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STATEMENT OF  
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COMMANDER  
U.S. MARINE FORCES SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND  
BEFORE THE  
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SUBCOMMITTEE ON EMERGING THREATS AND CAPABILITIES  
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## INTRODUCTION

Chair Ernst, Ranking Member Slotkin, and distinguished committee members, thank you for the opportunity to present the posture and future vision of Marine Forces Special Operations Command (MARSOC). I am honored to present this statement, representing the U.S. Marine Corps component of U.S. Special Operations Command (USSOCOM), especially as we celebrate our 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary.

Thank you as well for Congress's sustained support to our forward-deployed Raider Team and commitment to resourcing USSOCOM, ensuring asymmetric advantage for the Joint Force.

MARSOC contributes to USSOCOM's asymmetric value by generating effects to solve Joint Force key operational problems. Our *RAIDER TEAM IS OUR PLATFORM* – providing solutions through multi-domain targeting. We serve as pathfinders providing Joint Force optionality for some of our Nation's most complex-dynamic national security challenges.

Drawing from our wider Marine Corps' storied warfighting lineage, MARSOC provides high impact, agile, and elite value at low cost. We are less than five percent of USSOCOM, and less than two percent of the Marine Corps, but execute nearly nine percent of USSOCOM's global operational missions. Further, we deliver these impacts on two percent of USSOCOM's budget and less than one percent of the Marine Corps' budget: a high return on investment.

Now twenty years into existence, MARSOC is evolving to increase our value to USSOCOM, the wider Joint Force, Interagency, and allies and partners through scalable and tailorable Special Operations Force (SOF) targeting options to out maneuver adversaries.

## OPERATING ENVIRONMENT

MARSOC confronts a dynamic operational and organizational landscape that demands consistent readiness *and* rapid adaptation to emerging threats. The challenges are threefold. First, we must enable SOF asymmetric advantage, both deterring adversaries below the threshold of armed conflict and ensuring readiness to support major Joint Force combat operations should state conflict arise. Second, the threat environment increasingly blurs the lines between state and non-state threats, creating conditions for simultaneity. Third, the accelerating integration of commercial off-the-shelf artificial intelligence (AI) and robotics is reshaping the character of warfare and how we prepare our forces. These conditions culminate in complex-dynamic, or “wicked,” problems, defying simple, linear solutions.

To overcome these challenges, MARSOC pursues three organizational imperatives. First, we relentlessly sustain readiness to meet current requirements while modernizing ahead of our adversaries. Second, we deliberately forge and preserve the Raider Team, ensuring resilience within the force. Third, we proactively support USSOCOM and the Marine Corps in reconciling legacy modernization timelines with the realities of AI-enabled capability development, and leverage rapid feedback loops from deployed forces to accelerate adaptation and readiness. Ultimately, sustaining effectiveness in this environment requires balance between operational demand, force preservation, and modernization.

## THE MARINE RAIDER NESTED FRAMEWORK & APPROACH

MARSOC's systematic framework to address these challenges and imperatives nests within USSOCOM's *WIN*, *PEOPLE*, and *TRANSFORM* lines of effort. Our approach employs *Multi-Domain Targeting* to deliver effects that solve Joint Key Operational Problems in any *Clime and Place*. To conduct targeting, we generate and deploy multi-discipline, multi-domain *RAIDER TEAMS* executing *Operations*, *Intelligence*, and *Information* cycles. These TEAMS layer capabilities to generate effects simultaneously across all domains and threats, rapidly providing theater or national-level decision-makers with actionable options to solve both short and long-term problems across the entire conflict continuum. Our effects in the Philippines and First Island Chain exemplify this approach's success. Finally, all aspects of our force posture, force development, training, and modernization systematically align to achieve Joint Force objectives, while ensuring tactical lethality and survivability.

### WIN — LAYERED CAPABILITIES SOLVING JOINT FORCE PROBLEMS

MARSOC persistently deploys layered capability packages, Raider Teams, to support Theater Special Operations Commands (TSOCs). These Teams operate in sensitive, austere, contested environments - sensing, making sense of, and shaping conditions across competition, crisis, and conflict. Their persistent multi-disciplinary agility provides TSOC commanders with a wide range of solutions across the conflict continuum. The Philippines provide a noteworthy example. Initially, we supported the Philippines' crisis response and counterterrorism efforts, retaking Marawi City from insurgents in 2017 and supporting stabilization of Sulu Island by 2022. MARSOC then transitioned to support the Philippines' illumination of and response to China's malign and coercive behavior in their Exclusive Economic Zone. Raiders now support the entirety of the Philippines' national defense through asymmetric SOF options - providing critical SOF capabilities and options to our allies and the Joint Force along key maritime terrain.

#### Positioning & Force Posture: Supporting Competition, Crisis, & Conflict

MARSOC's heaviest investments are in INDOPACOM, CENTCOM, and AFRICOM, with tailored efforts in EUCOM and a growing presence in SOUTHCOM. Theater prioritization is continually adjusted based on USSOCOM and Department guidance, focused on National Defense Strategy objectives such as Homeland Defense and Detering China, while remaining agile to meet new operational demands.

MARSOC is most heavily weighted in INDOPACOM within the First Island Chain. That positioning helps *deter China* by providing layered targeting options along key maritime terrain and enabling regional allies like the Philippines to counter extremism and defend their sovereignty. Beyond partners, MARSOC also supports the synchronization of SOF with conventional U.S. forces. For instance, *Stand-in Force* (SiF) integration with Marine Forces Pacific gives INDOPACOM scalable options bridging competition and crisis; targeted kinetic and non-kinetic operations in AFRICOM disrupt threat networks and free Joint Force resources for emerging priorities; and recent support to Operation Epic Fury highlights the versatility of MARSOC - shifting immediately from long-term campaigning to crisis and conflict support against complex-adaptive and inter-connected terrorists, proxies, and direct state adversaries.

### **Force Generation: Reliable, Lethal, & Survivable Multi-Domain SOF Targeting**

MARSOC's disciplined and systematic force generation process delivers consistent and dependable force packages that solve Joint Force problems using *China as the pacing threat*. From the O-3 to O-6 command level, our forces build capabilities through the same basic "building block approach" to ensure readiness across the spectrum of conflict and threats. This approach provides agility to support enduring campaigns or respond to emerging threats, crisis, and conflict. Raider Teams deliver this approach organically as well as "by, with, and through" allies and irregular partners. Thanks to this process, Raiders simultaneously support counter terrorism and deter China in the Philippines, across all domains where state and non-state threats blur, and shift from campaigning to conflict with moment's notice in CENTCOM.

### **Integration, Interoperability, & Interdependence (I3): Stand-in Force Connectors**

Joint and Service integration is critical to *WIN*, with MARSOC operating as part of the SiF and nested within Joint and Marine Corps frameworks. Our layered capabilities, guided by Marine Air Ground Task Force doctrine, are refined through exercises like BALIKATAN and others with I and III Marine Expeditionary Forces, ensuring conflict readiness. Our strategic integration with the wider Marine Corps strengthens Service partnerships and supports USSOCOM by operating across three levels: force generation (Marine Corps recruits and trains, MARSOC adds SOF-specific preparation), capability development (MARSOC provides pathfinding modernization in robotics, C2, and expeditionary operations), and operational employment (direct integration with Marine Expeditionary Forces as part of SiF concepts). Finally, MARSOC's SiF connector role and pathfinding promotes SOF readiness and Service modernization while mitigating resource competition and capability gaps across the Department.

## **PEOPLE — THE RAIDER TEAM IS OUR PLATFORM**

As with USSOCOM and the wider Marine Corps, MARSOC's people are our platform *and* competitive advantage. Our success lies in how we forge and preserve the force, ensuring operational readiness and balanced health and welfare. Our foundation for our Raider Team's success is forged by the leadership and expertise of our Marine Raiders, SOF Specialists, and Navy Corpsmen – who develop and maintain versatile expertise, including multi-disciplinary intelligence and multi-domain information capabilities. Most critical is our commitment to investing in rigorous training, professional development, and continuous education to keep our personnel prepared for any mission. We also prioritize balanced well-being through dedicated programs, ensuring our people are resilient and ready.

### **Forging the Raider Team: Production, Management, & Development**

The foundation of our success lies in the method in which we forge our deploying formations. We draw exclusively from the Marine Corps and Navy, harnessing the Services' talent and Esprit de Corps for SOF missions and demanding operational environments. We benefit from, and depend on, this outstanding support provided by both Services. It is crucial to sustain this key enabling support to continue to solve future complex-adaptive multi-domain challenges.

Building on this foundation, MARSOC's deliberate and systematic process to forge the Raider Team has allowed us to continuously refine our selection, qualification, and onboarding procedures to keep pace with evolving operational demands and organizational priorities. This

evolution will persist as advances in AI and commercial robotics drive changes in training and force structure. Future success depends on continually reassessing the optimal balance between generalization and specialization, keeping our force agile and prepared to meet future challenges.

### **Preserving the Raider Team: Stress, Health, & Retention**

Given the sustained demand for SOF solutions, we remain attentive to the pressures and strains our personnel face, honoring our commitment to uncompromising quality, credibility, and meritocracy. Preserving the Raider Team is essential for maintaining resilience and sustained excellence, even as we continue to deploy and modernize. Our Preservation of the Force & Families (POTFF) team plays a pivotal role in this endeavor, offering senior leaders critical counsel and delivering specialized care directly to our personnel. POTFF's holistic approach promotes wellness across mind, body, spirit, and family, ensuring elite warfighting readiness now and for the future. It has also enhanced force retention. Continued Congressional advocacy remains crucial to sustaining these vital support programs, which contribute to the collective resilience, adaptability, and lethality the modern battlefield demands.

## **TRANSFORM — JOINT FORCE PATHFINDERS**

MARSOC accelerates modernization through cross-functional, operator-driven feedback loops nested with USSOCOM and Service priorities, and streamlines research, development, and acquisition to address Joint Force challenges. This brings advanced sensor-shooter-network solutions into theater faster, strengthens the multi-domain kill web, and integrates robotics at the tactical edge to enhance SOF survivability and lethality. Operator-led feedback from training, exercises, and combat evaluations provides critical data for Special Operations Forces Capabilities Integration and Development System (SOFCIDS) reform, and ensures enterprise processes respond to operational needs. Disciplined experimentation and progressive validation before fielding reinforces analytical rigor and enables evidence-based assessments, allowing USSOCOM to refine acquisition processes for effective capability delivery. Integrated teams of operators, specialists, and acquisition professionals help manage risk while accelerating fielding in coordination with acquisition reform. Congressional support of the FY 2027 Budget remains pivotal here to achieve reform objectives and ensure U.S. readiness advantage over increasingly blurred state & non-state emerging threats operating at commercial speeds.

### **Capability Development: Modernizing at the Speed of Modern Conflict**

MARSOC employs a disciplined, systematic framework that links emerging technologies to operational concepts, delivering ready-to-use capabilities at the tactical edge. Through progressive combat evaluations in internal and Joint Force exercises, we verify readiness and support USSOCOM's streamlined acquisition efforts – ensuring rapid adoption of commercial AI and robotics that shape conflict across the globe.

### **Command and Control**

MARSOC prioritizes disciplined Command & Control (C2) modernization so that every Raider Team can drive multi-domain targeting. This enables us to counter adaptive threats, shape effects for the Joint Force, and maintain decision dominance. By integrating AI and building resilient, distributed networks, we ensure survivable, agile C2 that can outthink and out-maneuver adversaries. MARSOC is actively testing and deploying these flexible C2 models to address both

current and future operating-environment challenges in exercises such as BALIKATAN, SONIC SPEAR, RED FLAG, and RAVEN. These exercises rehearse distributed and resilient C2 while closing the multi-domain kill chain.

### **Closing the Kill Chain: Any Sensor – Any Shooter – Any Network**

MARSOC's unique layered targeting capability underpins our modernization focus on thickening the Joint Force kill web, composed of numerous individual kill chains. MARSOC integrates multi-domain sensors and shooters ranging from commercial off the shelf options to exquisite compartmentalized capabilities, including organic weapons, partner and allied assets, and Joint over the horizon options. Our major investments address priorities in contested kill chains and focus on three "any-sensor, any shooter, any-network" buckets: (1) assure Joint Force awareness; (2) enable multi-domain firing solutions (kinetic and/or non-kinetic); and (3) secure resilient communications to assure resiliency with fires networks that seamlessly transition between low and high-tech, and function in contested environments. Finally, we have advanced cyber, space, and information-related capabilities at the tactical edge to expand sensor and shooter options, whether organic, joint, or partnered.

### **Robotics & Unmanned Systems**

Robotics and unmanned systems are a critical sub-focus for closing kill chains down to the tactical edge. Accordingly, MARSOC has supported Defense Autonomous Warfare Group testing of experimental platforms and, as a *Service Pathfinder*, led a task force evaluating diverse robotics systems to inform the next round of combat evaluations. Historically, we have transitioned numerous capabilities to the wider Service after initial pathfinding. Internally, we have also raised the baseline for robotics integration in our culminating validation exercise, RAVEN, and unit-level training. RAVEN exercises our full spectrum of layered capabilities – air, ground, maritime, and multi-domain SOF maneuver and core activities. And our company-level live-fire capability exercises at Dugway Proving Grounds advance the integration of robotic non-lethal sensors and lethal air, ground, and maritime platforms with traditional tactical maneuver. All this paves the way for future Raider-Robotics dominance to survive and thrive in contested environments. Committee members enjoy a standing invitation to attend and observe firsthand.

### **CONCLUSION**

Twenty years since our establishment, MARSOC delivers sustained asymmetric advantage through layered, multi-domain targeting that maximizes Joint Force advantage. Facing an increasingly complex environment – blurred state-non-state boundaries, AI-enabled adversaries, and rapid technological change - MARSOC remains poised to provide agile solutions across the conflict continuum. Our persistent presence in key theaters against priority threats underscores our commitment to solving the Joint Force's toughest challenges while preserving the agility to respond to emerging priorities.

Our success stands on our interdependent ability to **Win** by delivering layered multi-domain targeting capabilities, our **People** who serve as our platform, and our commitment to **Transform** through operator-led modernization at the speed of modern conflict. The Marine Raider Team – forged through rigorous selection and sustained through comprehensive preservation programs – remains our greatest competitive advantage.

Looking forward, MARSOC's modernization priorities focus on Joint Force requirements, thickening the multi-domain kill web and pioneering robotics at the tactical edge. Sustaining our effectiveness also requires enduring partnership with Congress through USSOCOM and the Marine Corps across three interdependent areas: preservation of the force programs to ensure resilience; acquisition reform to enable modernization at commercial speed; and updated training infrastructure to prepare forces for multi-domain threats in contested environments. We are committed to transparent stewardship and accountable execution of our *organize, train, and equip* responsibilities in partnership with USSOCOM and the Marine Corps. This collaboration ensures we remain ready, relevant, and accountable while delivering asymmetric advantage to the Joint Force.

Marine Raiders remain ready to outthink and outmaneuver adversaries in any clime or place. We thank the committee for its unwavering support to our forward deployed force and their families.

Semper Fidelis and Spiritus Invictus