

Advance Policy Questions for Lieutenant General Raymond A. Thomas, USA
Nominee for Commander, United States Special Operations Command

Defense Reforms

The Senate Armed Services Committee has initiated an intensive review of the organization of the Department of Defense—both military and civilian, including the elements created by the Goldwater-Nichols Department of Defense Reorganization Act of 1986, in order to enhance the effectiveness of the Department of Defense to execute the National Military Strategy going forward.

Based on your experiences as a senior officer, what challenges have you observed with the current organizational structure, with particular focus on warfighting capabilities, and what modifications, if any, do you think are necessary to the current organizational structure including any Goldwater Nichols Act provisions?

This is a topic under discussion as part of the DoD’s review of the Goldwater Nichols Act. One of the greatest challenges in facing these transregional challenges is matching the speed of our adversary with the speed of our decision making process. We must enable faster, real-time operational decision-making to enhance command of globally integrated operations. We must develop a common global operating picture for the Secretary and DoD Civilian and Military leadership, and more timely current operations planning and execution. This could enable global and functional unity of effort across the Joint Force while generating positive second order effects and efficiencies, subject to organizational details.

As part of reviewing ways to match the speed of our adversaries, as currently interpreted the Chairman provides his best military advice to the SecDef and President, but does not have the authority to direct or redirect the employment of forces or resources. Currently, this authority resides with the SecDef. Per Title 10 USC 152, “The Chairman may not exercise military command over the Joint Chiefs of Staff or any of the armed forces.” This portion of Title 10 is an area worth discussion and review.

Some have advocated for changes to the SOCOM Commander’s responsibilities under title 10, United States Code that would enhance the Commander’s role in the promotion, assignment, retention, training, and professional military education of special operations officers.

What is your assessment of the need for such changes?

Promotion boards, selection for command, selection for advanced educational opportunities, foreign language testing policy, and foreign language proficiency bonus payment policies all differ significantly by Service and are all primarily crafted to support Service needs. USSOCOM will continue to partner with the Services to ensure SOF equities are realized during these career milestones to ensure our force is properly manned, trained, and equipped.

Relationships

Section 162(b) of title 10, United States Code, provides that the chain of command runs from the President to the Secretary of Defense and from the Secretary of Defense to the combatant commands. Other sections of law and traditional practice, however, establish

important relationships outside the chain of command. Please describe your understanding of the relationship of the Commander of SOCOM to the following offices:

The Secretary of Defense

The Secretary of Defense is the USSOCOM Commander's next superior command authority in the chain of command, as your introductory paragraph stated. If confirmed, I will look to the Secretary of Defense for the operational authority, and the resources, to develop and employ the most well-trained and capable Special Operations Forces our nation can muster to meet the challenges of a highly uncertain global security environment now and in the future. The USSOCOM Commander owes the Secretary of Defense his best military advice on all aspects of training, equipping, managing, and employing Special Operations Forces in support of his, and the President's, national security objectives.

The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff

The USSOCOM Commander coordinates activities through the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. As the senior military advisor to the President and Secretary of Defense, the Chairman is essential in communicating Special Operations Forces' capabilities and requirements to the President and Secretary of Defense. Coordination of USSOCOM activities ensures that the Chairman remains fully informed in support of his responsibilities and for coordination of USSOCOM staff and the Joint Staff efforts to meet Presidential and Secretary of Defense directed tasks.

The Under Secretary of Defense for Policy

The Under Secretary of Defense for Policy, USD(P), is the principal staff assistant and advisor to the Secretary of Defense and the Deputy Secretary of Defense for all matters on the formulation of national security and defense policy. The USD(P) develops, coordinates, and oversees the implementation of a wide variety of Department policy, including matters related to planning, programming, budgeting, and execution of special operations activities. USD(P) also exercises authority, direction and control over the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations and Low-Intensity Conflict ASD(SO/LIC), who is responsible for overall supervision of Special Operations activities. If confirmed, I will work closely with USD(P) to ensure USSOCOM activities are closely aligned with Department policies.

The Under Secretary of Defense for Intelligence

The USD(I) is the principal intelligence advisor to the Secretary of Defense. He exercises authority, direction, and control on behalf of the Secretary of Defense over all intelligence and security organizations within the Department of Defense, including the National Security Agency, the Defense Intelligence Agency, the National Geospatial Intelligence Agency, the National Reconnaissance Office, the Defense Security Service, and the intelligence components of the combatant commands and military services. Across the Defense Intelligence components, the Secretary oversees the \$18B Military Intelligence Program, the Defense portion of the \$54B National Intelligence Program, the intelligence interests within the Battlespace Awareness portfolio, and over 110,000 personnel. He is also dual-hatted as the Director of Defense Intelligence in the Office of the Director of National Intelligence, and reports to the DNI in this capacity. He is the Department's principal interface with the Central Intelligence Agency and other elements of the Intelligence Community, and represents the Department on intelligence and sensitive operations at the National Security Council.

The Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition, Technology & Logistics

The Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition, Technology, and Logistics, USD(AT&L), is the principal staff assistant and advisor to the Secretary of Defense for all matters relating to the DOD

Acquisition System, including procurement; research, development, test and evaluation (RDT&E); military construction; and nuclear, chemical, and biological defense programs. If confirmed, I will closely coordinate USSOCOM acquisition activities with USD (AT&L) to ensure USSOCOM procurement efforts are closely aligned with Department procurement processes and priorities.

The Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations and Low-Intensity Conflict

ASD (SO/LIC) is the principal staff assistant and civilian advisor to the USD(P) and the Secretary of Defense on Special Operations and low intensity conflict matters. The principal duty of the ASD (SO/LIC) is the overall oversight of Special Operations activities within the Department of Defense, including USSOCOM. As I state in subsequent responses, the USSOCOM Commander works closely with ASD (SO/LIC) in the execution of his “service-like” authorities under 10 U.S.C. section 167.

The Service Secretaries

The USSOCOM Commander’s authority over the Service components, and those forces assigned to him, is clear in the Goldwater-Nichols Act, but requires close coordination with the Service Secretaries to ensure that USSOCOM does not intrude upon each Service Secretary’s legal responsibilities. Close coordination between the USSOCOM Commander and each of the Service Secretaries is also essential to gaining and maintaining the Services’ support of Special Operations Forces with support units from the General Purpose Forces and with service-common materiel.

The Service Chiefs

Without the full support and cooperation of the Service Chiefs, the USSOCOM Commander cannot ensure the preparedness of his assigned forces to execute his assigned missions. The Joint Chiefs are also a source of experience and judgment that every Combatant Commander may call upon. If confirmed, I will continue a full and frank dialog with the Service Chiefs.

The other combatant commanders

Successive USSOCOM Commanders have fostered an atmosphere of teamwork and trust in their relationships with the Combatant Commanders. These relationships have only strengthened over the last 15 years as trans-regional threats have emerged and certainly since USSOCOM has been responsible for synchronizing planning for global operations against terrorist networks. If confirmed, I will continue to work closely with the other Combatant Commanders to achieve our common objectives against transnational threats and violent extremist organizations. I will be committed to providing the Geographic Combatant Commanders trained and ready Special Operations Forces to support national and theater security objectives.

Major Challenges and Priorities

In your view, what are the major challenges confronting the next Commander of SOCOM?

Winning the current fight, including against the Islamic State (IS), Al Qaeda (AQ), and other areas where SOF is engaged in conflict and instability is an immediate challenge--USSOCOM is focused here on a daily basis. This will continue to be a major challenge and one which, if confirmed, I will ensure is adequately resourced with trained and ready forces. I will work with the Secretary of Defense, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, the Service Chiefs, and the Geographic Combatant Commanders to ensure our Special Operators are best leveraged to engage in the persistent fight against these transregional terrorist threats.

Terrorism remains the most pressing threat to the security of Americans at home and abroad. The growth and expanding influence of transregional threats, including violent extremist organizations (VEOs) and transnational organized crime, remains a very challenging threat. VEOs have proven themselves highly resilient and adaptable, and less reliant on nation-state sponsors for funding and safe havens. Our Special Operators will be called upon to protect the nation from these threats, and to build the capacity of partners and allies to deny terrorists and violent extremists from the safe havens they need to develop and launch attacks.

As the force provider for SOF, the USSOCOM Commander must prepare his forces and sustain a high state of readiness for the full range of conflict and contingency scenarios. We must balance the steady-state requirements to meet current challenges while preparing for a volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous threat in the future. Investing now in partnerships, concepts, access, and capabilities will ensure we have the competitive advantage in the future. Doing so effectively requires the right level of resources, and the right approach to sustaining our force.

Another challenge is managing and preserving USSOCOM's Major Force Program-11 funding within the current budget and future budget discussions. At the forefront of this discussion is the recognition that many of the current expenditures are funded by the overseas contingency operations funds. The other part of this challenge includes monitoring and understanding the stress the Services' budgets are facing and the impacts it will have on their ability to meet present and future USSOCOM requirements for forces, capabilities, and platforms.

None of this can happen if we do not preserve and protect our Special Operations Forces and the families that support them. After nearly 15 years of sustained high operational tempo, our people need help with mending their mind, body, and spirit. The nation asks much of our Special Operators and their families, and they have always delivered. Much more will be asked of them, and, if confirmed, I will seek to preserve our most precious asset—our people.

If confirmed, what plans do you have for addressing these challenges?

In order to thwart expanding transregional threat networks and VEOs such as IS and AQ, USSOCOM must outpace the growth of threat networks with friendly networks across cultures. Working with our international partners allows us to share the burden more appropriately. We must engage, not only where problems occur, but also in places critical to our vital national interests where no visible threat currently exists. Success in meeting these challenges demands unprecedented levels of trust, confidence, and understanding built through persistent engagement.

In order to win the current fight, I will place a premium on the organization, training, education, and equipping of our force as we face new and rapidly growing challenges. SOF's readiness also hinges upon our ability to preserve our force and care for our families.

I will continue to place my priority on the Preservation of the Force and Family (POTFF) initiative. With the support of Congress, the Department of Defense, and the Services I will fully support what General Votel, Admiral McRaven, and Admiral Olson started. Aggressively, I will reach out to our SOF families and listen to their concerns to ensure, between the Services and USSOCOM, there are solutions available to meet their needs. One of the key causes of stress for our families is the unpredictability of training and deployment schedules, and I will continue measures to improve in these areas.

To offset resourcing shortages, while maintaining the best trained and educated force, we must use technology to meet our immediate and long-term challenges. SOF must be internally innovative and take advantage of innovations that could enhance our ability to conduct SOF activities. It is critical that our use of new technology outpaces our adversaries. In this sense, acquisition speed and agility is paramount.

What are the most important lessons you have learned during your tenure in senior leadership positions in the special operations community?

My career-long appreciation of the value of small, highly competent teams, capable partners with shared objectives, and political permission to act on our authorities continues to be reinforced.

The most important lesson I have learned is the value of open and transparent relationships and communication with all parties who influence the Special Operations community.

If confirmed, what priorities would you establish in terms of issues that must be addressed by the Commander of SOCOM?

As the Commander of Joint Special Operations Command and a senior member of the USSOCOM Enterprise, I believe in the Command's current touchstone priorities of ensuring SOF readiness, helping our nation win, continuing to build relationships, preparing for the future, and preserving the force and families. We will remain agile and flexible and will continue to shift emphasis to remain relevant.

Civilian Oversight of SOCOM

The legislation creating SOCOM assigned extraordinary authority to the Commander to conduct some of the functions of both a military service and a unified combatant command.

Which civilian officials in the Department of Defense (DOD) exercise civilian oversight of the "service-like" authorities of the Commander, SOCOM?

ASD (SO/LIC) is the principal staff assistant and civilian advisor to the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy (USD(P)) and the Secretary of Defense on Special Operations matters. The principal duty of the ASD (SO/LIC) is the overall oversight of Special Operations activities within the Department of Defense, including USSOCOM.

USSOCOM also coordinates with the USD(P), USD(AT&L), and Under Secretary of Defense (Comptroller) on matters within their jurisdiction which touch upon the USSOCOM Commander's "service-like" authorities under 10 U.S.C. section 167. The USSOCOM Commander and his staff works closely with USD(P), USD(AT&L), and the Comptroller, and their staffs, to ensure USSOCOM's programs are aligned with Department of Defense acquisition policies and are appropriately funded.

The Under Secretary of Defense for Intelligence has primary responsibility for oversight over intelligence and intelligence-related activities and all matters pertaining to the Military Intelligence Program (MIP) budget.

In your view, what organizational and administrative relationship should exist between the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations and Low-Intensity Conflict (ASD SOLIC) and the Commander, SOCOM?

There are two sides to this – oversight and advocacy. The ASD (SO/LIC) provides oversight on behalf of the Secretary of Defense, to ensure the USSOCOM Commander and the activities of the Command are aligned to the Department’s policies, directives, and regulatory requirements. At the same time, the ASD (SO/LIC), as the Secretary’s principal civilian advisor for Special Operations, is an advocate for SOF to ensure the views and interests of the USSOCOM Commander are represented in the formulation of policy and allocation of resources within the Department and with Congress.

What should be the role of the ASD SOLIC in preparation and review of Major Force Program 11 and the SOCOM’s Program Objective Memorandum?

ASD (SO/LIC) is directed by the Deputy Secretary of Defense to provide overall oversight of the preparation and justification of Special Operations Forces (SOF) programs and budget; review and approve memoranda of agreement governing the USSOCOM program, budget, and execution process; approve the U.S. Special Operations Command recommendations concerning which programs the USSOCOM Commander will execute directly; review the USSOCOM Program Objectives Memoranda (POM) and budget prior to submission to the Director for Program Analysis and Evaluation and the DOD Comptroller, respectively; and present and defend the SOF program to the Congress, with the advice and assistance of the USSOCOM Commander. I believe these duties describe the appropriate role for ASD (SO/LIC) in oversight and support of USSOCOM.

What is the appropriate role of the ASD SOLIC in the research and development and procurement functions of the SOCOM?

The development and procurement functions receive civilian oversight from both ASD(SO/LIC) and USD(AT&L); the ASD(SO/LIC) function is primarily to ensure SOCOM investments are aligned with the Department's policies and strategies while the USD(AT&L) primarily ensures adherence to acquisition policy and coordination with other DoD and Service investment efforts.

What is the appropriate role of the ASD SOLIC in the operational planning of missions that involve special operations forces, whether the supported command is SOCOM, a geographic combatant command, or another department or agency of the U.S. Government?

Through broad policy, coordination, and oversight roles as the principal staff assistant and civilian advisor to the Secretary of Defense on Special Operations matters, the ASD (SO/LIC) reviews the procedures and provides policy guidance to the USSOCOM Commander on all aspects of Special Operations planning, including contingency planning when directed by the President or Secretary of Defense.

What is the role of the Under Secretary of Defense for Intelligence in providing civilian oversight of U.S. SOF in relation to the responsibilities of the ASD SOLIC?

The Under Secretary of Defense for Intelligence has primary responsibility for oversight over intelligence and intelligence-related activities and all matters pertaining to the Military Intelligence Program (MIP) budget. ASD SOLIC has oversight over all non-intelligence SOF operational activities

falling outside established intelligence functions to include clandestine operations employing cover, and the oversight of SOF policy and resources.

Department of Defense Budget

The bipartisan budget agreement of 2015 allocated \$610 billion in base and overseas contingency operations funding for fiscal year 2017 for the Department of Defense, which is less than the amount projected for fiscal year 2017 in last year's Future Years Defense Program.

What impact, if any, did the bipartisan budget agreement of 2015 have on the fiscal year 2017 budget request for SOCOM?

DoD's planned FY17 funding was approximately \$20 billion dollars below the FY17 level agreed to in the bipartisan budget agreement of 2015. While reductions came mostly from the Services, USSOCOM was slightly impacted by the Department's actions to balance to the BBA FY17 funding level. Taking into account base to OCO transfers to comply with the BBA, SOCOM's reductions totaled \$209M: \$17M in baseline, \$57M in OCO reductions, and \$135M in MILCON projects which were deferred to FY18. These reductions came primarily from C4I and planned SOF capital equipment replacements, contractor logistic support for EC-130 aircraft, European Reassurance Initiatives, and classified rotary wing aircraft. Overall, we assess these reductions are manageable.

What is your assessment of the risk assumed by the fiscal year 2017 budget request for SOCOM and, if confirmed, how would you seek to mitigate such risks?

Risk associated with the fiscal year 2017 budget request can best be characterized as manageable. The FY17 combined baseline and OCO request represents a 3.2% increase over the FY16 enacted levels, and, if appropriated, will provide the resources necessary for mission accomplishment. However, we remain concerned about the Service's ability to provide an adequate level of SOF support. SOF depends on the Services in areas such as Service-provided capabilities/manning to deployed SOF, depot maintenance, sustainment and restoration of basic facilities and infrastructure, base operating support (both garrison and deployed) and the continued development of SOF through institutional training and education opportunities. We mitigate Service risk with continuous dialogue with the Services, CJCS, OSD, and GCCs to ensure SOF requirements for Service support are identified as early as possible to ensure resources are available when needed. While challenges can and do occur, we are usually able to address them or find acceptable alternatives to meet SOF requirements.

USSOCOM considers our reliance on OCO funding a significant risk; 27 percent of USSOCOM's FY17 PB request is OCO. The uncertain and year-by-year nature of OCO funding, coupled with USSOCOM's charge from the Department to carry out persistent, networked, distributed operations, provides sufficient justification to transition OCO-funded capabilities to the baseline. Recent strategies to mitigate this risk have been overcome by the Budget Control Act and Bipartisan Budget Act, but we will continue to work with the Department and Congress to find resourcing strategies to mitigate this risk.

Combating Terrorism

What is your understanding of the U.S. national strategy for counterterrorism and what are the roles and responsibilities of the Commander of SOCOM within the strategy and how would you fulfill such responsibilities if confirmed?

The primary role for the Commander of USSOCOM is to synchronize DoD CT plans and planning efforts. Practical implementation of synchronization occurs throughout the development of the Campaign Plan for Countering Transregional Terrorist Organizations (CTTO) and in the parallel development of the GCCs' subordinate regional CT plans. Specifically, regional objectives/intermediate military objectives and planning and assessment tasks are agreed upon through the Joint Planning Working Groups which are comprised and represented by all GCCs and Functional Combatant Commanders (FCCs) and led by Headquarters USSOCOM.

If confirmed, how would you seek to fulfill SOCOM's assigned responsibilities for synchronizing global operations against terrorist networks?

I will continue with USSOCOM's development of the Campaign Plan for Countering Transregional Terrorist Organizations, directed by the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, pursuant to the Secretary and the President's most recent counter-terrorism guidance. The plan is implemented by and through all the Global Combatant Commanders and addresses the principal terrorist threat networks identified by policy and the intelligence community. The new mechanism we have begun implementing, even as the plan is being written and coordinated, is the revised global synchronization and new strategic assessment process. This gives voice to all 4 star commanders quarterly with the Chairman on their commands' views of the terrorist challenges and requirements in their geographic or functional areas. It leads to the global quarterly assessment provided by USSOCOM, with any necessary recommendations for the Chairman or the Secretary on weighting or changing levels of effort, networks for emphasis, and force or resource transfers, if applicable.

Do you believe current authorities of the SOCOM Commander are adequate for SOCOM to fulfill its responsibilities for synchronizing global operations against terrorist networks? If not, what changes would you recommend?

The current authorities are adequate for SOCOM to fulfill its responsibilities for synchronizing global operations against terrorist networks. However, the environment does not remain static. I believe we will need to assess authorities and funding that allow us to be adaptive and flexible to move and outpace our adversaries.

Are there steps DOD should take to better coordinate its efforts to combat terrorism with those of other federal departments and agencies?

We can, and must always strive to, improve on our methods for coordination and effective collaboration with those who are primary in intelligence, law enforcement, diplomacy, financial matters, information activities, and oversight. We've learned much and applied those lessons in coordination over the past 15 years, and have seen gratifying advances in collaborative operations and assessments. The Constitutional and legal differences in departmental and agency authorities, that lead to some logical and necessary tensions between actionable intelligence and prosecutable evidence, will remain a challenge to the nation's global multi-dimensional counterterrorist campaign. Yet we are finding ways to minimize limitations through interagency and coalition mechanisms that attack these problems, such as Operation Gallant Phoenix.

On May 23, 2013, the President issued policy guidance regarding U.S. counterterrorism operations that "indicated a preference that the U.S. military should carry out the use of force in active warzones, and beyond."

Do you agree with the preference indicated in the President's May 23, 2013 policy guidance and, if so, why?

I am familiar with the specific Presidential guidance and agree with the policy. We seek to prevent terrorist attacks against U.S. persons in the best means possible for any situation.

Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL)

What is your assessment of the threat posed by ISIL and its associated forces to the U.S. homeland and U.S. interests more broadly?

The Islamic State (IS) poses a threat to the U.S. homeland, though the threat to U.S. interests abroad is likely higher. IS-inspired lone actors pose the most direct and immediate threat to the U.S. Homeland, as we saw in San Bernardino and Dallas. IS's ability to inspire such lone actors is growing as its message resonates with Muslim extremists in the West.

Outside of Syria and Iraq, which ISIL affiliates in your view pose the greatest threat to U.S. interests?

Outside of Syria and Iraq, IS-Libya poses the greatest threat to U.S. interests. The lack of any credible Libyan counterterrorism pressure, recognizable government, or stability in the region emboldens IS-Libya and affords IS the opportunity to pursue training, planning, and operations in Libya against regional and Coalition interests. Libya also provides a foothold from which ISIL can expand its reach and influence throughout Africa.

Al-Qa'ida

What is your assessment of the threat posed by al-Qa'ida and its associated forces to the U.S. homeland and U.S. interests overseas more broadly?

Al-Qai'da and its affiliates remain a significant threat to U.S. interests, personnel and facilities, despite limited guidance from AQ senior leaders and continued pressure from U.S. CT operations. Al-Qaida affiliates, such as AQ in the Arabian Peninsula, al Shabaab and al Nusrah Front are more operationally active, increasing their influence and connectivity with other extremist groups.

In your view, what impact, if any, has the expansion of ISIL and ISIL affiliates had on al-Qa'ida, its recruitment, planning and operations?

Competition from IS has fractured several al-Qaida groups, which has challenged al-Qaida's recruitment and operational planning. Several al-Qaida members have defected to join IS ranks. Additionally, IS's battlefield successes, along with its efforts to supplant al-Qaida, have driven IS to the top of the global Salafi jihadist movement, siphoning off al-Qaida adherents and resources. Furthermore, IS's sophisticated use of social media has undermined al-Qaida's recruitment, appeal, media coverage, and operating space.

Recruitment: Most foreign fighters in Syria opt to join IS over Al Nusrah Front. IS is also better than al-Qaida at using social media to attract a broad pool of Western supporters.

Jihadist Appeal: IS has gained the admiration and support of many al-Qaida mid-level and rank-and-file members. Several al-Qaida-aligned groups and individuals have officially realigned with IS.

Media Coverage: IS's propaganda highlighting its battlefield successes has completely overshadowed al-Qaida's media efforts.

Afghanistan

What is your assessment of the current security situation in Afghanistan?

The situation in Afghanistan has changed in 2015 quite significantly. The competition for Afghanistan has expanded and become more intense, engaging not only the Taliban, but also a resurgent Al Qaida, the Haqqani network, the Islamic State, and to a lesser extent other insurgent groups such as the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan. Four primary factors have driven this change.

First, this was the first year when the Afghans were in the primary role regarding security, the coalition having officially ended their combat mission. The Taliban did not let this pass unnoticed and have pressed our Afghan partners very hard from Kunduz in the north to Helmand in the south. Lack of clarity regarding coalition plans has in some cases ceded battlefield initiative to the opposition. With our continued support, the emergence of a combat-capable Afghan Air Force could help return battlefield initiative to our Afghan partners.

Second, the death of long-time Taliban leader Mullah Omar became publicly known and his replacement, Mullah Mansour, has taken the reigns of Taliban leadership. Mullah Mansour has chosen to increase Taliban attacks to strengthen his position vis-à-vis not only the Afghan government and potential Taliban splinter groups, but also other insurgent organizations like the Islamic State.

Third, the Islamic State has come to Afghanistan. The Islamic State is challenging the Taliban, particularly in Nangarhar Province, and also the Afghan government. Calling themselves the Islamic State in the Khorasan (ISKP), they have announced the importance of Afghanistan to their cause. In response, we recently expanded our authority to target them just as we target al-Qai'da, based on their status as insurgents.

Fourth, al-Qai'da as a group has been weakened in Afghanistan, and only a small number of its operatives are still actively militant in the border areas between Afghanistan and Pakistan. In October 2015, a multi-day operation in southern Afghanistan that involved Special Operations Forces and American airstrikes targeted an al-Qai'da in the Indian Subcontinent training camp. Sensitive Site Exploitation from another raid on another al-Qai'da facility in eastern Afghanistan led to discovery of the camp's existence and the eventual raid that destroyed it.

What is your understanding of the current U.S. strategy and objectives to combat terrorism in Afghanistan and to train, advise, and assist the Afghan National Defense and Security Forces? What modifications, if any, would you recommend to strengthen that effort?

Aligned with Commander Resolute Support (COM RS) functionally-based Security Force Assistance (FB-SFA) efforts, U.S. and Coalition SOF are advising Afghan Special Security Forces (ASSF) on critical enablers like aviation, logistics, intelligence fusion, and command and control. While the force has drawn down, SOF presence remains robust in order to advise the ASSF, a critical component of the Afghan government's ability to maintain a sustainable security apparatus.

The NATO Special Operations Component Command-Afghanistan/Special Operations Joint Task Force-Afghanistan (NSOCC-A/SOJTF-A) has five Special Operations Advisory Groups (SOAGs) focused on mentoring and advising our ASSF partners to ensure they can command, control, maintain, and sustain their tactical units spread across the country. These special military and police units are our most capable partners in the Counterterrorism (CT) fight.

While countering corruption is not a primary SOF mission, we promote sound Afghan governance by helping ASSF develop mechanisms of transparency regarding not only money and equipment, but also operations. Time and again, Afghans prove patient when told the truth about collateral damage during combat operations, less so when such notification is delayed. In all our training and advising operations we emphasize the importance of transparency and clear communication to the primary stakeholders, the Afghan people.

To reassure our Coalition and Afghan partners of our commitment, we should maintain planning flexibility and be prepared to fully support the willingness of our NATO and Coalition partners to continue the Resolute Support mission. Mission duration should be addressed carefully, and in concert with the other key factors to ensure our enemies fear our resolve and our partners welcome it.

In your professional military judgment, what U.S. military capabilities and authorities will be necessary to implement this strategy in 2016 and beyond?

Mission duration, basing, optimal authorities, and adequate enablers are equally important to achieve overall military effectiveness and a sustainable security strategy in Afghanistan.

The number of U.S. SOF in-country is a very important part of the total force package. Likewise, SOF is ineffective if not supported by adequate conventional forces and enablers, such as Intelligence Reconnaissance and Surveillance (ISR) platforms. Additionally, Close Air Support (CAS) enhances SOF capability and, when employed, allows our forces to reduce risk.

A large force, with limited authorities, and locked down in a few large bases, may not be as effective as a smaller, much more flexible force, spread across more smaller bases affording greater access to Afghan SOF partners. Further, with adequate enablers, smaller forces can maintain greater effectiveness, but without adequate ISR, even a large force could be fighting ‘blind.’

Through SOF efforts, the Afghan Special Security Forces have become the preeminent Afghan force and are in very high demand. They are capable, and routinely conduct partnered, enabled, and fully independent operations.

A flexible, conditions-based approach provides the best chance for supporting the Afghan National Defense and Security Forces’ continued development as part of Afghanistan’s future stability, while achieving our own strategic objectives.

Recently, this Committee received testimony about troubling allegations concerning child sexual abuse by members of the Afghan Local Police (ALP).

In your view, what is the appropriate role for a U.S. military commander who is working with the ALP, when that officer becomes aware of allegations of child abuse by members of the ALP?

A commander's role working with ALP is to report any suspicions of sexual abuse to the Afghan government and encourage that they take action to protect their citizens by thoroughly investigating all allegations and administering justice appropriately.

If confirmed, what direction would you give to SOCOM personnel who become aware of such allegations?

US forces will routinely report allegations of criminal violations up the chain of command, and support Afghan law enforcement and judicial authorities as appropriate.

Under what circumstances would you expect SOCOM personnel to intervene to stop such misconduct if they suspect it or observe it?

Our forces will act to prevent harm they witness, and then support Afghan law enforcement authorities in responding to criminal acts. We expect all members of the force to report allegations or suspicions up their chain of command.

Syria and Iraq

What is your understanding of the current U.S. strategy and objectives in Syria and Iraq and the role of U.S. Special Operations Forces (SOF) in support of the strategy?

The President's National Strategy to Counter ISIL, and the several new supplemental campaign plans, inform the Department and the GCCs that our goals are to reduce and degrade ISIL, and eventually to bring about its defeat, within a multinational approach. This is an interagency effort that must bring to bear all the appropriate elements of national power, as well as those of our partners and allies. Yet the effort is only in part a military one; during and after a campaign to defeat ISIL, we must deal with societal and governance stability, economic distress, and humanitarian crises in both countries. Our long term goals are legitimate and peaceful governance, social stability, absence of conflict, and re-energized development, which will require sustained coalition effort over many years. Our nation's SOF capabilities are applicable in conflict phases through direct action, developing partner forces, planning assistance, and delivering combat support capabilities. Equally important are direct civil affairs and information activities, and partner support, in post-combat and stability phases.

Al-Qa'ida in the Arabian Peninsula

What is your assessment of the current U.S. strategy to counter the threat posed by al-Qa'ida in the Arabian Peninsula and what is your understanding of the role of U.S. SOF in support of that strategy?

Access to Yemen inhibits comprehensive SOF support in support of the U.S. strategy, which is designed to assist the legitimate armed forces of Yemen and their legitimate government to defeat several strains of terrorism that include al-Qai'da. The long range goal of the strategy is a stable and politically coherent Yemen, under a popularly elected government, that is free of external aggression, transnational terrorism, major political violence or indigenously originating terrorism. The SOF role includes providing training assistance and advice to approved, designated Yemeni armed forces elements, facilitation of their equipping efforts, and a specific U.S. counter terrorism line of effort involving U.S. and Yemeni nationally approved objectives and targets.

North Africa

What is your assessment of the security situation in Libya and, more broadly, throughout North Africa?

The violent overthrow of Muammar Qaddafi's government in Libya upended the political status quo and forced post-revolutionary leaders to attempt to rebuild political institutions. Libya's descent into civil war has benefitted regional jihadist groups, particularly Islamic State-Libya.

Morocco and Algeria have largely avoided political turmoil, though violent conflict and political disorder has undermined North Africa's economic potential. Parts of North Africa have become strongholds for criminal networks, including drug traffickers and human smugglers, who have used North Africa as a base from which to gain entry into Europe. Egypt and Tunisia are directly threatened by the presence of ISIL in Libya.

In your assessment, what terrorist groups pose the greatest threat to U.S. interests in the region and beyond?

IS-Libya poses a limited threat to U.S. interests in the region. However, IS-Libya demonstrates the greatest level of governance and influence outside of IS's Middle East enclave. Additionally, IS-Libya indirectly threatens U.S. interests by posing the greatest risk to coalition partners operating beyond the North African region and European countries due to IS-Libya's training camps and geographic proximity to Europe. IS-Libya also has the resources to strengthen other IS-branches in Africa by providing training, weapons, and fighters to IS-West Africa, in Nigeria, and to IS-Sinai, in Egypt

What is your understanding of the U.S. strategy to combat these threats and the role of SOF in implementing that strategy?

The U.S. strategy in Africa focuses on neutralizing Al-Shabaab in East Africa (Somalia) and empowering the Federal Government of Somalia to secure its own borders, neutralize Al-Shabaab, and interdict the flow of illicit drugs, money, WMD material, and personnel. Next, the strategy focuses on working with our African partners in North and West Africa to ensure they are willing and capable of containing the instability in Libya, degrading VEOs in the Sahel-Maghreb region, and interdicting the flow of illicit material. Equally important, we are working with our African partners on containing Boko Haram. Ultimately, our goal here is to have Nigeria capable of suppressing Boko Haram's recruiting, operations, and support in accordance with international human rights law.

SOF implements this strategy by being a part of global team of national and international partners, that conduct persistent, networked, and distributed full spectrum special operations in support of AFRICOM to promote stability and prosperity in Africa. The SOCAFRICA end states are to neutralize Al-Shabaab and Al Qaeda Affiliates and Adherents in East Africa, contain Libyan instability and Violent Extremist Organizations and other Terrorist organizations in North and West Africa, and degrade Boko Haram.

Pakistan

What is your assessment of Pakistan's cooperation with the United States in counterterrorism operations against militant extremist groups located in Pakistan?

The U.S.-Pakistan relationship is fundamental to our vital national security interests. We will need to continue cooperation with Pakistan to defeat al-Qaeda, support Pakistan's stability, and achieve a lasting peace in Afghanistan. If confirmed, I would in consultation with Commander USCENTCOM continue to evaluate the specifics of the relationship based on my assessment of our shared interests with Pakistan and its effectiveness of achieving our shared goals. I will continue to evaluate the efficacy of the SOF-to-SOF military cooperation we have with Pakistan and identify ways in which we can support USCENTCOM efforts to work with Pakistan to enhance regional stability.

Special Operations Authorities

The Commander of SOCOM has received more control over the deployment and utilization of special operations forces. For example, the Secretary of Defense modified policy guidance for the combatant commands that gave SOCOM, for the first time, responsibility for resourcing, organizing, and providing guidance to the Theater Special Operations Commands of the geographic combatant commanders and special operations forces assigned to them.

Do you believe the Commander of SOCOM needs additional authorities to optimize the utilization of deployed special operations forces?

No, we do not require additional authorities. Having the Theater Special Operations Commands assigned to USSOCOM enables resourcing, organizing, and guidance supporting Geographic Combatant Commanders while increasing effectiveness of special operations forces assigned to them. Over the past year we have developed processes to optimize this force allocation.

Section 1208 Operations

Section 1208 of the Ronald Reagan National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2005 (Public Law 108-375), as amended by subsequent bills, authorizes the provision of support (including training, funding, and equipment) to regular forces, irregular forces, and individuals supporting or facilitating military operations by U.S. Special Operations Forces to combat terrorism.

What is your assessment of this authority?

I am very appreciative of Congress's continued interest in and support for this program. Section 1208 remains a critical tool in our combating terrorism efforts. It allows small-footprint SOF elements to take advantage of the skills and unique attributes of indigenous regular and irregular forces – local area knowledge, access, ethnicity, and language skills to achieve effects that are critical to our mission objectives, especially in remote or denied areas where larger U.S. formations are infeasible. Our ability to quickly provide enabling support to willing partners under Section 1208 has resulted in hundreds of successful tactical operations. These operations have disrupted terrorist networks and their activities and denied them operating space across a wide range of operating environments, at a fraction of the cost of other programs.

Are there any modifications that you would recommend to this authority?

I am encouraged by Congress's efforts to provide us with the tools we need to execute the mission and in particular our shared perspective on the value of Section 1208. The USSOCOM staff, in collaboration with the combatant commands and ASD-SOLIC, has worked closely with Congress for the past 10 years to incrementally grow this program apace with the requirements. I envision modest

growth in the program in the coming years, as the combatant commands will increasingly leverage small-footprint, discreet USSOF elements to execute combating terrorism operations by-with-and through willing partners. Meanwhile, we must maintain adequate fiscal authority to rapidly respond to emerging crises. After more than 10 years it continues to provide tremendous flexibility and responsiveness in support of our combating terrorism operations, while affording the DoD leadership and Congress complete visibility through notification, reporting, and briefing requirements. I absolutely believe we must maintain Section 1208 authority for the foreseeable future; as a combatant commander I would advocate for a multi-year extension – out to FY2020 or later.

Airborne Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance (ISR)

Airborne ISR capabilities are frequently cited by combatant commanders as one of their greatest unmet requirements.

What is your assessment of the availability of airborne ISR to fulfill the requirements of the combatant commanders?

There is a critical shortfall in airborne ISR across the Department of Defense, and it is hampering the effectiveness of the combatant commanders. For Special Operations units in particular, ISR is critical to understanding and targeting the enemy, providing force protection and overwatch, and degrading and destroying terrorist cells and networks. The lack of ISR slows the pace of operations and inhibits our ability to put decisive pressure on enemy networks such as ISIL or al-Qai'da. Additionally, USSOCOM continues to drive the requirement for a DOD-wide, joint global data transport infrastructure for moving Airborne ISR data from asset/sensor to processing, exploitation and dissemination (PED) nodes, C2 cells, and forward deployed elements for all services and SOF.

What, if any, suggestions do you have for improving the prioritization and allocation of ISR capabilities across the geographic combatant commands?

The current system does an adequate job in prioritizing and allocating ISR, but it lacks the flexibility and agility to rapidly move assets across a changing battlefield. In particular, moving ISR across combatant command boundaries is problematic, and creates seams which our enemies exploit. However, as mentioned in the previous question, the greatest challenge to our ability to employ ISR is the lack of capacity. There simply is not enough.

SOCOM Acquisition Authorities

SOCOM is unique within the DOD as the only unified command with acquisition authorities and funding. Further, the Commander of SOCOM is the only uniformed commander with a subordinate senior acquisition executive.

If confirmed, how would you ensure SOCOM requirements are adequately vetted and balanced against available resources before moving forward with an acquisition program?

If confirmed, I would ensure that SOCOM requirements are fully coordinated with the Joint Staff and the Services to focus the command's resources on only those requirements that are truly SOF-peculiar. For those SOF-peculiar programs, I will continue the Commander-driven process of my predecessor where we reviewed requirements and prioritized resources against those requirements and ensured full

transparency of how we allocated those resources with the Department and the Congressional Committees.

In your view, are there ways in which the SOCOM acquisition system can be reformed to more expeditiously address emerging requirements?

It is critical that we continuously evolve USSOCOM's acquisition system to ensure it can support the evolving operational environment and pace of our SOF operations. I believe it is critical that USSOCOM continue to retain its flexibility to tailor the more traditional DoD acquisition processes to ensure they can respond rapidly to emerging battlefield requirements. I fully support the initiatives currently employed by SOCOM's Acquisition Executive, such as SOFWERX and TALOS, to facilitate collaboration and reduce barriers to entry with traditional and non-traditional industry partners and academia.

What role can SOCOM's development and acquisition activities play in broader service and DOD efforts?

There is a symbiotic relationship between SOCOM's activities and the Services and DoD. SOF relies on the Services and DoD for those major platform acquisitions better suited for their infrastructure, scope, and breadth. SOF enjoys a size and scale that allows for greater agility, especially in the development phase, that often leads the DoD in defining and developing solutions to capabilities that begin as SOF-peculiar but over time transition to the Services. Continuing our current processes to coordinate and collaborate early and often with our DoD and Service counterparts ensures these transitions occur deliberately and as timely as possible.

If confirmed, how would you ensure that special operations capabilities and requirements are integrated into overall DOD research, development and acquisition programs?

If confirmed, I would continue full transparency of not only the developments SOCOM is pursuing but also the capabilities we are seeking to partner on. For capabilities, this transparency is facilitated by our relationship with the Joint Staff through their requirements evaluation process and annual review of Combatant Command Priorities. SOCOM also conducts annual Service-to-SOF talks with the respective Service Chiefs to review items of mutual interest. For developments, we intend to continue semi-annual SOF Acquisition Summits with USD(AT&L), the Joint Staff, and each of the Service Acquisition Executives.

If confirmed, how would you ensure sufficient resources are dedicated to the development of special operations-unique platforms, when required?

If confirmed, I would continue the interactive and transparent process that has resulted in the excellent support to date from Congress for resourcing. Integral to that process is coordination with our key stakeholders in the USSOCOM mission, namely ASD(SO/LIC), USD(I), the Joint Staff and interagency partners so that USSOCOM's requests are fully aligned with and complementary to our government's overarching strategies and operations.

If confirmed, what metrics will you use to determine the effectiveness of SOCOM technology development investments and whether SOCOM is investing sufficient resources in these efforts?

The average SOF operator is older, more experienced, with more training and education opportunities, and battle-tested after numerous combat deployments. They provide the first, and arguably the most effective, feedback on how well the equipment we provide supports them in current and future operations. As the JSOC Commander, I participated in the Commander-driven process, representing those operators, within USSOCOM to ensure the right requirements were identified, validated, and resourced. USSOCOM is constantly reviewing our assumptions to ensure our efforts are as dynamic as the pace of change both in the technologies at our disposal and the security situations where SOF will be employed.

If confirmed, how will you ensure that SOCOM has an acquisition workforce with the skills, qualifications, and experience needed to develop and manage its acquisition and research and development programs?

If confirmed, I will empower the SOCOM Acquisition Executive to continue to recruit, train, and retain a workforce with a SOF Acquirer mindset. DoD has formally recognized that workforce for excellence for the past five straight years. Additionally, I would ask the Services to continue to assign their best acquisition officers to meet the demands of the SOF acquisition mission.

Stress on the Force and Families

In recent years, special operations forces have experienced higher suicide rates than those in the general purpose forces and continue to face significant numbers of divorces. SOCOM has focused significant effort and resources on addressing the stress on special operators and their families through the Preservation of the Force and Families initiative.

If confirmed, how would you seek to address issues associated with the stress of difficult and repeated deployments on special operators and their families?

Even one suicide is a tragedy. Unfortunately, the SOF suicides outnumber GPF suicides. From 2012 to 2013, GPF suicides reduced from 22.7 / 100,000 to 18.7/100,000. However, the GPF rate showed a slight increase in 2014 to 19.9/100,000. On the other hand for the same time period, SOF suicides have shown a steady decreasing trend: from 39.3 in 2012 to 35.8 in 2013, to 27.2 in 2014, and to 25.0 in 2015 per 100,000, which is a 26% decrease in raw numbers of SOF suicides between the years of 2012 and 2015. Regardless, per DOD policy, the number of suicides per year that are less than 25 do not use the "per 100,000 comparison rate." SOF suicides have not been more than 25 per year since tracking began in 2007.

I consider preserving the force and families my highest priority. The success of any mission depends on our people. While the command has seen a steady decrease in suicides over the past four years, my focus on this problem will not waver. I hope to achieve a command climate that views behavioral healthcare as a normal and expected aspect of personal and professional development.

If confirmed, I intend to continue the efforts of my predecessors by maintaining personnel and operational tempos that provide predictability to the forces and their families. The command's policy is that SOF will be at home no less than one-third of the time during a two year period.

I will also ensure that SOCOM continues to promote the psychological, physical, social, and spiritual wellbeing of the force and their families by embedding professional staff into our formations where they are accepted as trusted and accessible members of the team.

The Services and DoD provide a host of excellent family readiness, spiritual, behavioral health, and fitness programs, and we will continue to leverage those programs while working to fulfill gaps and meet unique requirements. We have made tremendous strides in meeting the needs of our Service Members and their families, and I will continue to build on that foundation.

How do you define “special operations-unique” challenges to special operators and their families?

The special operations community is unique in that it includes a more experienced, older population who are expected to meet exceptionally high standards of maturity, stability, and readiness. Special Operation Forces and their families face consistently high PERSTEMPO and short notice deployments that are unique in both scope and mission requirements. Many of SOCOM's forces are geographically isolated and have sensitive mission sets that limit their ability to seek support outside of the unit. With the high demand for special operations, it is important that we have systems in place that keep our forces in the fight and return them to duty quickly when they experience illnesses and injuries. With Congress' help we have been able to help mitigate some of these unique challenges. The command's Human Performance Programs help our people to train better and rehabilitate faster when they are injured. The pilot authority to conduct family programs granted by Congress allows the command to agilely respond to the needs of our families, and our embedded behavioral health providers help our teammates to get help early and often.

Recruiting and Retention

What are the biggest challenges to retention you see in the SOCOM community?

Overall, retention objectives are being met across the SOF Enterprise, and the Services' implementation of retention incentives are being effectively managed. While there are some areas for concern within specific officer/enlisted career fields and/or year groups for each of the Services' special operations forces, we continue to meet our operational requirements.

The constant global demand for special operations forces since 2001 has resulted in near constant deployments for our SOF operators. This, coupled with other challenges such as Service force reductions, Service force management initiatives, military compensation and retirement modernization commission, selective early retirement boards, high-year tenure reductions, and a high retirement-eligible population require scrutiny to ensure the Special Operations Force is not negatively impacted, and continues to attract and retain the best to meet operational requirements across the entire spectrum of Special Operations.

What steps need to be taken, in your view, to meet the recruiting and retention goals of each of the services' special operations forces?

Maintaining the experience base and the personnel we have in our inventory to meet our current operations tempo is paramount to successful mission execution. Overall, recruiting and retention objectives are being met across the SOF Enterprise, and monetary incentives, which are being effectively managed, continue to be valuable recruiting and retention tools. We thank you for the continued support for and funding for programs that are beneficial to SOF and also in maintaining recruiting and retention budgets for the Services.

Recruiting and retention efforts, however, must look beyond reactive financial incentives and must emphasize total Service member and family wellness. It is a moral imperative. The welfare of our service members and their families is critical to our command's readiness and our ability to accomplish the mission. We demand the best from our people and in return have an obligation to provide the best care, education, equipment, and training to them. We are grateful to congress for passing into law Section 554 of the FY 2014 Defense Authorization Act, authorizing USSOCOM to support family programs by finding innovative solutions to meet their unique needs. Working together with the Services, we need to maintain these programs to ensure the Special Operations Force not only attracts the best, but also retains the operational experience and capability necessary to meet operational requirements across the entire spectrum of Special Operations.

Sexual Assault Prevention and Response

What is your assessment of the problem of sexual assaults in SOCOM?

We remain committed at all levels to preventing sexual assault and providing resources to victims. USSOCOM has experienced a reduction in incidents of sexual assault.

What is your assessment of current sexual assault prevention and response policies and procedures in SOCOM?

I believe the efforts undertaken to prevent these crimes are proving effective in reducing incidents and increasing reporting. We will continue to work closely with the Services to improve investigation of and response to sexual assault. Where we lack resources, then we will rely on available facilities to ensure timely support – medical, psychological, investigative - to victims of sexual assault.

Prevention of sexual assault is a leadership responsibility. Commanders at all levels must remain committed to eliminating sexual assault within our forces by sustaining robust prevention and response policies; by providing thorough and effective training to all assigned service members; by identifying and eliminating barriers to reporting; and by ensuring care is available and accessible.

Do you consider current sexual assault policies and procedures, particularly those on restricted and unrestricted reporting, to be effective?

I do believe that the current sexual assault policies and procedures are effective. The ability for victims to choose between restricted and unrestricted reporting is an example of this effectiveness. The choice represents a balance between taking care of victims and prosecuting offenders. Allowing victims to file restricted reports provides the Department and commanders information to better understand the scope of the sexual assault problem, while also respecting a victim's privacy and providing access to medical care and support services.

What is your view of the adequacy of the training and resources SOCOM has in place to investigate and prosecute allegations of sexual assault?

We receive excellent support as we work with the military services for training sexual assault response personnel to ensure they are well-trained to investigate and prosecute allegations of sexual assault. Improved training for investigators is also a priority and this includes investigative resources in deployed areas. As you may imagine, deployed operations and the combat environment are very dynamic and investigative resources are often strained by other mission requirements. I believe the

DOD training network in place now prepares investigators and prosecutors to handle sexual assault cases in a caring, responsive, and professional manner. Our ability to respond and support victims is critical.

USSOCOM reports sexual assault allegations to service law enforcement to investigate. Some USSOCOM units have assigned service-provided military law enforcement that operate under Service supervision. Others have a supporting military law enforcement agency that investigates the allegations. Both arrangements provide adequate investigative support. The services are responsible for training sexual assault response personnel to ensure they are well-trained to investigate and respond to allegations of sexual assault. With respect to prosecution, we work through our service components for prosecution of sexual assault cases. Our joint commands receive prosecution support through support agreements depending on the service of the accused. Accordingly, our prosecution support is consistent with that of the services. Our ability to respond and support victims is critical.

What is your view of the adequacy of resources and programs in SOCOM to provide victims of sexual assault the medical, psychological, and legal help they need?

Victim care is a top priority. We work with the military Services to ensure sexual assault care providers (Sexual Assault Response Coordinators, Victim Advocates, medical and mental health providers, and legal counsel) are well-trained to support victims of sexual assault. If resources are not readily available where the alleged incident occurred, victims are transported to a facility where there is appropriate victim advocate support, medical and psychological care and investigative/legal support.

What is your view about the role of the chain of command in providing necessary support to victims of sexual assault?

Supporting victims of sexual assault is a leadership responsibility and priority. Commanders at all levels must remain committed to ensuring victims receive the service support they deserve. If any barriers are encountered, I expect commanders to take the lead in resolving them.

What is your view about the role of the chain of command in changing the military culture in which these sexual assaults occur?

Establishing an appropriate culture where victims are treated with dignity and respect starts at the top. Commanders are accountable for what happens in their units and they set the leadership tone. Commanders are crucial to our ability to effect institutional change and leaders at all levels must foster a command climate where sexist behavior, sexual harassment, and sexual assault are not condoned or ignored.

Surveys report that up to 62 percent of victims who report a sexual assault perceive professional or social retaliation for reporting.

If confirmed, what will you do to address the issue of retaliation for reporting a sexual assault?

First of all, any form of retaliation goes against our core values and has no place in our military. If confirmed, I will ensure that the culture of Special Operations is one of respect and that retaliation is not tolerated, especially among peers.

Sexual assault is a significantly underreported crime in our society and in the military. If confirmed, what will you do to increase reporting of sexual assaults by military victims?

In order to increase reporting of sexual assaults by military victims, we must improve victim confidence in our ability to respond to incidents of sexual assault. We must also continue to reinforce a climate in which victims are treated with dignity and respect, and where any form of retaliation or reprisal is unequivocally unacceptable. If confirmed, I will continue the partnership with the Services to assess current programs and develop initiatives to enhance support services and improve our systems to hold perpetrators appropriately accountable.

In your view, what would be the impact of requiring a judge advocate outside the chain of command, instead of a military commander in the grade of O-6 or above as is currently the Department's policy, to determine whether allegations of sexual assault should be prosecuted?

I support the Department's current policy. The Uniform Code of Military Justice operates as both a criminal justice system and a critical component of a commander's authority to maintain good order and discipline. I believe our military members and national security will best be served by retaining the military commander's key role in the military justice decision process. While I greatly value the legal analyses and recommendations provided by our highly proficient judge advocates, and fully expect all leaders in the Services to take the greatest advantage of this expertise, I firmly believe the military commander's role is indispensable in the prosecutorial process.

What additional steps would you take, if confirmed, to address the problem of sexual assaults in SOCOM?

I will ensure that commanders and all in SOCOM understand that the prevention of sexual assault and the response to sexual assault are priorities that each of us is responsible for.

What is your assessment of the effect, if any, of recent legislation concerning sexual assault on the capability of SOCOM commanders to prosecute sexual assault cases?

It is my understanding that these changes are designed to facilitate the prosecution of sexual assault cases which is always a positive development.

HQ USSOCOM and the elements under its administrative control, JSOC and the TSOCS, have noticed no impact with respect to prosecuting sexual assaults. The services provide administrative control over the service components' courts-martial and I defer to the services for comment concerning the service components.

Assignment Policies for Women in the Military

On December 3, 2015, Secretary Carter announced his final determination to open all military positions, career fields and specialties to women.

Do you believe that gender neutral occupational standards for SOCOM occupations have been set appropriately?

I am completely confident that our occupational standards have been set appropriately and that our challenging standards, applied appropriately by our training professionals, will continue to produce

Special Operations personnel who are ready to succeed in the vital, challenging missions our nation requires.

If confirmed, will you commit to submitting to the Committee the implementation plans that are to be used for the integration of women into SOCOM occupations?

When our implementation plan is approved by the Secretary of Defense I will, with Secretary Carter's approval, submit it to this Committee.

Selective Service Act

Some have suggested that the success of the All-Volunteer Force has reduced the need for our Nation to have a continuing authority and capability to conduct a draft. Further, a future national emergency may require that the military have the ability to identify citizens with unique and specialized skills to fill critical combat support requirements, both within the military and in the civilian sector. Currently, the Selective Service System does not identify individuals with such skills.

Do you believe the Selective Service System, with its focus on supplying large numbers of replacement combat troops, meets the needs of the Nation and today's military, as well as national and military needs over the next 20 years?

The Selective Service System as currently constructed meets the requirement to provide large numbers of personnel in the event of a national emergency. If a scenario presents a need for specialized combat support skill sets, and those personnel do not exist at sufficient levels, the current system is inadequate.

Do you believe the Selective Service System we have today can provide the types of skills and individuals that the special operations community needs?

The Selective Service System does not meet the needs of SOF given that two of the SOF truths are SOF cannot be mass produced and competent SOF cannot be created after emergencies occur.

Do you believe that the military, civilian security agencies, and the Nation may have specialized needs that a Selective Service System based on education and skills, and not raw numbers of combat troops, might be better to accommodate?

A Selective Service System that collects a broader range of data could very well better support the more technically oriented military of today and the future.

Do you believe that whatever the Selective Service may look like, that if there's a requirement that citizens and residents register, that women should be included in that requirement?

Everyone who is eligible and capable of serving should be required to register for the Selective Service.

Language and Cultural Awareness Capabilities

Deployed special operations personnel remain heavily concentrated in the Central Command area of operations, including many who have been deployed outside of their regional area of expertise.

Are you concerned that the language and cultural skills among SOF are being degraded because of repeated deployments outside their regional area of expertise?

This continues to be a concern. SOF accrue language and cultural capability through training and experience and the pace of deployments into the Central Command area of operations has contributed to imbalances in SOF language and cultural capability. At the basic levels, SOF remain proficient due to the effective efforts of SOF training institutions and units. Moving forward, training and developing partner forces increasingly demands intermediate or higher proficiency. Likewise, our efforts in which we are partnered with multiple nations are more effective when SOF are able to communicate directly with those partners and allies in their languages. This too calls for higher proficiency.

If so and if confirmed, what, if anything, would you do to ensure these unique skills are adequately maintained?

Language and culture skills begin with requirements articulated in TSOCs' plans. Recruitment, assignments, training, testing, and incentives all play critical roles in fulfilling the warfighters' requirements. I will continue efforts already begun to ensure we have the instructors most adept at maximizing training gains within the available time at our schools and in our unit sustainment and enhancement programs. I will increase collaboration with DOD and among the Services and SOF components to optimize heritage recruitment, regionally relevant assignments, training, testing, and incentives. Alignment of these functions to the actual capabilities warfighters require is central to this effort. Sufficient language and cultural capability derives from time on task and I will assess the balance of capabilities required of our operators to ensure its optimization.

Special Operations Missions

In recent years, SOF have taken on an expanded role in a number of areas important to countering violent extremist organizations, including those related to information and military intelligence operations. Some have advocated significant changes to SOCOM's Title 10 missions to make them better reflect the activities special operations forces are carrying out around the world.

What current missions, if any, do you believe can and should be divested by SOCOM, and why?

USSOCOM and SOF senior leaders are in a constant process of reviewing our SOF core activities as outlined in DOD Directive 5100.01. This process encapsulates current authorities and the ever-changing global environment Special Operations Forces deal with to meet current and future requirements threat detection and counter violent extremist organizations operations. This process is reported in updates to the Directive itself, as well as, other key reporting documents to include our new reporting requirements as the Trans-regional Lead for the department. At the moment, I'm not prepared to advocate for divestiture of current USSOCOM missions.

Are there any additional missions that you believe SOCOM should assume, and, if so, what are they and why do you advocate adding them?

One additional mission to consider would align our counterterrorism strategy with the global threat of radicalized foreign fighters. USSOCOM is in a unique situation where we look at the global threat picture and can synchronize regional efforts into a single mission focus. This is a cross-departmental effort within the Department and across the USG approach to get at this effort. Trained radical foreign fighters create a threat to other recruitment from terrorist groups, as well as, a threat to their respective countries they retain citizenship with. SOF routinely works with partner nation military and International law enforcement organizations to engage on looking at these networks. We are in a unique situation to synchronize planning.

Military Intelligence Operations

In your view, how are intelligence operations carried out by special operations personnel different from those carried out by others in the intelligence community?

Special Operations personnel carry out a variety of intelligence operations, and the key difference is that they are conducted in direct support of special operations missions. While they are mindful of national collection priorities, SOF conduct intelligence to directly enable task forces conducting operations on behalf of the combatant commands. The preponderance of special operations intelligence assets are dedicated to locating individuals, illuminating enemy networks, understanding environments, and supporting partners. In most cases, similar capability does not exist within the IC or DoD.

If confirmed, how would you ensure intelligence activities carried out by special operations forces are coordinated adequately with other activities carried out by the intelligence community?

SOF intelligence activities are closely coordinated with the combatant commands and intelligence community. There are robust mechanisms in place to ensure SOF units comply with all applicable policies and directives. If confirmed, I would continue to closely monitor the activities of Special Operations Forces, and ensure that required coordination and synchronization with the Intelligence Community continues to strengthen.

Special Operations Personnel in Embassies

SOF deploy to work with country teams in a number of priority countries where the United States is not engaged in direct action operations, but rather trying to stop the spread of violent extremism. Their mission is to support the priorities of the Ambassador and the geographic combatant commander's theater campaign plan against terrorist networks.

If confirmed, how would you seek to ensure the goals of SOF deployed to these countries are aligned closely with those of the Ambassadors they are working with?

Essential to the success of SOF is absolute commitment to ensuring the goals of the Ambassador, the GCC and any deployed SOF are one in the same, at all times. I completely concur deployed SOF's mission is to support the priorities of the Ambassador and SOF does nothing without the express

approval of the US Ambassador/Chief of Mission to that country. In the case of Section 1208 authority, for example, we must gain written concurrence from the U.S. Chief of Mission (COM) prior to the application of that authority in support of our operations.

Headquarters USSOCOM employs two persistent, strategic avenues to engage with and inform the Embassy leadership of SOF capabilities and operations, the Special Operations Liaison Officer (SOLO) Program and the Ambassador Orientation Visit (AOV) Program.

Special Operations Liaison Officers (SOLOs) are USSOCOM-sourced, U.S. SOF-qualified officers, placed under Chief of Mission authority as part of the Country Team, via an U.S. Chief of Mission (COM)-approved NSDD-38 agreement. These are permanent change of station assignments where the duties and responsibilities of the SOLO are derived from the COM's Integrated Country Strategy and consistent with the GCC's Theater Security Cooperation Plan. Placing the SOLOs under Chief of Mission authority acknowledges and supports the Department of State's lead in Security Sector Assistance as outlined in Presidential Policy Directive-23. There are currently seventeen serving SOLOs in various countries (Australia, Brazil, Canada, Colombia, El Salvador, France, Israel, Italy, Japan, Jordan, Kenya, Norway, Peru, Poland, Romania, Turkey, and United Kingdom) working with the U.S. Embassy country teams. Since 2007, the program has been highly successful in building key SOF partners, preparing for future contingencies, and building mutually beneficial global relationships in support of U.S. Embassy, Geographic Combatant Command and Theater Special Operation Command engagement strategies. With a very small footprint, the countries with SOLO's enjoy a more efficient relationship with the U.S. interagency, GCCs, and USSOCOM on SOF specific issues, affording insight and influence with strategic partner nation SOF globally, building the pool of security exporters in advance of crisis.

The AOV provides future Ambassadors the opportunity to visit USSOCOM Headquarters, receive briefings on USSOCOM unique capabilities and responsibilities, as well as regionally targeted introductions considerate of their newly assigned posts. During the program the ambassadors have a one hour one-on-one discussion period with their respective TSOC Commander and a one hour session with the USSOCOM commander. To date, USSOCOM has hosted more than 274 ambassador designees. Feedback on the program has been positive and the future ambassadors have indicated that the experience is worthwhile and will help them in the future.

In addition to the AOVs hosted by USSOCOM, the TSOC Commanders also work vigorously to ensure coordination between the SOF under their command and the Chiefs of Mission and U.S. Country Teams in the countries where SOF is deployed. This coordination takes place in a variety of recurring venues and dedicated key leader engagements with the Embassies. TSOC Commanders also leverage a robust network of SOF "nodes" assigned to Embassies, such as the aforementioned SOLOs as well as other temporarily assigned liaison officers, and also numerous Special Operations Command Forward (SOC FWD) command and control elements. Through these Embassy-based SOF personnel, continuous coordination with the COM and the principals on the U.S. Country Team is accomplished through enduring SOF presence at our diplomatic posts.

In your view, what is the value of SOF to their respective geographic combatant commands and the country teams they are supporting?

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

U.S. SOF brings unique capabilities to further U.S. policy, goals, and regional/country objectives. In coordination with our interagency partners from across the U.S. Government, SOF works to ensure a synchronized whole of government approach. As such, U.S. SOF have become an integral part of every Geographic Combatant Command Theater Campaign Plan.

Information Warfare

What are your views on DOD's military information support operations and influence programs and their integration into overall U.S. foreign policy objectives?

Military Information Support Operations (MISO) are a critical military capability for the current and future operating environments. MISO forces provide commanders at all echelons a cost effective, small footprint asset that develops and disseminates culturally relevant information and messaging designed to support the achievement of military objectives. In addition to promulgating the friendly narrative, MISO counter hostile information and propaganda, de-legitimizing and countering the appeal of terrorist ideology and its proponents.

MISO activities are fully coordinated with the Department of State and are complementary to and supportive of US foreign policy objectives, although they do not explain or clarify US foreign policy directly. When operating out of a US Embassy, at the request of an Ambassador, Military Information Support Teams' (MIST) support to public diplomacy is closely coordinated with the embassy country team and often serves to support the achievement of both military and Department of State (DOS) objectives. MISTs also provide the capability to maintain awareness of the information environment by identifying current trends in local and regional media reporting, identifying hostile messaging, and measuring local populace reaction.

Fiscal constraints, along with the increasing complexities associated with conducting large-scale DOD operations across the globe, combined with the rapidly evolving domains of the information environment, make MISO a quintessential capability in achieving national security objectives. MISO is the primary capability in DOD to engage in the battle of the narrative.

What is the role of DOD in relation to the intelligence community and the State Department in conducting these activities?

Military Information Support Operations Forces provide unique capabilities which can support the entire USG information and influence efforts worldwide. They continue to be one of the most deployed in the military, with 39 MISO elements deployed across the world, 23 working directly out of

US Embassies. These elements develop messages to counter hostile information and propaganda that are culturally relevant to the host nations' population. Outside areas of hostilities, MISO activities are fully coordinated with the Department of State and must have the concurrence of the relevant US Ambassador. MISO elements working out of embassies, called MISTs, closely coordinate all activities with the embassy staff. A steady drumbeat with a clear and compelling narrative that supports U.S. policy, anchored in the bedrock of truth, best serves our national interests. The Department of Defense takes its lead from the Commander-in-Chief and, outside areas of hostilities, the Department of State in re-enforcing the message from our nation. We are cognizant of the varying roles and missions in the information realm, and through close coordination and focused planning, have been successful in executing mutually supportive operations with all other agencies of the USG. In summary, DOD works in concerted efforts with the intelligence community and the DOS in a holistic approach to ensure we support a cohesive and consistent message.

Civil Affairs Operations

In your view, does SOCOM have sufficient personnel and resources to conduct the range of civil affairs missions required for today's operations?

No, the dynamic and evolving nature of our complex operating environment has and continues to place an incredible strain on our Civil Affairs Forces. Our SOF Civil Affairs are currently deployed at a 1:1 ratio. Our SOF CA forces are a finite asset. To mitigate the risk we see our Trans-Regional Synchronization process and associated prioritization as a means by which we mitigate this risk.

The 95th CA Brigade is the active duty SOF Civil Affairs unit. The 95th is comprised of five active duty battalions. Each battalion is comprised of 6 companies with 5 CA Teams within each company. There is a total of 150 CA Teams to support global SOCOM priorities.

The 85th CA Brigade is the active duty General Purpose Forces CA unit. The 85th is comprised of 5 active duty battalions. Each battalion is comprised of 5 companies with 5 CA Teams within each company. The brigade will be reduced to one battalion by FY17. This one battalion is tasked to support the Army's Global Response Force responsibilities.

If confirmed, how would you ensure civil affairs activities by special operations personnel are integrated into larger U.S. government efforts?

USSOF CA Operations are already deeply integrated into the planning and operations of the 3 D's (Defense, Diplomacy, and Development). SOF CA currently works out of 25 US Embassies across the globe and assists each Country Team member in achieving specific effects within their own strategy/plan. Our nation's military contributions to foreign policy are only of the instruments of national power. As an integral part of this contribution, our SOF Civil Affairs deployed as part of the Civil Military Engagement program are uniquely positioned within countries across the globe to address civil vulnerabilities which if not addressed contribute to the spread of Violent Extremist Organizations. They are part of the connective tissue, starting at the tactical level with our Civil Military Support Elements continuing to the operational level with our deployed Theater Civil Military support Elements, between bringing together our Unified Action Partners to achieve a synchronized and balanced whole of government approach.

If confirmed, how would you ensure Civil Affairs and Military Information Support Operations are adequately coordinated to achieve a maximum impact?

Maintaining the ability to forward deploy our SOF CA and embed them with our TSOCs and US Embassies is critical to ensuring proper planning and execution for stability operations. Civil Affairs and Military Information Support Operations constitute an indirect approach to addressing our global threats. These efforts are complementary and integrated into each of our lines of effort. They are documented in our supporting campaign plans, as well as echoed through the goals and strategies of our Unified Action Partners. Synchronization occurs at each level-from tactical, to operational, to strategic-as exercised by echelon of command within our formation. This nested synchronization is best demonstrated by resourcing decision that are made as part of our Trans-Regional Synchronization process

Capabilities of Special Operations Forces and General Purpose Forces

What is your assessment of the mix of responsibilities assigned to general purpose and SOF, particularly with respect to security force assistance and building partner military capabilities?

Both Special Operations Forces (SOF) and General Purpose Forces (GPF) are capable and have supported these missions most recently in Iraq and Afghanistan. Many GPF, like SOF, have units that are now regionally focused and have a thorough understanding of the culture and are able to build relationships with the partner nations military. SOF are best utilized in areas which are politically sensitive environments and where a large U.S. presence or a sizeable force is unacceptable to a host country government, while GPF are best suited for delivering GPF capabilities to foreign military forces in environments where U.S. presence is acceptable to the host-country government and where large-scale U.S. presence is considered necessary and acceptable by the host-country government.

Are there certain mission areas that should be reserved for SOF only?

Missions involving the Title 10 SOF Core Activities include Direct Action, Special Reconnaissance, Unconventional Warfare, Counterterrorism, and Counter Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction. These missions are highly specialized requiring extensive mental and physical training and a high degree of risk that the personnel conducting these missions accept. However, other agencies in the U.S. Government are also specialized in some of these missions, particularly Counterterrorism and Counter Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction. SOF needs to partner closely with them in the conduct of these operations. Additionally, SOF is best suited for politically sensitive environments, where an overt large U.S. presence is unacceptable to the host nation's government, and in denied environments.

Special Operations Enabling Capabilities

In your view, how should the responsibility for providing enabling capabilities for special operations missions be divided between SOCOM and the services?

The 5th SOF truth is, "Most Special Operations require non-SOF assistance." The current enabling force structure is sufficient to meet SOF requirements. Most SOF enablers are used for short duration support for the SOF operator. However, during sustained operations SOF must rely on theater provided Service enablers to meet their support requirements.

In light of current budget pressures, do you believe SOCOM and the services are maintaining adequate enabling capabilities to support special operations missions?

Regional challenges in austere, politically sensitive environments, as have occurred with VEOs throughout northern Africa and the Levant in the past 10 years, require non-standard, rapidly executed and low foot print solutions in enabling logistics support. This challenge requires USSOCOM and the Services to quickly realign funding for enabling support mechanisms inside year of execution for support to SOF operations in these emerging regional actions. While DoD has sufficient assets for this type of support, enabling actions in quickly emerging, politically sensitive, austere environments often requires a custom solution not tasked to any specific logistic or support capability. Standard solutions do not always work for non-standard, challenging environments. Libya is a key example of an emerging requirement, in a politically sensitive environment, requiring non-standard, quickly designed and executed funding solutions if determined to be in our national interest.

What enabling capabilities are in short supply or at greatest risk with current budget constraints?

The enabling capabilities that are the most requested and in greatest short fall for SOF are Airborne ISR and SOF enabler support personnel. Shortfalls in current ISR support capability for meeting SOF global demand crosses multiple disciplines and affects actions and decisions across the SOF spectrum of operations. SOF depend heavily on Service provided capabilities for support for operational readiness and execution. Current sequestration-associated force structure reductions on the services will decrease the availability of these special operations enablers.

Render Safe Proficiency

The proliferation of weapons of mass destruction is a growing and especially concerning threat to our nation. Select special operations units are assigned the task of interdicting and rendering-safe weapons of mass destruction should they ever fall into the wrong hands.

If confirmed, how would you ensure render-safe capabilities are adequately maintained by special operations units who may currently be heavily engaged in offensive kill/capture missions against high value counterterrorism targets?

The Department of Defense has tasked USSOCOM with the responsibility of Counter Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction. The tasks inclusive in these responsibilities span Counterproliferation, interdiction, and render safe. My view is that SOF has found the proper threshold of maintaining the world's foremost counterterrorism force, while ensuring our Counterproliferation forces, including the no fail mission of render safe, are manned, trained, and equipped and prepared to address WMD threats as they arise. Special operations units continuously participate in the Joint Operational Readiness and Training (JORTS) Cycle that incorporates world-wide deployments, individual training, collective training, and joint exercises (and evaluations) year round. If confirmed, I will continue to use the current training and exercise programs in place to maintain our ability to meet our mission to Counter WMD.

Do you believe additional render-safe capabilities are needed within SOCOM?

USSOCOM has sufficient render-safe capacity to respond to the most likely CWMD scenarios based upon today's threat analysis. USSOCOM's technical capability is world-class and must remain so as

our adversaries capabilities evolve. Robust research and development to maintain the lead in state-of-the-art technology are imperative. We must continue to resource these efforts and transfer as much capability as is reasonable to forward-deployed SOF units. The same approach must reside within our interagency supporting partners as they provide a symbiotic relation that is integral to our capabilities.

What is your assessment of the role of SOF in disrupting the development or acquisition of weapons of mass destruction by state and non-state actors?

USSOCOM plays a vital role in understanding and mitigating the networks that support the flow of commodities that support state and non-state procurement activities that feed WMD programs and the proliferation of WMD knowledge, material, and expertise. We work alongside our USG partners through the whole of SOF approach to apply our capabilities in a network-centric application against actors of concern who have, or desire, a WMD capability. I feel this is a collective activity, working with allies and partners to reduce those WMD threats of our nation and our interest abroad. Through a shared understanding of the threats, we are able to better strengthen alliances by building our partners capabilities and the focusing of finite USSOF capabilities.

Do you believe SOF currently have adequate capabilities to carry out such missions?

SOF today possesses adequate capabilities to conduct such missions based upon our understanding of the current threat. That understanding continuously evolves, therefore I encourage our efforts that look to project what the threat may look like in the near and mid-term future. By forecasting what the threat may evolve to, we can then focus on developing SOF forces capable of responding in advance of our adversary's ability to counter our capabilities.

Supported Combatant Command

Under certain circumstances and subject to direction by the President or Secretary of Defense, SOCOM may operate as a supported combatant command.

In your view, under what circumstances should SOCOM conduct operations as a supported combatant command?

USSOCOM has not historically been the supported combatant command for operations, with the exception of several compartmented operations. Rather, it provides specialized forces capabilities to the geographic combatant commands (GCC) in pursuit of national objectives. Even our most high-end forces are typically put under the operational control of the Geographic Combatant Commander to execute missions of national importance. That force package itself often receives significant support from the GCC, but as far as supported/supporting roles between the combatant commands is concerned, there are no obvious circumstances under which USSOCOM would need to be the supported commander for operations. The GCCs have the overall military responsibility within their areas, integrating the spectrum of military operations and activities over time. With that responsibility comes their role as the supported commander. One potential exception to this is in the area of planning and combatting transregional threats where unlike the Geographic Combatant Commanders who are focused on their particular AOR, Commander USSOCOM takes a global approach.

In your view, what resource, organization, and force structure changes, if any, are required in order for SOCOM to more effectively conduct both supporting and supported combatant command responsibilities?

The ongoing discussion and strategy development regarding transregional threats continues to inform our thinking in this area. It may be possible to assign one GCC as the supported commander for a given threat such as ISIL and designate the other GCCs as supporting commanders. However, this approach has some inherent limitation in that each GCC is incentivized to address the threat in its borders, without necessarily having a comprehensive understanding of the threat as a whole. Assigning transregional problems to a combatant commander such as USSOCOM, which has no boundaries, may enable synchronized operations against threats such as foreign terrorist fighter flow, for example. However, this would require adjustment in the way our combatant commands habitually interact. Our evolving campaign plan against transregional terrorist organizations seeks to find the right balance between establishing GCCs and Functional Combatant Commands as the supported command, relying heavily on the former.

Interagency Collaboration

The collaboration between U.S. SOF, general purpose forces, and other U.S. Government departments and agencies has played a significant role in the success of counterinsurgency and counterterrorism operations in recent years. However, much of this collaboration has been ad hoc in nature.

What do you believe are the most important lessons learned from the collaborative interagency efforts in Afghanistan, Iraq, and elsewhere?

Deepening our interagency (IA) relationships and collaboration continues to be a hallmark of U.S. SOF efforts as these partnerships have proven to be essential to success. In terms of lessons learned:

Increasing the depth and speed of information sharing has helped us accelerate our targeting processes, improved its fidelity, and significantly expanded the availability of intelligence for future operations.

Additionally, closer IA collaboration and integration has expanded the U.S. Government's options for success in the CT fight. Our relationship with our IA partners is a two way street, and we often find the quickest, most effective solution to many of today's CT challenges lies within SOF playing a supporting role to a Law Enforcement "finish." Whether through leveraging our more robust DOD logistics enablers, or the sharing of information and situational awareness provided by SOF, we believe our partners gain as much or more from these relationships.

Finally, one of the top lessons learned is the need to develop and maintain relationships and trust across the IA. This forms the foundation for understanding our IA partner's priorities, capabilities, and areas where we can best support one another in this global fight.

How do you believe these efforts can be improved?

Like many inter-organizational challenges, good, rapid two-way communications and understanding is essential. USSOCOM has put a significant level of energy into building both the electronic and human network connections to enable this.

We have established a recurring Video Tele-Conference series where our IA partners are key participants. However, not all of our sister departments and agencies have the appropriate systems to join. This is something we can assist with to a degree, but in the end, it is up to our IA counterparts to invest in the electronic communications systems to allow full collaboration. In addition to this area of

improvement, it would be helpful to establish and publish a common standard to enable trusted, vetted connections across the multiple electronic communications networks of individual agencies.

On the human side of the network, USSOCOM has provided a liaison element to most of our key IA partners and, in turn, accepted a liaison from these agencies. While these individuals are critical nodes in maintaining our relationships and communications, we also need to be more consistent in expanding opportunities for exposing our internal staff and leadership to deeper IA interactions. I am hopeful that our IA partners feel the same way. Establishing such early relationships will be especially valuable as our young leaders of today become senior leaders tomorrow.

Should these informal and ad hoc arrangements be made more formal (i.e. through legislation, DOD Directives or Instructions, etc...) or is their ad hoc nature the reason for their success?

I am not sure ad hoc is the correct term as most all our relationships with our IA partners are supported through more formal agreements, whether a tactical-level partnership, or a more long-standing exchange of liaisons. To date, we have been quite successful in using the existing processes and I see no pressing need to overlay further instructions on what is essentially a successful, mutually beneficial effort to achieve national objectives.

At the same time, it would be helpful to examine ways where we might formally address IA interactions, authorities, and funding for those operations and activities that require synchronized SOF-IA efforts, as there have been times when some of our IA partners with a significant capability are limited by lack of specific guidance from their standard operating procedures, or conflict with existing authorities, or funding constraints.

Detainee Treatment Policy

Do you support the standards for detainee treatment specified in the revised Army Field Manual on Interrogations, FM 2-22.3, issued in September 2006, and in DOD Directive 2310.01E, the Department of Defense Detainee Program, dated September 5, 2006?

Yes

If confirmed, would you ensure that special operations forces comply with the standards in the Army Field Manual, the DOD Directive, and applicable requirements of U.S. and international law regarding detention and interrogation operations?

Yes

Congressional Oversight

In order to exercise its legislative and oversight responsibilities, it is important that this Committee and other appropriate committees of the Congress are able to receive testimony, briefings, and other communications of information.

Do you agree, if confirmed for this high position, to appear before this Committee and other appropriate committees of the Congress?

Yes.

Do you agree, when asked, to give your personal views, even if those views differ from the Administration in power?

Yes

Do you agree, if confirmed, to appear before this Committee, or designated members of this Committee, and provide information, subject to appropriate and necessary security protection, with respect to your responsibilities as the Commander of SOCOM?

Yes

Do you agree to ensure that testimony, briefings and other communications of information are provided to this Committee and its staff and other appropriate Committees?

Yes

Do you agree to provide documents, including copies of electronic forms of communication, in a timely manner when requested by a duly constituted Committee, or to consult with the Committee regarding the basis for any good faith delay or denial in providing such documents?

Yes