

Testimony Before the Senate Armed Services
Subcommittee on Emerging Threats and Capabilities

The Honorable Thomas W. O'Connell
Assistant Secretary of Defense
Special Operations / Low-Intensity Conflict

April 5, 2006

Mr. Chairman and distinguished members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify about the status of our nation's superb Special Operations Forces (SOF) and the increasing ability of the United States Special Operations Command (USSOCOM) to respond to current and emerging transnational terrorist threats as well as evolving asymmetrical threats.

The recently published 2006 Quadrennial Defense Review Report accurately states that we are in a long war that is irregular in nature. This long war is characterized by dispersed, global terrorist networks with radical political aims that directly and indirectly threaten the United States and our way of life. The nature of this long war requires the U.S. Armed Forces to adopt unconventional and indirect approaches to ultimately prevail in this historic struggle. The report further emphasizes the important and necessary changes needed to prepare SOF and other forces to respond to wide asymmetric challenges. The result of this emphasis is a significantly expanded SOF program that will qualitatively increase not only USSOCOM's capabilities but also its capacities to confront and prevail against the global terrorist network threat.

As you know, Title 10, Section 138 requires my position to provide civilian oversight of special operations activities of the Department of Defense. I am responsible for ensuring that our SOF are appropriately tasked and employed, and that senior policymakers, to include our interagency partners, understand SOF capabilities as well as their limitations. Not only am I an advocate of the USSOCOM and SOF, I am also dedicated to ensuring our elements continue to be the best trained, best equipped, most flexible and effective fighting force available to our country. I consult closely with General Brown on a wide range of policy issues and participate in the USSOCOM Board of Director's meetings, the Command's executive resource body. This effort produces a SOF program and budget that stress force readiness and sustainability, and provides sufficient force structure to meet the demands of the geographic combatant commanders and General Brown in his role as the supported commander in the Global War on Terrorism.

I'd like to recognize the superb effort of General Brown's Deputy Commander, Vice Admiral Eric Olson, for his USSOCOM team's work on the Quadrennial Defense Review. USSOCOM was well prepared to present an objective blueprint for SOF growth and posture. They put a Combatant Commander's fingerprints on the QDR process, which I believe improved the result. A key component of that strategy has been the unwavering support of members of this committee, the full House and Senate in delivering the necessary support, Congressional oversight, and critical review for SOF programs and initiatives. We've had successes and, yes, some setbacks with our programs, but I believe we've taken a prudent course in building both capability and capacity for the long war.

The FY2007 President's Budget Submission for USSOCOM is \$5.2 billion (excluding Military Pay), an increase of 27% over the FY 2006 submission. This FY 2007 increase is essential to support the Department's QDR decision to increase SOF capability and capacity to conduct low-visibility, persistent presence missions and a global unconventional warfare campaign.

The FY 2007 President's Budget Submission continues to strengthen the command, reflecting QDR guidance to increase USSOCOM's military capability and capacity. It will enable USSOCOM to: 1) add over 1,300 personnel to find, fix, and finish terrorist networks; 2) maintain sustained operations in areas where terrorist networks are operating; 3) continue the investment in critical fixed-wing, rotary-wing, and unmanned aircraft that provide SOF with the mobility necessary to deploy and to execute their missions quickly; 4) invest in additional active and reserve component Civil Affairs and PSYOPS force structure; and 5) support the newly created Marine Corps Special Operations Command (MARSOC), providing USSOCOM greater flexibility and capability to fight terrorism.

I would like to thank this Committee and the Congress for your support of this nation's Special Operations Forces. Your continued interest and support of the FY 2007 President's Budget Submission will be essential to sustain this critical funding for USSOCOM.

We are faced by interacting networks--sometimes structured--of radical extremists who inflict terror with minimal concern for their innocent victims. These networks will migrate to places where they can survive, operate and grow. Our challenge is to develop counter-networks to monitor, isolate, disrupt, and destroy hostile elements. SOCOM has started this process. While some of USSOCOM's

operations are visible, there has been a substantial investment in low-visibility and clandestine activities. Our Army Special Forces, Army Special Operations Aviation Forces, Army Rangers, Navy SEALs and Special Boat Units, Army Civil Affairs, Army Psychological Operations units, Air Force Special Operations crews and staffs, Combat Controllers and Weather Teams, have served CENTCOM requirements very well from their counter-insurgency and foreign internal defense roles in Afghanistan and Iraq to their work in the Horn of Africa. Most importantly, SOCOM Forces operate in the only environment that can lead to success: Joint, Interagency, Combined, and Coalition.

USSOCOM is also increasing its capacity to conduct operations against the threat:

- The recently activated MARSOC with its organic operational and foreign training units provides USSOCOM additional depth and operational flexibility in irregular warfare.
- A programmed one-third increase in active duty Special Forces battalions will improve USSOCOM's rotation base. Similarly, there is a programmed one-third increase in Civil Affairs and Psychological Operations units, both active and reserve component. These force level increases allow additional time between deployments to refit and reconstitute units that will improve their readiness posture. Coupling this force level increase and a flexible basing and rotation strategy will meet the demands of the Secretary of Defense and the President as well as the nation as the unknown unfolds.

My position in the Pentagon also gives me a unique perspective on a number of initiatives to expand the authorities that govern USSOCOM and Geographic

Combatant Commander's operations. These initiatives are slowly but surely moving together to match national and military strategies.

- On the Stability Operations front, we've seen advances in authorities that will allow greater efforts in train and equip missions, peacekeeping initiatives, and capacity building while partnering with Department of State. Section 1206 of the 2006 Defense Authorization Act permits the Secretary of Defense, at the direction of the President, to conduct or support programs to build foreign military capacity counter-terrorism or stability operations. The Joint Staff and Combatant Commands are actively identifying opportunities to enable partner nations to seize opportunities and counter unexpected threats through assistance under this authority. We are working with the Combatant Commands, the Joint Staff, and our colleagues at State to plan potential assistance under this authority and, once directed by the President, to efficiently and effectively implement designated assistance programs. I want to stress that we fully expect this type of authority will be extremely helpful in meeting the needs of our Combatant Commanders for more flexibility in working with international partners against today's unpredictable threats.
- The 2006 Defense Authorization Act also established a DoD security and stabilization assistance authority, Section 1207, which authorizes DoD support to the Department of State for civilian deployments and programs in countries falling into or emerging from conflict. The Department of Defense is working closely with the Department of State's Coordinator for Stabilization and Reconstruction to determine the most effective means of using this transfer authority to deploy civilian experts and facilitate the provision of reconstruction, security, or stabilization assistance. We need

substantial Congressional support for the President's FY 2007 request that will support efforts to build civilian capabilities for tasks like stabilization and reconstruction. Although requests for the Department of State and other agencies are outside the responsibility of this committee, I want to stress to the Committee that civilian capabilities will be critical to the nation's long-term success against terrorism and could reduce the stress on U.S. forces by precluding the need for certain deployments.

- Our Counternarcotics (CN) portfolio provides very robust longstanding train and equip authorities and resources that permit maximum flexibility for Combatant Commanders as they develop tactics, techniques, and procedures to combat smugglers, pirates, narco-terrorists, money launderers, proliferators, and other networks. Our foreign CN training efforts are proving a valuable adjunct to our counterterrorism efforts and provide U.S. access to countries for counternarcotics activities whose governments may not allow U.S. in for other reasons. Our close partners from the British Special Operations Forces now assist a key Afghan Counter Narcotics element that has been highly successful in seizures over the last year.
- The authority provided by Congress last year in Section 1208 of the Ronald W. Reagan National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2005 is being used effectively by the command to train, pay and equip foreign indigenous forces and build indigenous capabilities essential to developing counterterrorism networks. As we exercise this authority on the ground, we are getting smarter at how best to employ this very unique tool.
- USSOCOM was granted relief from Title 5 Personal Service Contract prohibitions. This allows DoD to authorize personal services contracts for the purpose of hiring SOF expertise and recruiting long-term sources and

assets in support of the GWOT. The additional authority allows flexible response to emerging situations and the ability to tap into previously unexploited resources.

As USSOCOM undergoes stressful periods of change during this long war, there will remain one constant: the importance of our human capital investment in the special operator. In terms of missions performed and in the qualities of the individuals who undertake those missions, the special operator is truly unique and requires a different type of mindset on our end in terms of planning and support. Our starting point has always been and must continue to be what we call the “SOF Truths,” which are essentially statements of the fundamentals: “Quality is better than quantity. Special operations forces cannot be mass produced. Competent special operations forces cannot be created after a crisis occurs. And, humans are more important than hardware.” I pay special tribute to the superb officers, non-commissioned officers, and civilians of the command who live and enforce these truths every day.

These truths have been reaffirmed by the awe-inspiring performance of our Special Operations Forces in Afghanistan, Iraq, Colombia, the Philippines, and many other countries around the world. I hope one day we may be able to fully reveal their story. They could not meet their mission requirements without the superb support of the Secretary of Defense, the Department Staff, the Joint Staff, and the Military Departments.

It is also with the support of Congress that USSOCOM has moved so far and will continue to do so.

I would like to conclude by highlighting the implications the posture, programming and policy for SOF in the war on terrorism have for all aspects of our nation's defense. Our Special Operators have often been the innovators for the larger military, and the SOF mindset has been the incubator of innovation. That is especially true today. With the shift from SOF being postured for reactive, regional contingencies to being a global, proactive and preemptive force, we are witnessing a key evolution in how we must conduct our security affairs in the future and address those "safe havens," and build capacity to deal with those who would harm our country.

Finally, a personal note –repeated from last year. Whenever possible, I attend funerals of SOF personnel at Arlington National Cemetery. It is indeed a high honor to represent the Department of Defense. When I look into the eyes of widows, children, parents and other relatives of our fallen heroes, I understand that there is no "quit" in their demeanor. We must honor their service and sacrifice. They are an inspiration to all who witness their courage and spirit. Your support is critical to the success of our Special Operations Forces. I thank you for your careful scrutiny of our program and budget. Together, we can continue to help move our Special Operations Forces into a position of prominence that will continue to press the fight against America's enemies.

Thank you for your continued support. I welcome your questions.