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HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE

STATEMENT OF
GENERAL BRYAN D. BROWN, U.S. ARMY
COMMANDER
UNITED STATES SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND
BEFORE THE HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON TERRORISM,
UNCONVENTIONAL THREATS AND CAPABILITIES
ON THE CURRENT MANNING, EQUIPPING, AND READINESS
CHALLENGES FACING SPECIAL OPERATIONS FORCES
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GENERAL BRYAN D. BROWN
COMMANDER
UNITED STATES SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND

Mr. Chairman, Representative Thornberry, and distinguished Members of the Subcommittee, it is an honor and privilege to report to you on the manning and readiness of the United States Special Operations Command (USSOCOM). Our Special Operations Forces (SOF) are better trained and more capable than ever before. Since 9/11, USSOCOM has grown faster and in greater proportion than at any other time in history, maintaining the high standards for selection, assessment and training that are the foundation of SOF. We have done this while maintaining our readiness and manning in virtually all areas, while responding to many unique challenges presented by operations on a global battlefield.

The 2006 Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR) directed SOF growth in both the capacity and capabilities. This allows USSOCOM to accomplish its increased missions and responsibilities of synchronizing the Global War on Terror (GWOT) as both a supported and supporting command. This growth will occur over a span of five years and encompasses every aspect of SOF. Growth areas include increasing the number of U.S. Army Special Operations Command (USASOC) Special Forces (Green Berets), Rangers, and Special Operations aviation; growing the number of active duty U.S. Army Civil Affairs and Psychological Operations (PSYOP) forces; increasing Naval Special Warfare Command (NAVSPECWARCOM) SEAL Team force levels; establishing the Marine Corps Forces Special Operations Command (MARSOC) as a Marine Corps component of USSOCOM; and increasing U.S. Air Force Special Operations Command

(AFSOC) aircraft inventory and Special Tactics capacity, as well as establishing new specialized aviation capabilities. This growth, while large by SOF standards, is occurring over enough time to recruit, select, train, and equip the right people to maintain the high quality of SOF.

End Strength and Personnel Growth

With few exceptions, the personnel readiness of SOF is excellent. By the end of FY 2007, USSOCOM will achieve its authorized personnel end strength of 47,911. With current manning at 46,223, overall USSOCOM manning today sits at 96 percent of authorized growth for FY 2007. The programmed enhancements to USSOCOM's capability focus on our most valuable resource - the SOF Warrior. Our future end strength will be 58,801 (military and civilian) in FY 2012, incorporating the total QDR manpower growth of 13,119 personnel. Our growth plan involves each of the Services contributing personnel to build Special Operations capability and capacity, as described below.

USASOC accounts for 57 percent of Special Operations growth, including five new Special Forces Battalions, one per year starting in FY 2008, increasing our Special Forces capacity by one third. In addition, we will grow three new Ranger companies and add reconnaissance capacity and other support functions to our existing Ranger units. The Special Operations Aviation Regiment will increase its capacity in airframes and aircrews, while USASOC's Civil Affairs personnel will double and PSYOP forces will grow by five companies.

The MARSOC will contribute to 19 percent of SOF growth and are well ahead of schedule. Our newest component has already contributed significant Foreign Internal

Defense (FID) capability to the SOF family, with eight FID capable Foreign Military Training Teams. These units have already deployed to Africa and South America and are making significant contributions to theater engagement plans. Two Marine Special Operations Battalions have been activated, one on each coast. In keeping with our plans, we deployed the first Marine Special Operations Company under command of a Theater Special Operations Command in January 2007, and we will deploy the second in April 2007.

AFSOC provides 9 percent of our growth, doubling our Aviation FID capacity, increasing AC-130 Gunship and specialized fixed-wing aircraft, as well as adding a critical Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance (ISR) capability with a dedicated Special Operations Predator Squadron.

NAVSPECWARCOM will account for 8 percent of the overall growth by adding capacity to our SEALs and Surface Warfare Combatant Crewman (SWCC). The manpower equivalent of two SEAL Teams will increase the total SEAL end strength by approximately 20 percent. Additionally, the SWCC are programmed to grow by approximately 13 percent.

Government civilian positions round out the remaining 7 percent of QDR growth, providing tremendous added capability and continuity to headquarters units and supporting commands that might otherwise require active duty SOF personnel.

USSOCOM's growth is proceeding well: With the close-out of FY 2006 we experienced significant growth in SOF manning levels with Army Special Forces manning at 98 percent, Navy SEALs at 88 percent (SEAL operators and Corpsmen combined), and AFSOC's overall manning improving to 89 percent. Despite these

improvements, these are still areas USSOCOM is closely watching. Continued recruiting and retention success is key to the long term support of these warriors.

MARSOC has now reached Initial Operational Capability (IOC), adding more capacity to USSOCOM. We are working very closely with the Marine Corps and anticipate full integration of this component into our personnel management monitoring and reporting structure in the very near future.

A significant realignment in FY 2006 was the transfer of all Reserve Civil Affairs and PSYOP organizations to the U.S. Army. This realignment will increase the effective use of these units and better prepare them to work in conjunction with conventional units, which are their traditional partners. USASOC maintains control of active duty Civil Affairs and PSYOP units, and will remain the proponent for Civil Affairs and PSYOP capabilities and training.

USSOCOM's growth is not without obstacles. SEAL officer manning and SEAL training throughput continue to be major challenges. During our most recent staff talks with the U.S. Navy, the shortage of SEAL mid-grade officers was highlighted. Some of the officer shortage is a result of increased authorizations due to force structure increases, requiring time to grow and fill those billets. In an effort to alleviate this problem, the Navy has implemented a spot promotion program for select mid-grade officers. In addition, a thorough review of the current SOF Officer Continuation Pay Initiative is being conducted. To address SEAL training throughput, the demanding Basic Underwater Demolition/SEAL (BUD/S) training regimen is under constant review to increase graduates without compromising standards.

The inventory for critical AFSOC Special Tactics specialties remains too low for current requirements. Significant changes to the training pipeline are resulting in steady annual increases in the number of these Air Force SOF battlefield airmen. Based on the AFSOC projected increases through FY 2009, its current manning shortfalls should be eliminated. USSOCOM is reviewing the skill sets required in the Special Tactics field to ensure the pipeline is only as long as necessary to accomplish required training levels.

As we create and grow MARSOC as a component command, support from the Marine Corps and Navy is paramount to fill critical billets needed to reach full operational capability (FOC). The growth of Marine Corps SOF is affected by the availability of support personnel for both USSOCOM headquarters and MARSOC. We are working with the Navy and the Marine Corps to meet the challenges of available personnel to fill required MARSOC billets.

Finally, we must ensure sufficient infrastructure such as Military Construction is available for QDR growth. Such growth is currently programmed, but delayed FY 2007 MILCON appropriations may present subsequent challenges in projected milestones.

Recruiting, Assessment, Selection and Retention

The SOF Warrior is at the core of SOCOM's unique capabilities. Success in recruiting these warriors is the cornerstone of our ability to maintain a quality force, turning bright, capable young individuals into trained SOF warriors. USSOCOM monitors this recruiting very closely. With the support of the Services, we continue to excel in this area.

Obtaining sufficient SEAL candidates is our main recruiting challenge. To meet this, the Chief of Naval Operations has made SEAL recruitment a top Navy priority. The Navy's FY 2007 goal for qualified recruits arriving at BUD/S is 1,400 personnel. In the first quarter of FY 2007, the Navy recruited 77 percent of that goal, providing 1075 recruits as SEAL candidates – an 18 percent increase to the total goal reached in FY 2006. USSOCOM is partnered with the Navy to focus on this area, and we are confident that progress will continue in the future.

Recruiting challenges are not unique to the Navy. Recruiting Combat Controllers and Pararescue Operators have historically been a challenge, but the U.S. Air Force recruiting for these very talented individuals has improved dramatically. Although still short of operators in the field, AFSOC's redesigned training curriculum and improved recruiting are closing the gap, facilitating the projected elimination of the shortfall by FY 2009.

Assessment and selection is the critical initial process by which candidates with the necessary aptitude and attitude are identified for entry into the Special Operations community and is a common starting point for SOF warriors. A relative few possess the essential combination of maturity, unflinching character, mental agility, physical strength, and endless internal drive necessary for selection and future success.

USASOC is a shining example of effecting change after increasing instructors and totally redesigning its accession schools. In the case of the Special Forces Qualification Course, planning began in 2002 with the foresight to reach the commands goals. A phased plan was implemented to grow from a 10 year average of 350 active duty enlisted graduates per year to 750 for FY 2006. I am pleased to report that 947

Special Forces soldiers graduated SFQC in FY 2006, proudly serving in the ranks of USSOCOM today.

SOF are generally a more mature and experienced force, requiring tailored methods to maintain readiness. The Department of Defense continues to work with USSOCOM to develop creative ways to use the force management tools available to maintain current personnel readiness levels. USSOCOM Component training pipelines have been maximized to the greatest extent possible while maintaining quality in the process. The Services have been briefed on the increase in requirements and they have pledged their fullest support. However, we cannot simply overpopulate the force with junior personnel to meet aggregate numbers and simultaneously strive to maintain required personnel readiness. To meet this challenge, USSOCOM identified the need for retention incentive bonuses. In FY 2005, the Undersecretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness approved the SOF Retention Initiative enabling us to provide focused incentives to SOF throughout their careers. In the first year, we guaranteed an inventory of 671 senior SOF with 19+ years of experience. By the end of FY 2006, we added another 440 experienced operators to that cadre. Most will stay with SOF through 24 years of service.

Retention incentives, the expansion of our training base, and ongoing efforts to improve recruiting, are the pillars on which we will maintain and grow the force. Overall, our SOF populations are healthy in the areas of inventory, promotions, training, command opportunity, and active component retention. Again, with few exceptions SOF personnel continue to equal or exceed Service averages in all areas. We expect and need this positive trend to continue into the future.

Equipment

Today's SOF are better equipped than ever, but continue to face challenges meeting high demand for ISR and next generation SOF-specific armored vehicles. Persistent airborne ISR is a critical supporting element to USSOCOM's prosecution of the GWOT. ISR must not only be ever present, but must rapidly disseminate operational information to key elements on the battlefield. USSOCOM has been rapidly equipping SOF with ISR capabilities within the overall constraints of our budget and our Special Operations-unique responsibilities. Through mission analysis and lessons learned, we have determined a combination of manned and unmanned airborne ISR is required to provide the flexibility to support the dynamic SOF mission set. We have modified existing SOF equipment where available, procured additional dedicated ISR equipment, and partnered with the Services to cooperatively field additional airborne ISR equipment in support of USSOCOM missions.

It is important that Congress fully fund the FY2008 budget request that will be presented next week for airborne ISR so that USSOCOM can continue to work toward filling its full requirement for this critical capability. Additional airborne ISR equipment is needed to enable USSOCOM to accelerate successes in the challenging GWOT mission. The FY 2007 USSOCOM Supplemental Request included over \$100M for immediate additional airborne ISR needs. We are currently working with the Joint Staff to reallocate priorities for use of existing assets.

It is also critical that Congress fully fund the budget request for additional modern lift assets. All USSOCOM components have identified the need to recapitalize aging

systems, as well as increase the quantity and combat capability of a wide array of ground, sea and air vehicles.

Conclusion

Readiness and manning remain at the bedrock of our foundation. We are committed to meeting our growth requirements while fulfilling the needs of the Geographic Combatant Commanders and synchronizing the overall Global War on Terror. SOF growth supports the GWOT Campaign Plan and USSOCOM's implementation of the GWOT plans. This growth is not taken lightly, or without forethought. It is happening at a pace that USSOCOM and its components can sustain without compromising the high standards of the SOF Warrior.

I appreciate the opportunity to meet and speak with you. I could not be more proud of our Special Operations Forces, and am humbled to represent them before you. We remain focused on our mission, ever mindful of the fact that this is a long war, one that will be fought over generations, not across a few short years. I thank you for your time, and look forward to answering your questions.