF Veterans
- Support efforts that ensure there is continuity of care for all ARSOF Veterans
- Support efforts that enhance seamless transitions from DOD to VA and Sponsorship of our transitioning SOF Operators to their destination locations (States) that are geared to reduce negative outcomes such as Veteran suicide, homelessness, and unemployment
- Expand the eligibility window of DOD Skillbridge Program from 180 days before separation date to 365 days before separation while keeping the maximum length at 180 days to provide additional flexibility to Commanders to manage opportunities between Unit and Veteran Readiness
- Ensure that soldiers are afforded enough time to execute a successful transition. USASOC advocates soldiers to start 24 months prior to their final day in the military
- Providing additional suicide prevention training, services, and strategies for transitioning Service Members prior to the 24-month transition window may reduce suicide rates post-separation. Research suggests that veterans out of the service for up to 3 months were more likely to take their own life than Active Duty servicemembers. The suicide rate nearly tripled among veterans who had been out of the military between three to 12 months.

Lieutenant General SLIFE. The prolonged exposure to stressful environments experienced by many in the SOF community can make transitioning to “normal” civilian careers more difficult. Having a dedicated program or team that understands and builds upon the unique experiences and culture of our members would be a huge benefit as they transition to civilian life.

Rear Admiral HOWARD. Yes. Ideally, all special operations units would have dedicated transition services personnel consisting of transition advisors and medical professionals to assess, identify, and resource the risk factors that special operators experience in their career and must address during their transition process. In addition, all special operations units would benefit from having dedicated post-transition resources. NSW's operators need additional resources to assist them in finding and engaging in a new purpose, translating their unique skills to the civilian sector, navigating relationships outside of the military environment, and connecting with their new (typically non-military) team environment.

Major General GLYNN. Certainly. All servicemembers to include special operators and their families, would benefit from having access to embedded and networked transition support staff with whom trust and relationships have been established, particularly when the servicemember is deployed and the family is preparing for transition.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR KEVIN CRAMER

PERSONNEL COSTS

4. Senator CRAMER. Rear Admiral Howard, it is my understanding that we spend more per servicemember today than at any other point in history. Is that true?

Rear Admiral HOWARD. Direct costs for SEAL/SWCC qualification training increased from fiscal year 2018 to fiscal year 2022. Direct costs include Operations

and Maintenance associated with initial qualification training (Basic Underwater Demolition/SEAL Course (BUDS) and Special Warfare Combatant Craft Crewman (SWCC)) and advanced qualification courses. NSW does not maintain historical records to sufficiently compare recent costs to those incurred prior to fiscal year 2018.

Additional assessment costs (separate from recruiting costs) also increased between fiscal year 2018 to fiscal year 2022. Indirect costs associated with operating Naval Special Warfare Center (NSWCEN), which supports initial and advance training, also increased between fiscal year 2018 and fiscal year 2022.

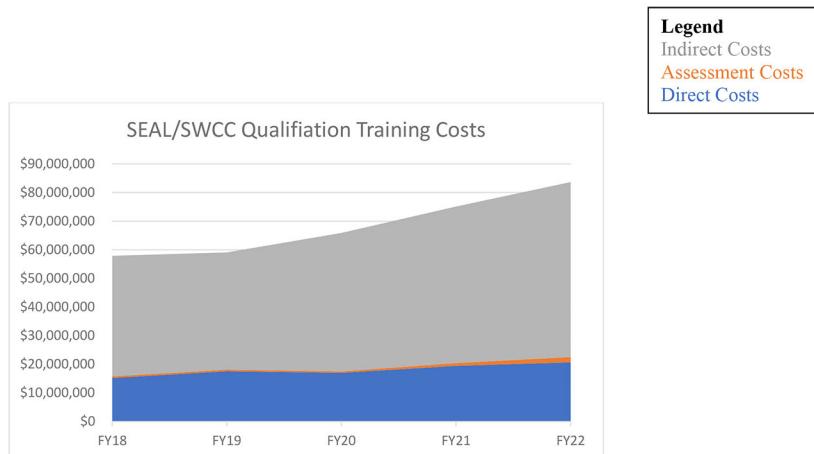
Information for direct costs for the assessment, selection, and training pipeline, and total indirect costs is provided for fiscal year 2018 to fiscal year 2022 (estimated). The costs below are not adjusted for inflation.

	Fiscal Year 2018	Fiscal Year 2019	Fiscal Year 2020	Fiscal Year 2021	Fiscal Year 2022E
Initial and Qualification Training	\$15,222,000	\$17,599,000	\$17,051,000	\$19,487,000	\$20,714,000
Assessment	\$560,000	\$560,000	\$496,000	\$994,000	\$1,855,000
Indirect Costs	\$42,141,000	\$40,954,000	\$48,354,000	\$54,620,000	\$61,080,000
TOTAL	\$57,923,000	\$59,113,000	\$65,901,000	\$75,101,000	\$83,649,000

5. Senator CRAMER. Rear Admiral Howard, what metrics do you use to determine the cost to (recruit, assess, select, train) an individual?

Rear Admiral HOWARD. The total costs to recruit/assess/select/train NSW personnel are not fully captured by NSW. Costs of recruiting and basic training are captured by Navy Recruiting Command and Navy Education and Training Command, whereas NSW-specific initial training is captured by NSW. Overhead costs include all indirect costs required to conduct our courses and include Civilian Pay, Base Operating Support, Range Support, various support contracts, and Facilities Sustainment, Restoration, Modernization (FSRM). Candidate throughput for our courses is captured every year on our OP-5J Attachment 10 Budget Exhibit.

Cost Per Candidate. For fiscal year 2022, NSW's Qualification Training Costs (Direct (Blue), Assessment (Orange) and Indirect (Gray)) are projected to be \$83,649,000. Projected required candidate output is 303 (175 SEAL Operators, 58 SEAL Officers, and 70 Special Boat Operators). Projected costs per candidate are estimated to be \$276,076 (\$83,649,000 / 303 candidates). Changes in counting candidate output/cost preclude direct comparison with prior fiscal years. General data indicates that NSW's cost per candidate did increase over the prior period.



HEALTH & READINESS

I am interested in how you determine readiness in the human domain. Equipment, training and manning are all relatively easy metrics to measure.

6. Senator CRAMER. Rear Admiral Howard, how are you assessing the “health” of the force?

Rear Admiral HOWARD. NSW has embedded licensed, credentialed POTFF providers at the O-6 level major commands to provide immediate access to care, to evaluate and treat all medical and human performance conditions in the areas of psychological health, musculoskeletal health, and cognitive performance. Medical readiness metrics for immunizations, dental status, and deployable status are tracked monthly to ensure our forces are always ready for operational commitments. Annual human performance assessments, including body composition, strength, and cardiovascular performance are required to ensure physical capabilities for mission requirements are maintained and to proactively address any identified risk area. Cognitive performance is measured prior to deployment and at least every 3 years using the Automated Neuropsychological Assessment Metrics (ANAM). Psychological health is assessed through the Human Factors Program, to identify any personal challenges one might be facing, engage their senior leadership, and develop a plan to optimize functioning before the challenges become significant problems. Psychological assessments are also performed upon return from deployments through Warrior Transition and Third Location Decompression programs. These multi-domain assessments provide a holistic overview of individual and command readiness.

7. Senator CRAMER. Rear Admiral Howard, why aren’t we using a more representative model that includes both health (high blood pressure, mental health, diabetes, heart disease, depression, etc.) AND performance (non-deployable status, mental health, obesity, diabetes, cognitive function, strength, endurance, recovery, etc.) metrics to better understand not just the status but also the trends?

Rear Admiral HOWARD. The NSW Human Performance Program has a robust data base that tracks and records individual and team performance metrics, such as aerobic capacity, mobility, power and strength, and lean muscle mass. These metrics are used to proactively identify and address any risk areas and to ensure the highest level of performance of all personnel. All musculoskeletal injuries are given a mission status of Red, Yellow, or Green, and are used to recommend a command member’s ability to deploy or participate in physical mission training. Psychological health metric trends are tracked longitudinally by gathering and analyzing data from programs such as the Human Factors Program, Warrior Transition, and Third Location Decompression. Monthly psychological health reports are also generated that track trends, utilization, and content issues.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR MARSHA BLACKBURN

PRESERVATION OF THE FORCE AND FAMILY (POTFF)

8. Senator BLACKBURN. Lieutenant General Braga, Lieutenant General Slife, Rear Admiral Howard, Major General Glynn, what metrics do you use to define ‘success’ concerning POTFF and how does each service determine metrics for success?

Lieutenant General BRAGA. USASOC uses USSOCOM Directive 10-12, which provides common data collection requirements for each POTFF domain. The requirements include utilization measures and other domain specific data, such as a physical assessment, psychological assessment, psychological diagnosis, or spiritual fitness scale.

USSOCOM Directive 10-12 identifies three statuses to stratify individuals based on how mission capable they are: (1) Green is fully mission capable; (2) Yellow is some functional limitation for mission essential training or deployment participation; and (3) Red is significant functional limitation—member advised not to participate in mission essential training or deployment.

While the directive lists the common data collection requirements for all SOCOM POTFF domains, USASOC collects additional data to inform our program evaluations with feedback from subordinate unit Human Performance and Wellness (HPW) personnel.

Lieutenant General SLIFE. AFSOC measures ‘success’ by the reduction of risk behaviors. POTFF is spread a little unevenly across AFSOC as some of our units have greater demands for one aspect than another. Data has shown that units with POTFF resources embedded at a unit level have a lower incidence of risk behaviors (sexual assault/harassment, suicidal ideation or attempted suicides). Based on the lower incidences, we believe we are seeing a significant return on our POTFF investment.

Additionally, AFSOC is implementing the use of an annual Tactical Performance Index Questionnaire (TPIQ) as a comprehensive evaluation of a member's current performance and lifestyle metrics. The TPIQ includes metrics to show improvements or changes in an airman's physical, mental, social, spiritual and cognitive capabilities and will help us monitor changes over time.

Rear Admiral HOWARD. Since the implementation of SOCOM's POTFF program at NSW, 'success' has been assessed through two broad categories: (1) tracking trends of harmful behaviors, and (2) measuring utilization of POTFF service providers. Trends we focus on include suicide, DUI, spouse abuse, divorce, service-related injuries, etc. Utilization rates of POTFF services demonstrates whether the services are destigmatized and whether servicemembers are being more vulnerable in accessing offered care, as well as overall availability and access to POTFF providers.

NSW POTFF uses metrics directed by SOCOM and success is determined through identifying positive trends over time.

Major General GLYNN. MARSOC has developed and implemented across the component a comprehensive evaluation process that addresses the quality and effectiveness of the program. The primary metrics used to define success are: 1) Access to care/services; 2) Sustained operational availability; 3) Enhanced career longevity; 4) Health and wellness of the Family. This program extends to those MARSOC members and families assigned to billets outside of the immediate organization.

9. Senator BLACKBURN. Lieutenant General Braga, Lieutenant General Slife, Rear Admiral Howard, Major General Glynn, are you aware if your POTFF-related metrics for success and definition of success are the same as those used by your counterparts at the other service component commands?

Lieutenant General BRAGA. Yes, POTFF staff at SOCOM headquarters provide policy guidance and resources for the program. Service components and TSOCs are responsible for implementing POTFF at their commands, including identifying any unique needs or capacity gaps at each command.

We (USASOC) are nested within SOCOM's POTFF data collection effort to measure the utilization, quality of care, and ensure both help us to meet our mission requirements. The critical resources, programs, and leader emphasis to help take care of our soldiers and their families is imperative to preserving our experienced Special Operators that have endured over two decades of sustained combat operations and ensure we are postured to meet the requirements that the Department of Defense and the Nation have for ARSOF in the future.

Assessment:

- Measures of performance / effectiveness at soldier and unit levels
- Data from existing assessments and surveys
- Physical, Cognitive, Psychological, Spiritual / Social, Administrative, and Program metrics
- Regular updates to enable Commanders to more frequently gauge unit readiness

Return on Investment:

- Benefit to soldiers—improved health, fitness, readiness, and access to care
- Benefit to Commanders—improved ability to meet unit-specific readiness needs
- Benefit to Units—improved readiness, morale, and effectiveness
- Benefit to Army—increased readiness, reduced attrition, and cost savings

Lieutenant General SLIFE. Yes. USSOCOM will employ Smartabase software, a HIPAA-compliant software system that can improve human performance and optimize strength, speed, stamina, and help with injury prevention across the enterprise. While the mission and function of each component drives specific performance measurements, there is a high degree of standardization across the components.

Rear Admiral HOWARD. Yes. A recent SOCOM Directive has standardized POTFF metrics collection to better define success. This Directive identified 17 distinct data collection items across the five POTFF domains. Those 17 data elements will be collected by all component commands for input into a centralized, Force-wide data repository.

Major General GLYNN. Yes, there is a common baseline, and it is expected there will be slight deviations due to unit specific nuances. The MPOTFF Program communicates regularly both internally to the USSOCOM components, Marine Corps, and Navy; and externally to the many health, academia, and industry professional resources that are critical to the success of the network. This type of communication creates a degree of standardization across the force. USSOCOM Leadership recognizes a level of uniqueness at each subordinate command and the associated policy, delineates baseline standards.

10. Senator BLACKBURN. Lieutenant General Braga, Lieutenant General Slife, Rear Admiral Howard, Major General Glynn, what are the shortfalls with current POTFF domain guidance regarding roles and responsibilities?

Lieutenant General BRAGA. USSOCOM Directive 10-12 defines the common requirements of the POTFF program across five domains—physical, psychological, cognitive, social and family, and spiritual—by providing an overview of the program, including its goal, the domains' roles and responsibilities, and execution guidance for the subordinate commands.

USSOCOM does not believe there are any current shortfalls regarding POTFF related roles and responsibilities. Based on SOCOM guidance, USASOC provides guidance and resourcing to meet POTFF mission and intent.

Lieutenant General SLIFE. SOCOM has made vast improvements to strengthen and clarify the roles and responsibilities across the domains of resiliency while allowing flexibility for each component to tailor their programs to meet the needs of the force down to the unit-level commanders. AFSOC has further defined our guidance for the unit-level commanders by implementing the Integrated Resilience Optimization Network (IRON) program and by providing clarifying guidance on the roles, responsibilities, goals and processes across all domains. This will ensure the maximum effectiveness and proper utilization of all resources provided through the POTFF program in concert with and complementing those provided by the Air Force.

Rear Admiral HOWARD. NSW does not assess there are any current shortfalls regarding POTFF related roles and responsibilities. Both SOCOM and Navy provide strategic level guidance and appropriate level resourcing to meet POTFF mission and intent, with the commensurate provided autonomy. The mantra of “centralized guidance and resourcing / decentralized execution” provided by higher headquarters allows for maximum flexibility and adaptation. NSW considers their POTFF program “right sized” in terms of personnel and programs in a currently fiscal constrained environment.

Major General GLYNN. We are conscious that the operational environment has shifted from highly kinetic conflicts with servicemembers receiving both severe visible and invisible wounds on a near daily basis. As a new norm is baselined, we are conscious that even with the best force protection measures in place we still have servicemembers in harm's way and conducting hazardous duty on both operational and training assignments. An example of an emergent and growth area is cognitive wellness and the SABRES program that USSOCOM sponsors. Servicemembers and families still require the detailed levels of care sustained by a fully funded and resourced program; in fact, at this point may be when they can reap the mid to long-term benefits of POTFF more than in the midst of war.

DEGRADED VISUAL ENVIRONMENT (DVE) SOFTWARE INTEGRATION

11. Senator BLACKBURN. Lieutenant General Braga, what would be the potential time, cost, and mission benefits of Special Operations Command (SOCOM) procurement of a standard DVE solution as a mission-enhancing, rather than risk-mitigating, too?

Lieutenant General BRAGA. The USASOC DVE solution is a risk mitigation solution which improves safety to crew and passengers and allows USASOC rotary-wing aircraft to exploit adverse environmental conditions both enroute and at the objective to gain a tactical advantage. In the past 20 years, Special Operations Aviation aircraft have suffered over 20 fatalities directly attributed to operations in degraded visual environments. The USASOC DVE solution is tested, in production, and is fully funded. Fielding of DVE solutions is currently ongoing. The USASOC solution is the best fit for USSOCOM's rotary-wing aircraft. USASOC has demonstrated and shared its DVE solution with the US Army and USSOCOM. The Army is adopting the USASOC solution for the Future Long-Range Assault Aircraft (FLRAA). While the rest of the USSOCOM aircraft enterprise has different requirements, any commonality at the system or subsystem level is surely beneficial.

Lieutenant General SLIFE. The strategic, fiscal, and technological landscapes are shifting and the “AFSOC We Needed” is no longer the “AFSOC We Will Need”. As we pivot, the mission-enhancing DVE system for CV-22 has been deferred due to higher priority requirements. A reduced visibility landing system capability (risk-mitigating) for SOCOM CV-22s is currently undergoing developmental testing as part of the next CV-22 tactical software release planned in 1st quarter fiscal year 2024.

Rear Admiral HOWARD. Currently for maritime SOF, DVE software integration would be mission enhancing. Potential applications include NSW surface and sub-surface craft in a maritime environment or operators in a low-visibility (i.e. dust

storm or fog) land environment. Efforts to increase collection of all-spectrum information through hardware/software and then consolidate that information in real-time to provide pertinent critical information would decrease the cognitive load on operators. Decreasing the cognitive load on operators is in SOCOM's and JWC's guidance for decision advantage.

NSW is currently unable to ascertain time and/or cost benefits, and currently have no (high TRL) DVE systems under consideration.

Major General GLYNN. Degraded Visual Environment Software Integration is part of the SOCOM Aviation Systems Portfolio. MARSOC does not have an aviation component. As a supported element utilizing rotary aircraft for air assault MARSOC appreciates the requirement for the best and latest technological capabilities for pilots that best support the mission and mitigate the hazards of aviation operations.

LEVERAGING EMERGING TECHNOLOGIES

12. Senator BLACKBURN. Lieutenant General Slife, how is Air Force Special Operations Command (AFSOC) incorporating a hybrid proliferated space architecture to enable resilient cross-domain operations?

Lieutenant General SLIFE. The strategic environment is substantially different from the one in which we have operated in for the last two decades. In order to remain relevant in the emerging technologies environment, AFSOC is participating with Air Force Research Lab and the Strategic Development Planning and Experimentation office on experimentation of emerging low earth orbit (LEO) based satellite communications technology. This technology can become a resilient and affordable Beyond Line-Of-Site command and control enabler for Joint All-Domain Command and Control via the AF Advanced Battle Management System. AFSOCs efforts are focused on helping test, advise, and steer the commercial satellite communication industry to develop capabilities and functionality that can be leveraged by DOD in the near future. Assuming LEO satellite technology achieves desired results at low cost, AFSOC intends to leverage AF and SOCOM to field these capabilities to airborne platforms, ground C2 nodes, and Special Tactics within 1-2 years.

Additionally, AFSOC is also engaging with the USSF on development of the Rocket Cargo Specialized Spacelift Vanguard project to demonstrate commercial spacelift capabilities. This capability has the potential to provide National Command Authority, Combatant Commands and Theater Special Operations Commands a new ability to rapidly transport personnel and equipment anywhere in the world. As a deeply invested partner in the Vanguard Rocket Cargo effort, AFSOC provides subject matter experts to develop Special Operations Forces (SOF) payload configurations and concepts in order to influence payload bay design. These concepts will support development of SOF Medical spacelift payloads for Air-Land, Air-Maritime, and Air-Drop capabilities support Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief missions. The ability to respond to a Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief crisis by rapidly deploying forces and equipment anywhere in the world within an hour is a strategic differentiator.

13. Senator BLACKBURN. Lieutenant General Braga, how can SOCOM strengthen and innovate current specialized skillsets and capabilities with existing specialized testing infrastructure?

Lieutenant General BRAGA. USSOCOM is maximizing resources toward Joint efforts capable of conducting Joint All-Domain exercises / experimentation to expand opportunities at Service Combat Training Centers (CTCs) and SOF venues like the Crestwood, KY underground training facility and the Special Operations Training Center at Fort Bliss and White Sands Missile Range. USASOC is leveraging ongoing Army efforts to develop new military career fields and specialties related to areas like Counter Threat Finance, Data Analytics and Software Development. USSOCOM is invested in improving Joint capability sets related to these fields. Additionally, USASOC is conducting the necessary analysis to explore the feasibility of expanding SOF career fields related to robotics and unmanned systems. These investments build upon current Joint and Component initiatives designed to better equip and prepare SOF for Joint All-Domain Operations. USSOCOM is investing in increasing the skills and capabilities of our Psychological Operations soldiers. This includes creating people and organizations that are capable of competing trans-regionally across the information space. These efforts include the integration and synchronization of Service and Joint SOF, Space, and Cyber capabilities.

14. Senator BLACKBURN. Lieutenant General Braga, what innovative experimentation is United States Army Special Operations Command (USASOC) focusing on to counter Chinese and Russian malign activities?

Lieutenant General BRAGA. USASOC is focusing its innovative experimentation in the areas of Irregular Warfare, Information Advantage, Multi-Domain Operations Interoperability, Next generation Precision Effects, Unmanned Systems / Robotics / AI, Next Generation Mobility, and Enhancing the ARSOF soldier. USASOC has been directly involved in the development of the Joint Concept for Information Advantage (JCIA) and the Army Concept for Information Advantage 2028 to address required capabilities to identify and counter malign information and influence. USASOC is specifically experimenting in the convergence of SOF, Space, and Cyber capabilities, Contested Communications, Data at the Edge, Counter Unmanned systems, Robotics, and Next Generation Lethality Systems such as advanced loitering munitions. USASOC is committed to conceptual and live experimentation thorough our efforts with the Joint Staff J7's Global Integrated Wargame (GIWG), Army 2030, 2040, and the Joint Warfighting Assessment events, USSOCOM's Shadow Warrior, and the full range of Army Future Warfighting Experiments (AFWE) including Joint Live Experimentation in the Army's capstone event, Project Convergence. USASOC is partnered with ASD/SOLIC's Irregular Warfare Technical Support Directorate (IWTSD), the Army's Space and Missile Defense and Cyber Commands, Rapid Capabilities and Critical Technologies Office (RCCTO), Night Vision Lab, and Command, Control, Computers, Communications, Cyber, Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance Center (C5ISR), as well as OSD, National Labs, and private industry.

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE ASSISTED DECISION-MAKING

15. Senator BLACKBURN. Lieutenant General Slife, how can Special Operations Forces utilize data-processing software such as Big Data Analytics to assist in utilizing available data to compensate for limited personnel?

Lieutenant General SLIFE. Using analytics and enabling AI will continue to be critical as SOF evolves. We continue to monitor the progress of Project Maven and other AI applications to gain efficiencies in intelligence analysis. We are actively contributing to development through tagging and deconflicting intelligence data. We remain confident that AI will allow us to use our manpower more efficiently in the future.

We are also using AI in defense of our cyber networks. We use AI to prioritize observations within data sets, perform analytics (descriptive, diagnostic, predictive, and prescriptive) and provide actionable insights in defense of the network. These analytics help AFSOC to achieve increased flexibility and risk reduction in constrained environments. A few of our current efforts in use now:

- AI / Big Data Analytics search across all social media and news sites for specific information or patterns which assist us regarding news, posts, and rumors related to SOF activities, adversarial activities and more. This includes overcoming language barriers via natural language processing.
- On our networks, we are able to enable automatic network traffic analysis to determine actor intent and trustworthiness of services in real-time, allowing us to respond appropriately.

UKRAINE AND TAIWAN

16. Senator BLACKBURN. Lieutenant General Braga, what lessons can be applied from the Russian-Ukraine conflict to other partners worldwide—particularly Taiwan?

Lieutenant General BRAGA. [Deleted.]

17. Senator BLACKBURN. Lieutenant General Braga, how can each component command work together to meet the different requirements in a Ukrainian or Taiwan scenario?

Lieutenant General BRAGA. Unity of effort and collaboration is an organic feature of SOF Components.

- SOF components work together in sharing intelligence and various partner nation building endeavors, both point to point and/or thru the respective regional Theater Special Operations Commands, particularly when sharing common areas of operation.

Special Operations components possess unique expertise and capabilities.

- Domain and functional based unique expertise are rarely redundant and cannot or should not be replicated.
- ARSOF has significantly regionally aligned PSYOP and Civil Affairs units that complement all SOF units of action.
- Naval Special Warfare has significant maritime assets that other SOF Components do not and it would be cost prohibitive to duplicate.

- Each Army Special Forces Group possesses highly skilled elements that interact and complement all other units of action deployed in that respective area of responsibility.

Continued joint SOF participation in Joint Chief of Staff (JSC) and Service exercises

- Continued joint SOF participation in a litany of JCS and Service Exercises is another critical tool to drive SOF component teamwork, especially in the large-scale global exercise environment.
- USASOC requests continued funding and advocacy for SOF participation in as many of these venues as possible.
- SOF provides combat multipliers to magnify the effects of indigenous mass.
- Both Ukraine and Taiwan involve conflict with a superior adversary.
- Engaging a superior adversary by employing Irregular Warfare (IW) concepts offers the best chance of success.
- SOF are experts in the conduct of IW.

SPECIAL OPERATIONS FORCES ETHICS

18. Senator BLACKBURN. Rear Admiral Howard, how do traditional roles of ethical teaching resonate with SOF operations, and what are the untapped options for shaping ethical narratives and decisionmaking to address these issues?

Rear Admiral HOWARD. Naval Special Warfare (NSW) implements ethics and culture development in every phase of assessment and selection, utilizing various approaches and techniques as we strive to be an exemplar of a Highly Reliable Organization on-and off-the-battlefield—with trust, authenticity and integrity.

First, NSW is selective of the individuals who are offered the opportunity to participate in the SEAL and SWCC assessment and selection pathways; candidates are assessed based on character, cognitive and leadership attributes. Ethical individuals are the building blocks of an ethical Force. Upon admission to the SEAL and SWCC training programs, candidates receive both formal and informal development. Informal development takes place in day-to-day interactions between candidates and instructor staff who are empowered by NSWCEN leadership to identify and leverage opportunities to develop candidates with an ethical decisionmaking foundation. In terms of formal ethical training, a minimum of 4 hours per week is programmed into SEAL and SWCC Basic Training, and ethical decisionmaking is enforced continuously through small unit tactics instruction during SEAL Qualification Training (SQT) and Crewmen Qualification Training (CQT), including 10 hours of lessons learned and tactical ethics scenarios administered by qualified SEAL and SWCC instructors. Further detail regarding ethical development during the SEAL and SWCC training pipelines can be found in Encl (1) (Developing Ethics and Culture at the Naval Special Warfare Center).

Upon graduation from SQT and CQT, SEAL and SWCC operators report to their operational commands (SEAL Teams and Special Boat Teams) where ethical development is programmed into every phase of the Inter-Deployment Training Cycle (IDTC). The IDTC is broken into three distinct phases: Professional Development (PRODEV, focused on individual education, training, and qualification), Unit Level Training (ULT, focused on training the maneuver element in core and core plus mission areas necessary to certify for deployment), and Task Group Integration Training (TGIT), which incorporates combat service (CS) and combat service support (CSS) personnel into more complex scenarios that are tailored to respective elements' deployment area of operations, with oversight from the Commander (O-5 level) of the Task Group element.

During PRODEV, prospective leaders within NSW attend courses of instruction administered by NSW Leadership Education and Development Command (NLEAD) which are required to fulfill respective leadership positions (E-6 Leading Petty Officer, E-7/O-3 Platoon Leaders Course, E-7/O-3 Ground Force Commanders Course, E-8/O-4 Troop Leaders Course, Chief Warrant Officers' Course, O-4 Executive Officer Course, E-9/O-5 Command Leaders' Course). These courses leverage a mix of “traditional roles of ethical teaching” (for example with Dr. Jeremy Davis, a Postdoctoral Associate from University of Florida for “Ethics Theory and Application”) and less traditional roles utilizing combat ethics case studies methodology, and tactical decisionmaking exercises led by experienced military personnel. What resonates with the candidates in these courses depends on how well the content is delivered rather than whether it is “traditional” or not. We find that this blended approach with a mix of both is most effective: the traditional approach provides a framework, while the non-traditional approach addresses application.

Upon completion of PRODEV, elements at the Platoon and Troop level progress into ULT, which incorporates Tactical Ethical Conditioning (TEC) where tactical

leaders and operators are put into scenarios that test their knowledge and ability to apply the law of war, current theater Rules of Engagement, and ethical decision-making in stressful situations and then debriefed accordingly to develop the operator's "ethical armor." In addition to scenario-based ethics conditioning, ethical discussions and personal vignettes are used for shared awareness and personal development throughout ULT.

Progressing into TGIT, NSW elements aggregate CSS and CS personnel, and participate in TRIDENT Exercise to garner Certification for deployment at the O-5 Task Group, O-4 Task Unit, and O-3 Task Element levels. Within TRIDENT Exercise, Ethical dilemmas are present in every training exercise scenario, designed to test and develop decisionmaking processes and consideration. In practice, this looks like leaders intuitively assessing/asking: "Can I?" "Should I?" and "So What?"—further refining with "Is it (whatever it might be) legal, moral, ethical?" and sharing/staffing/collaborating ideas by, with and through peers, mentors, and experts. While operational dilemmas are certainly tested, e.g. Go or No-Go criteria—based on changing conditions/circumstances; legal, ethical, and moral aspects are challenged as well as each leadership team—and their maneuver elements must navigate through the uncertainty presented by the simulated yet operationally oriented training scenarios. Most importantly, these deliberate sets and reps offer NSW personnel a low cost yet high yield learning opportunity in this critical area. In addition to TRIDENT Exercise, every deploying unit is required to participate in Just Warrior Training (JWT), a formal course facilitated by Chaplains and a SEAL Chief Warrant Officer (CWO) on the importance of ethics in garrison and while deployed to reinforce moral character based on the SEAL/SWCC ethos and Just War theory.

We believe the current overall NSW ethics training delivered to our sailors at all phases of their professional development pipeline is both robust and thorough. We continually evaluate options to better shape our ethical narratives and decision-making using updated and relevant vignettes and by tapping into the civilian education and professional ethics networks for current best practices.

19. Senator BLACKBURN. Rear Admiral Howard, how do commanders balance innovative technologies and austere conditions with ethical decisionmaking at the tactical, operational, and strategic levels?

Rear Admiral HOWARD. NSW Commanders ground the employment of innovative technologies in austere conditions with ethical decisionmaking and ensure the Force conducts itself with the highest moral and ethical standards, on and off the battlefield.

Upon deployment, NSW forces continue to have opportunities for ethical development. Deploying forces generally undergo an Operational Chain of Command (OPCON) shift to the Theater Special Operations Command (TSOC) that is responsible for operations in their respective deployment's geographic area. Each TSOC builds upon a geographically focused Law of Armed Conflict / Rules of Engagement and the ethical training that NSW units receive during TGIT through their operational guidance and persistent contact with subordinate commanders. When physically dislocated, NSW Commanders maintain contact with subordinate commanders in their administrative control chain-of-command to provide mentorship for professional and ethical matters.

Furthermore, by incorporating ethical training metrics into pre-deployment certification of all deploying elements, NSW ensures that only units who have demonstrated ethical decisionmaking in realistic conditions attain Certification by their Commander, Verification by their ISIC, and Validation by their TYCOM (CV2) for them to deploy. NSW relies on the ethical foundation that is imbued throughout selection and training, the IDTC methodology, and through position-specific leadership training to prepare operators and leaders; then tests them in realistic conditions to confer trust (via CV2) that they will conduct themselves in keeping with the high moral standards that their nation expects of them when deployed around the globe.

