

Statement of
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U.S. ARMY SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND

Introduction

Chairwoman Ernst, Ranking Member Slotkin, and distinguished Members of the Sub-Committee, thank you for the opportunity to represent the over 36,000 men and women of The United States Army Special Operations Command (USASOC). It is my honor to accompany my fellow Special Operations Service Component Commanders and to discuss the role of USASOC within the world's premier Special Operations Forces (SOF).

Army SOF (ARSOF) has never been more lethal. Crafted on the backbone of talent recruited and developed by the Army, ARSOF is purpose built and honed to integrate with the Joint Force and prepared to support the Joint Force through unilateral or partnered special operations in both high-end and low intensity conflict. ARSOF spans the globe, in nearly 80 countries on any given day, helping our allies and partners to counter the actions of shared adversaries. We also conduct deliberate and dynamic targeting against state and non-state actors seeking opportunities to do us harm. Finally, ARSOF maintains the capability to penetrate and operate deep into contested environments for crisis response, rescue missions, or to capture our Nation's highest value targets. These operational effects, and the training requirements to achieve them, create and drive the USASOC Mission: to generate combat-credible Army Special Operations Soldiers and formations. We maintain this hard-earned credibility, even as the character of war rapidly changes—ensuring we maximize the interaction between our warfighters, machines, and data. I firmly believe that technology alone will not win the next war—the force that most audaciously and expertly employs its technology will.

The USASOC Enterprise

USASOC's force is comprised of the Rangers, the premier joint forcible entry unit on planet earth; Army Special Operations Forces Aviators, who provide unmatched rotary wing denied area penetration and aerial Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance capability; Psychological Operations (PO), who blind, confuse, deceive, and protect to shape operational environments; Civil Affairs (CA), who conduct civil network development and engagement, lead civil-military integration, and manage civil information to support operational goals; and Active Duty and National Guard Special Forces (SF), who are our premier practitioners of partnered Irregular Warfare.

While the 75th Ranger Regiment and 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment assess, select, and train their force internally, the U.S. Army John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School (SWCS) assesses, selects, and produces SF, PO, and CA Soldiers for the 1st Special Forces Command to prepare for warfighting. SWCS, as the U.S. Army's Special Operations Center of Excellence, also provides high-end combat and technical skills, updates Army educational programs to incorporate lessons learned from modern battlefields, and publishes ARSOF doctrine.

USASOC, representing less than 10% of the Army formation, provides more than half of the Nation's Special Operations Forces, and consistently fills over half of the U.S. SOF deployments worldwide. We build generational partnerships and maintain an enduring presence of approximately 3,000 Soldiers deployed across nearly 80 countries—training foreign forces, integrating with partners and allies, and providing

support to ongoing conflicts in every combatant command. Throughout, we uphold our crisis response mission—capable of rapidly deploying anywhere around the world.

USASOC's Purpose

USASOC's core mission is to generate Combat-Credible Army Special Operations Soldiers and formations capable of entering denied environments, operating, and providing effects, options, and access for the Joint Force. Our Soldiers and formations contribute to the warfighting capability and readiness of our Service and the Joint Force through rigorous and realistic training with the Army's Brigades, Divisions, and Corps, and with the Joint Force's strategic assets and formations. We execute Psychological Operations, Civil Affairs, Deep and Denied Area Penetration, Crisis Response, Hostage Rescue, Counterterrorism, Unconventional and Irregular Warfare, Special Reconnaissance, Direct Action, and Operational Preparation of the Environment.

To accomplish this mission, we are taking a first principles approach—applying discipline to focus on generating ARSOF for our most challenging combat missions. This approach orients our efforts around the four core functions we are accountable for as an organize, train, and equip SOF headquarters: Producing ARSOF, Preparing ARSOF for conflict, Providing ARSOF for employment by the Geographic Combatant Commands, and Transforming ARSOF to win today's and tomorrow's fights.

Produce ARSOF

USASOC is responsible for assessing, selecting, training, qualifying, and ultimately retaining ARSOF Soldiers; sufficient throughput is our most significant challenge. Simply stated, we are not producing enough ARSOF Soldiers to replace those that are leaving our formations—a statement that has held true especially for our Special Forces Regiment for the past 17 years and has resulted in difficult manning decisions and unfilled formations. We are reevaluating all options to reverse this course; we removed non-standards-based attrition, provide additional preparation for candidates and opportunities for non-selects to return, and leverage data and Artificial Intelligence to identify the best potential candidates for assessment and selection.

We are also evolving our training, both initial entry and advanced skills, implementing lessons observed from current conflicts around the globe. Each of our subordinate headquarters has fully adopted the creation, employment, and integration of remote and autonomous systems—across ground, maritime, and airborne platforms. Artificial Intelligence is changing the way we collect and process information—helping us to better see ourselves, identify solutions, and execute sound decision-making.

We have reallocated funds to consolidate our evolved training pipelines and provide a sustainable solution for continued training modernization. This includes the upkeep of our existing infrastructure and ensuring our students train in realistic, tough, and *safe* environments—balancing the readiness of our future operational force with the growing demands of the modern battlefield.

Prepare ARSOF

To answer the demands of the modern battlefield and sustained high operational tempo—and a younger, less experienced force within Special Forces—we have changed how we organize, train, and equip the force. USASOC is adjusting our readiness cycle for the preponderance of our force—adding additional time between deployments to increase readiness and generate a baseline of lethality that is theater agnostic and interoperable with Service and Joint formations in large scale combat.

We are maximizing our participation in Combat Training Center and Warfighter Exercises to test ourselves in the hardest conditions possible, integrating our capabilities with the Joint Force formations we will support during large scale combat operations. The continued advancement of capability and changes to policy at our training centers ensure they are increasingly able to create the conditions we will face in conflict and challenging our capabilities in complex ways. With Congress's support of the FY 2026 and soon the FY 2027 Budget we have made, and will continue to make, strides to advance the capabilities of our training venues, but we still have more work to create the training venues capable of replicating the modern battlefield.

We must always strive to be masters of the basics, but the revolutions on the modern battlefield have shifted our baseline, now requiring the application of emerging technologies and tools. Our responsibility is to ensure our formations meet our Nation's needs in competition, crisis, and conflict: executing special operations in a contested environment—including infiltration, advising a partner force, communicating, surviving, sensing, and enabling deep, all-domain strikes against increasingly capable adversaries.

Provide ARSOF

Events of the past four months alone demonstrate the demand for Special Operations Forces has not abated; our formations remain fully employed, providing Special Operations options in pursuit of our Nation's Priorities in every Geographic Combatant Command and across the conflict continuum.

When crises arise, the 75th Rangers, 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment, and SF Commander's Interdiction Forces can rapidly deploy in tailorable, scalable packages to provide Geographic Combatant Commanders maximum flexibility.

We persistently empower the Theater Special Operations Commands (TSOCs) through our regionally aligned SF Group Headquarters. Our Special Forces Groups provide forces trained and ready with unique capability for the Joint Force and historic understanding, relationships, and expertise to support Combatant Commander Campaign Plans.

When proximity is not required, we maximize our support to the TSOCs by offering CONUS-based Operations Support to maintain the readiness of our formations, reduce cost, and provide predictability and stability for our Soldiers and their Families. An example of this is capitalizing on our years of targeting experience developed during the Global War on Terror to address threats posed by state and non-state actors operating along and through the seams of the Combatant Commands.

Collectively, our employed forces provide us with the opportunity to observe the modern battlefield at the tactical edge. We are rapidly integrating those observations into our training—both within the tactical units and the institutional pipelines—to develop and provide innovative and transformative solutions.

Transform ARSOF

Continuous transformation is inherent and there is unprecedented alignment between our higher headquarters—driving us to innovate and transform faster. We are exposing our formations to new concepts; integrating and developing new capabilities and tactics, techniques, and procedures; and fostering a “learn and fail fast” environment to keep pace at the tactical edge. We are transforming our formations and institutions to sustainably resource readiness demands and provide consistent capabilities.

The Army Special Operations Aviation Command is integrating layered protection systems to detect and defeat threats, provide precision navigation, and sustain communications. These systems, built on a digital backbone, unify manned and unmanned platforms and integrate autonomy and Artificial Intelligence to mitigate risk and enhance capability during Deep Penetration and Crisis Response operations.

The 75th Ranger Regiment, the Army’s Ranger Regiment, tests future Army capabilities—like the Next Generation Squad Weapon and One Way Attack systems—providing critical feedback prior to mass production and proliferation. Internally, the Rangers are evaluating force structure to integrate these multi-domain capabilities and advanced technologies with tactical formations, matching sensors with shooters and addressing the challenges of a sustained high operations tempo.

Within the Special Warfare Center and School, we are transforming across all fronts, enhancing the capabilities and qualities of candidates to better prepare them for assessment and selection, while preserving the standards that have served as the fundamental benchmark for our success. The pipeline is more streamlined, with lower wait times between courses and incorporating appropriate amounts of the latest technology and tactics, techniques, and procedures from the tactical edge. We have fundamentally stripped down and built back up our Psychological Operations production pipeline—cutting away the legacy systems and methods of broadscale media and homing in on precise, adaptive, data-informed, and tech-enabled delivery. We are dedicated to creating more capable PO Soldiers with the right training, certifications, and infrastructure access to conduct modern influence operations.

Within 1st Special Forces Command we are integrating capabilities and formations with U.S. Cyber Command, U.S. Army Cyber Command (ARCYBER), and U.S. Army Space and Missile Defense Command (SMDC), providing the linkages between cyber and space effects and our terrestrial-based and forward deployed formations. Further, we are creating an intelligence integration cell that can support global threat target development, provided from stateside. At the Special Forces Groups, we are integrating Psychological Operations and Civil Affairs battalions, transforming our Special Forces battalions into four line battalions that include organic Sensitive Activities and Robotics integration capabilities in each, and centralizing Multi-Domain Operations and Sensitive Activity Mission Management capabilities at the Group Headquarters.

Finally, we are transforming through our investment and partnerships at the tactical edge to inform and contribute to Department, Service, and U.S. Special Operations Command initiatives. USASOC is closely monitoring the work of our Sister SOF Components for the Department as they develop domain-specific solutions within the Defense Autonomous Working Group. Additionally, our formations are directly tied in with

the Department's Pacesetter Project Swarm Forge and Army's Drone Dominance Program. Within the Service, the combined USASOC, SMDC, and ARCYBER SOF-Space-Cyber TRIAD is continuing to mature, leveraging our global disposition to employ space and cyber capabilities against our Nation's adversaries. USASOC's part in this maturation is the development of ARSOF Space and Cyberspace capabilities and the pursuit of the role of lead SOF Service Component for Space and as a critical force multiplier for Cyber for the Joint Force.

Conclusion

In closing, USASOC is dedicated to its core mission to generate combat-credible Soldiers and formations, capable of operating in Deep and Denied Areas, in support of the Joint Force. USASOC, composed of the Army's finest men and women, will continue to transform and remain ready for crisis response, persistently forward deployed, and invested in generational relationships. ARSOF is strategically ready—building, maintaining, and balancing warfighting capabilities and competitive advantages that support the Joint Force's strategic objectives across threat and time horizons. Thank you for the invitation to speak, and for your continued support to your Army's Special Operations Forces.