

Stenographic Transcript
Before the

Subcommittee on Emerging Threats and Capabilities

COMMITTEE ON
ARMED SERVICES

UNITED STATES SENATE

HEARING TO RECEIVE TESTIMONY ON UNITED STATES
SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND'S EFFORTS TO SUSTAIN
THE READINESS OF SPECIAL OPERATIONS FORCES AND
TRANSFORM THE FORCE FOR FUTURE SECURITY
CHALLENGES

Wednesday, April 27, 2022

Washington, D.C.

ALDERSON COURT REPORTING
1111 14TH STREET NW
SUITE 1050
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20005
(202) 289-2260
www.aldersonreporting.com

1 HEARING TO RECEIVE TESTIMONY ON UNITED STATES SPECIAL
2 OPERATIONS COMMAND'S EFFORTS TO SUSTAIN THE READINESS OF
3 SPECIAL OPERATIONS FORCES AND TRANSFORM THE FORCE FOR FUTURE
4 SECURITY CHALLENGES

5
6 Wednesday, April 27, 2022

7
8 U.S. Senate

9 Subcommittee on Emerging

10 Threats and Capabilities

11 Committee on Armed Services

12 Washington, D.C.

13
14 The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 2:36 p.m. in
15 Room SR-232A, Russell Senate Office Building, Hon. Mark
16 Kelly, chairman of the subcommittee, presiding.

17 Committee Members Present: Kelly [presiding], Kaine,
18 Peters, Ernst, Fischer, Scott, Blackburn, and Tuberville.

1 OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. MARK KELLY, U.S. SENATOR FROM
2 ARIZONA

3 Senator Kelly: Good afternoon, everybody. Thank you
4 for being here. The Emerging Threats Subcommittee meets
5 this afternoon to receive testimony from the leaders of the
6 U.S. Special Operations Command service components. We look
7 forward to hearing how you are shaping our special
8 operations forces in line with the priorities laid out by
9 the National Defense Strategy and what more we can do, what
10 we can do, to ensure the readiness of your forces for the
11 range of missions they may be asked to conduct in coming
12 years.

13 First I would like to welcome our witnesses today:
14 Lieutenant General Slife, Commander of U.S. Air Force
15 Special Operations Command; Lieutenant General Braga,
16 Commander of U.S. Army Special Operations Command; Rear
17 Admiral Howard, Commander of Naval Special Warfare Command;
18 and Major General Glynn, Commander of U.S. Marine Forces
19 Special Operations Command. I also hope you will pass along
20 our sincere appreciation for the service and sacrifice of
21 the approximately 74,000 men and women of SOCOM and their
22 families.

23 The special operations community has achieved so much
24 for the nation in the last 20 years, but it has also borne a
25 significant burden in doing so. As our strategic priorities

1 evolve, we must never forget the people that make our
2 special operations capabilities so effective. As SOCOM
3 Commander General Clark stated during his posture hearing
4 earlier this month, "SOF creates strategic, asymmetric
5 advantages for the nation across a spectrum of conflict.
6 Their enduring value resides in the ability to adapt and to
7 combat asymmetric threats, including in the gray zone,
8 employ precision and surprise to achieve strategy effects in
9 conflict or crisis, build access, placement, and influence
10 through sustained partnership with foreign forces, and
11 support allies and partners, resilience, and resistance
12 efforts, all providing discreet options when conventional
13 action is impractical or not desired."

14 General Clark's testimony builds upon the recently
15 released Special Operations Forces Vision and Strategy that
16 lays out an ambitious, 10-year roadmap for realigning
17 special operations capabilities to support the National
18 Defense Strategy.

19 The threat posed by violent extremists remains present
20 and our SOF will remain at the forefront of keeping pressure
21 on terrorist networks to prevent them from conducting
22 attacks against our homeland and interests overseas.
23 Successive National Defense Strategies have rightly
24 emphasized a more resource-sustainable approach to
25 counterterrorism, and long-term strategic competition has

1 become the primary strategic focus. Our special operations
2 forces have a central role to play across the spectrum of
3 competition, crisis and, if necessary, conflict, with our
4 strategic adversaries, even when U.S. forces are not
5 directly involved in hostilities.

6 As has been widely reported, the persistent engagement
7 of U.S. special operations forces with their Ukrainian
8 counterparts, over a period of years, has undoubtedly
9 contributed to their success in degrading the larger and
10 more heavily armed Russian invasion forces. Without going
11 into details of our current support to the Ukrainian forces,
12 I hope our witnesses today will discuss the lessons learned
13 from our engagement with Ukraine and how they can be applied
14 to shaping our special operations forces for the future.

15 As agile as our SOF community is, adjusting to the
16 demands of long-term strategic competition will not be easy
17 after more than 20 years of sustained counterterrorism and
18 stability operations. Our SOF will require not only new
19 skills and capabilities but also new operating concepts to
20 make best use of their limited capacity and ensure their
21 activities are fully integrated with conventional and
22 interagency partners, a concept described by the new
23 National Defense Strategy as "integrated deterrence."

24 During today's testimony I hope you will address how
25 your commands are preparing our special operations forces to

1 support the requirements of the geographic combatant
2 commands while balancing the high demand for special
3 operations capabilities around the world. I hope you will
4 also address our efforts to ensure that our special
5 operations forces remain a respected and trusted force by
6 reinforcing a culture of accountability.

7 Last, but most certainly not least, I hope you will
8 update us on efforts to support special operations families
9 as they manage the stress resulting from the frequent and
10 demanding deployment of their loved ones.

11 I will now turn to our ranking member, Senator Ernst,
12 for any opening comments that she may have.

13

14

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

25

1 STATEMENT OF HON. JONI ERNST, U.S. SENATOR FROM IOWA

2 Senator Ernst: Yeah. Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank
3 you, gentlemen, for being here today. I apologize for my
4 tardiness. A number of us will have other committees. We
5 will pop in and out as we can. But again, I appreciate you
6 appearing in front of our subcommittee, and also thank you
7 for your continued service, not just to you but to your
8 command teams as well. We want to recognize those NCOs and
9 leaders that participate in your roles as well.

10 So, of course, the testimony that you provide today
11 will play an important role in this committee's work on the
12 National Defense Authorization Act, and the men and women of
13 Special Operations Command have been at the forefront of our
14 national security over the last two decades and have
15 undertaken some of the nation's most challenging missions.
16 They have inflicted serious damage to al Qaeda, to ISIS, and
17 other terrorist groups that want to harm us.

18 And while the counterterrorism mission will remain an
19 enduring requirement for our special operators, the force
20 must transform itself to deal with the growing threat posed
21 by China, by Russia, and other state actors. This will
22 require modernizing the force, updating training and
23 tactics, and employing innovative operational concepts.
24 That is why I included in last year's NDAA a provision
25 requiring a special operations joint operating concept for

1 competition and conflict. I look forward to that being
2 developed and delivered to this committee this year.

3 In order to support efforts to modernize the force we
4 need to provide them with the resources they need to fight
5 and win in a future fight. President Biden's budget request
6 is woefully inadequate in this regard. The fiscal year 2023
7 topline request for SOCOM is the same as it was last year,
8 despite a significant increase in threats.

9 As we all know, a flat budget equals a budget cut.
10 This reality is only exacerbated by the rising inflation.
11 SOCOM estimates that its fiscal year 2023 budget request is
12 actually \$1.3 billion, or 9 percent, less than its fiscal
13 year 2020 budget, using constant dollars. This represents a
14 significant decrease in SOCOM's buying power and hampers its
15 efforts to modernize the force.

16 That is why this committee needs to look at SOCOM's
17 unfunded requirements list and do what it can to help
18 address these shortfalls. I hope our witnesses will tell us
19 where they are facing the most pressing shortfalls and
20 describe the impact on their ability to accomplish the
21 mission.

22 Lastly, and most importantly, I want to talk about the
23 greatest capability in SOF, our special operations men and
24 women. As the first SOF truth says, "Humans are more
25 important than hardware." That is why I have been so

1 supportive of the Preservation of the Force and Families
2 Initiative, created after Admiral Olson's testimony in 2011,
3 that the force is, quote, "beginning to show some fraying
4 around the edges." POTFF has been instrumental in taking
5 care of the physical, mental, and spiritual needs of our
6 operators and their families. POTFF truly is a readiness-
7 builder for the force. I look to our witnesses to describe
8 how they are using POTFF and other programs to ensure our
9 troops and their families get the support they need.

10 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

11 Senator Kelly: Thank you, Senator Ernst.

12 We will now begin with witness statements. We will
13 start with Lieutenant General Slife, Commander of U.S. Air
14 Force Special Operations Command. General Slife.

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

25

1 STATEMENT OF LIEUTENANT GENERAL JAMES C. SLIFE, USAF,
2 COMMANDER, AIR FORCE SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND

3 General Slife: Good afternoon Chairman Kelly, Ranking
4 Member Ernst, distinguished members of the committee. I am
5 honored to appear before you today as the Commander of your
6 Air Force Special Operations Command, and I would like to
7 thank you for the opportunity to speak about the employment
8 of our nation's special operations forces in the future
9 operating environment.

10 On behalf of myself and our Command Chief, Chief Master
11 Sergeant Cory Olson, and the 21,500 airmen we serve
12 together, thank you for the support and resources provided
13 by this committee since our last testimony last year.

14 The National Defense Strategy describes the strategic
15 environment substantially different from the one in which we
16 have operated for the last two decades. AFSOC, like the
17 other SOF components, finds itself at a strategic
18 discontinuity, a moment in which the future should not be
19 considered a linear extension of the past but rather as
20 something different altogether.

21 Such inflection points require transformation, and my
22 goal today is to describe in greater detail some of the
23 changes we are implementing to ensure our airmen, the
24 disciplined professionals who representative our competitive
25 advantage, remain relevant in the emerging operating

1 environment.

2 As the Department embraces integrated deterrence as the
3 framework concept of our defense strategy, the AFSOC of the
4 future will have to balance among five focus areas to
5 compete with our pacing adversaries.

6 First, AFSOC will generate advantage by campaigning in
7 the gray zone, operating across the spectrum of visibility
8 and attribution. We will use our force to create the
9 dilemmas and uncertainty, and present cost-imposing problems
10 for our adversaries. For instance, the development of an
11 amphibious capability for our MC-130 transport aircraft will
12 enable runway-independent operations, extend the global
13 reach and survivability of the aircraft, and provide access
14 to the enormous portions of the Earth's surface covered by
15 water that does not currently exist.

16 Secondly, we will engage as part of the broader Joint
17 Force employing our unique and sensitive capabilities to
18 create windows of advantage and sap adversary strength. In
19 order to do this effectively, we are transforming our
20 training and force presentation models. Our force
21 generation process is made up of four phases, each 5 months
22 in length. The phases include a reset phase, individual
23 unit training, as well as joint and collective training
24 prior to commitment as part of the Joint Force.

25 We are pathfinding a new capability that we refer to as

1 "mission sustainment teams." These 58-person teams are
2 comprised of 22 different specialties and allow our airmen
3 to operate out of austere regions with the agility the
4 future operating environment requires. Our airmen will
5 spend the 15 months of the force generation cycle training
6 in skills above and beyond what their normal tasks might
7 entail. The end result is a team of multifunctional airmen
8 integrated into our tactical formations that can provide
9 limited force protection, air transportation services, bed
10 down, subsistence and operational contracting support, and
11 aircraft and personnel safety, to include explosive ordnance
12 disposal. By building these small, agile teams capable of
13 operating in disaggregated fashion in austere sites, we will
14 create dilemmas and uncertainty for our adversaries.

15 Third, AFSOC will remain poised to respond to global
16 crises and contingencies, wherever and whenever required, in
17 increasingly contested environments. We are employing our
18 force generation model to produce mission command echelons
19 at a higher state of readiness than previously has been
20 possible. Our force generation model will prepare, train,
21 certify, verify, and validate our airmen and their command
22 teams are ready for alert and deployment taskings. These
23 airmen will be trained to respond to short-notice taskings
24 while employing and maneuvering in militarily and
25 politically contested environments. This will reduce the

1 current risk to mission and risk to force by providing
2 continuity of leadership.

3 Fourth, AFSOC will more efficiently disrupt violent
4 extremist organizations to ensure they are unable to mount
5 external attacks on the U.S. homeland, and do so in a cost-
6 effective manner. Our Armed Overwatch program's light
7 footprint, rapid deployability, multi-mission utility, and
8 much lower operating costs per flight hour will enable AFSOC
9 to do more missions with fewer aircraft than had previously
10 been possible.

11 Finally, AFSOC will remain focused on the specific
12 tasks and missions assigned to SOCOM under the Unified
13 Command Plan and the Joint Strategic Campaign Plan.

14 Chairman Kelly, Ranking Member Ernst, distinguished
15 members of the committee, the nation, the Air Force, and
16 U.S. Special Operations Command appreciate your time today
17 in giving me the opportunity to talk to you just a little
18 bit about the AFSOC of the future.

19 [The prepared statement of General Slife follows:]

20

21

22

23

24

25

1 Senator Kelly: Thank you, General.

2 Lieutenant General Braga, Commander of U.S. Army
3 Special Operations Command. General.

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

11

12

13

14

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

25

1 STATEMENT OF LIEUTENANT GENERAL JONATHAN P. BRAGA,
2 USA, COMMANDING GENERAL, UNITED STATES ARMY SPECIAL
3 OPERATIONS COMMAND

4 General Braga: Chairman Kelly, Ranking Member Ernst,
5 and distinguished members of the committee, thank you for
6 the opportunity to represent the 36,000 exceptional men and
7 women of the United States Army Special Operations Command,
8 2,800 of which are deployed right now across 77 countries.
9 I am proud to accompany my teammates, seated to the left and
10 right of me, that I have had the honor and privilege to
11 serve in combat. Senator Blackburn, on behalf of the entire
12 command I would like to thank her and express our gratitude
13 for her support in upgrading Jeremiah Johnson's Silver Star
14 for his valorous actions in Tongo Tongo, Niger. Thank you.

15 Joining me today is Command Sergeant Major Michael
16 Weimer, USOC's senior enlisted advisor. Mike really
17 represents our people. Mike has served the nation for 29
18 years, deployed to combat 19 times since September 11, 2001.
19 He has carried with him a New York City Fire Department
20 patch as a reminder of our solemn responsibility to protect
21 the nation. On the 20th anniversary of 9/11, we were
22 fortunate to stand with hundreds of our Army special
23 operations teammates while Mike returned that same patch
24 that he carried on multiple objectives around the world, to
25 the men and women of FDNY, on the crowded and emotional

1 streets of Manhattan, as a symbol of our solidarity.

2 It is an honor for both of us to serve with the brave
3 men and women of the Army special operations community who
4 were the first in and the last out of Afghanistan.

5 As we approach Memorial Day, we are reminded of the
6 selfless sacrifices made by our soldiers and their families
7 over the last 20 years, especially the more than 1,700 Gold
8 Star family members. This year we will inscribe Staff
9 Sergeant Ryan Knauss, one of our psychological operations
10 warriors, as the 378th name on our wall, and we will never
11 forget.

12 Every component of the Army Special Operations Command
13 contributed in Afghanistan. From our special operations
14 aviators in filling Rangers in the dark of night to our
15 civil affairs teams operating in austere conditions to Green
16 Berets riding on horseback through the mountains, your Army
17 special operations had an impact and protected the homeland
18 without fail.

19 I assure you we remain vigilant in protecting the
20 homeland as we weight our efforts, the priorities outlined
21 in the National Defense Strategy. USASOC supports the Joint
22 Force through irregular warfare campaigning for integrated
23 deterrence, while simultaneously preparing for high-end
24 conflict. It is vital that we address these challenges with
25 strong interagency, international, and joint relationships

1 to preserve our advantages over our nation's adversaries.

2 Russia's invasion of Ukraine demonstrated President
3 Putin's determination to impose his will in blatant
4 disregard of international norms, rules, and behaviors. Our
5 existing partnerships and forward presence in the region
6 demonstrated strategic value when options were needed.
7 Following the invasion of Crimea over the last 7 1/2 years,
8 Army special operations deployed to assist our fearless
9 Ukrainian partners in support of building their resistance
10 capability and resiliency.

11 As we apply lessons from this crisis to train,
12 organize, equip, deploy, and campaign, we remain resolute in
13 our resolve to address our nation's most consequential
14 strategic pacing challenge, the People's Republic of China.
15 There is no sanctuary from the scope and scale of the
16 threat. We remain steadfast in our confidence that this
17 generation of Army special operations soldiers will build
18 upon the legacy of those who preceded them and uphold our
19 promise to protect the nation without equal.

20 We are committed to maintaining your trust and
21 continuing our complete transparency with Congress and the
22 American people. I thank you for this opportunity and look
23 forward to answering your questions.

24 [The prepared statement of General Braga follows:]

25

1 Senator Kelly: Thank you, General.

2 Rear Admiral Howard, Commander of Naval Special Warfare
3 Command. Go ahead, Admiral.

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

11

12

13

14

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

25

1 STATEMENT OF REAR ADMIRAL HUGH W. HOWARD, III, USN,
2 COMMANDER, NAVAL SPECIAL WARFARE COMMAND

3 Admiral Howard: Chairman Kelly, Ranking Member Ernst,
4 and distinguished members of the committee, thank you for
5 the opportunity to report on the mission readiness of Naval
6 Special Warfare. I am honored to update you and the
7 American people and humbled to do so alongside Force Master
8 Chief Bill King, who I have served with for 31 years.

9 My report to the American people is shared with
10 humility, a humility sharpened through the complexity and
11 risk of our mission. The threats that face our nation give
12 us urgency to accelerate distinctive and irregular
13 capabilities from the maritime flanks of our adversaries,
14 for integrated deterrence in our nation's defense. I am
15 confident that we are delivering the disruptive and
16 necessary change to be ready for what the nation will ask of
17 our force.

18 Our comparative advantage is our people, this nation's
19 greatest treasure. Our SEAL operators, combatant-craft
20 crewmen, warfighting support teammates, and families who,
21 alongside our Gold Star families, form a highly reliable
22 team, a team fused together and enrolled with a common
23 purpose, trust, and candor, creativity, and resilience. We
24 fortify the culture of continuous assessment and development
25 and design new character, cognitive, and leadership

1 attribute assessments across the career continuum. We have
2 implemented and improved a more rigorous selection for all
3 leaders, officers and senior enlisted, a process that
4 includes psychometric testing, peer and subordinate
5 assessments, and a double-blind selection panel leveraging
6 data science and counter-bias approaches to increase
7 precision and objectivity of leader selection and assignment
8 decisions.

9 We recognize diversity as one of our greatest sources
10 of strength to solve the hardest problems, and we are making
11 significant investments with the Navy to directly engage
12 communities that are underrepresented in our formation.

13 We built the sustainable architecture to proactively
14 seek out candidates that may not have historically thought
15 of joining our ranks. Since my last report we graduated our
16 first female combatant-craft crewman and tripled female
17 cadre across all phases of the assessment and selection
18 pathway to bolster development of women in Naval Special
19 Warfare.

20 Delivering a more lethal and survivable force requires
21 that we evolve and adapt faster than our adversaries. Over
22 the past year, we developed a plan to substantively increase
23 investment in the modernization of exquisite, cross-domain
24 capabilities that provide the access and effects we must
25 have as a nation to persistently hold peer adversaries'

1 critical targets at risk. We are now holding approximately
2 one-third of our force in reserve to more agilely respond to
3 emerging global missions, and critically to conduct the
4 urgent experimentation with innovative mission concepts for
5 step changes and tactics and advanced technologies,
6 technologies that include artificial intelligence,
7 eponymous, multi-domain unmanned systems, and cyber
8 electronic warfare and kinetic effects.

9 As the Navy's commandos, we are tightly linked with
10 fleet commanders, allies, partners, and U.S. government
11 agencies to create a regular warfighting advantage for the
12 Joint Force, and generate uncertainty in adversary
13 confidence, escalation offramps, and greater leverage for
14 our civilian leadership in crisis.

15 Master Chief King and I are proud of our force and
16 their service to protect and defend our great nation. We
17 will continue to be humble stewards of the incredible trust
18 that you and the American people place in us, and we thank
19 you for your continued support of our team and Naval Special
20 Warfare's families. I look forward to your questions.

21 [The prepared statement of Admiral Howard follows:]

22

23

24

25

1 Senator Kelly: Thank you, Admiral.

2 Major General Glynn, Commander of U.S. Marine Forces
3 Special Operations Command.

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

11

12

13

14

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

25

1 STATEMENT OF MAJOR GENERAL JAMES F. GLYNN, USMC,
2 COMMANDER, UNITED STATES MARINE FORCES SPECIAL OPERATIONS
3 COMMAND

4 General Glynn: Thank you, Chairman Kelly, Ranking
5 Member Ernst, and other distinguished members of the
6 committee. Thanks for the opportunity to update you on the
7 status and posture of Marine Corps Forces Special Operations
8 Command. It is an honor for Sergeant Major Loftus and I to
9 join you again this year, alongside my fellow SOF component
10 comments and their senior enlisted leaders.

11 Since we met last year, MARSOC maintains a persistent
12 forward-deployed presence in support of six named operations
13 across the globe, and Marine Raiders conducted operations in
14 Indo-Pacific Command, Central Command, and Africa Command,
15 while episodic deployments in support of European and
16 Southern Commands.

17 Our mission-tailored forces continue to maximize
18 efficiency while remaining faithful stewards of resources
19 and continue to account for significantly more of the
20 missions performed than the size of the force, 3,500, and
21 slice of the budget would predict.

22 As you have heard from the geographic combatant
23 commanders, they are increasingly challenged in the
24 uncertainty of semi-permissive environments as our
25 adversaries seek to gain and maintain influence in the gray

1 zone. MARSOC is leveraging our organizational agility,
2 predominantly our size, to maximize the effectiveness of the
3 force and provide immense benefit to the SOF enterprise and
4 our parent service. Competition requires special operations
5 forces that can be active in the gray zone and win in
6 conflict, for which your Marine Raiders are postured and
7 focused. In fact, it is our quest to bring transparency to
8 the gray in gray zone.

9 Over the past year we have further developed our
10 innovative operating concept that provides the nation with a
11 unique capability. Strategic shaping and reconnaissance
12 encompasses a wide range of capabilities, from cooperation
13 with partners and allies to increasing costs to adversaries
14 to deter, disrupt, and deny their objectives.

15 The operational art of SSR, Strategic Shaping and
16 Reconnaissance, seeks to connect the joint interagency,
17 intergovernmental, and multinational communities as they
18 develop persistent networks that can enhance strategic
19 intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance. The concept
20 supports multi-domain campaigning for long-term shaping and
21 influence in support of SOCOM, the Joint Force, and the
22 nation in strategically critical locations.

23 As one example over the course of the last year, MARCOS
24 provided SOF-peculiar capabilities to the theater Special
25 Operations Command for AFRICOM while connecting the combat

1 power of the Marine Corps 15th Marine Expeditionary Unit to
2 provide capability and capacity in support of current
3 operations off the coast of Africa. This demonstrated the
4 possibilities in a domain approach that includes forward-
5 based SOF operating in the littorals that can connect air,
6 maritime, and cyber elements, in this case of a Marine
7 expeditionary unit, off the coast of Somalia, to maintain
8 pressure on violent extremists while supporting our regional
9 partners.

10 As we experiment with emerging and next-generation
11 capabilities, operations against violent extremist
12 organization networks continue and provide our forces the
13 placement and access with partners and allies against
14 priority threats. We pursue missions in littoral regions
15 that facilitate close ties to the naval force that include
16 fleet and marine forces. Our ability to leverage these
17 characteristics is integral to our expanding impact as part
18 of what our commandant calls the "Stand in Force," necessary
19 at the persistent forward edge of deterrence.

20 We recognize that the current and future operational
21 capabilities rest upon a foundation that we all have in
22 common -- outstanding Marine Raiders and their families. To
23 maximize continued excellence and enable new operational
24 concepts, we must continue to safeguard and sustain our most
25 valuable resource through programs we discussed in some

1 detail last year, specifically Preservation of the Force and
2 Family, sexual assault and prevention, and diversity and
3 inclusion initiatives. Each are at a different point of
4 maturity, yet they contribute to a collective organizational
5 culture of physical, mental, spiritual, and family
6 excellence to enhance mission success and strengthen family
7 resilience.

8 In closing, we remain committed to providing the Joint
9 Force with Marine Raiders that possess unique special
10 operations capabilities, who are threat focused, devoted to
11 force modernization, and whose actions continually
12 demonstrate our motto, "Spiritus Invictus," or
13 "unconquerable spirit."

14 On behalf of the men and women of MARSOC, I thank the
15 committee for your continued support to those in uniform and
16 their families and for your commitment to our national
17 security. Thank you.

18 [The prepared statement of General Glynn follows:]
19
20
21
22
23
24
25

1 Senator Kelly: Thank you, General, and thank you to
2 all of you for your statements. I will begin our first
3 round of questions for 5 minutes here. And this first
4 question is for all four of you, and since we only have 5
5 minutes we will have to keep it brief.

6 For much of the last 2 years, the Department has been
7 refining a joint warfighting concept that finds a credible
8 theory of victory should deterrence fail with a near-peer
9 adversary. However, our long-term strategic competitors
10 continue to make gains through hybrid warfare and coercion
11 below the threshold of traditional armed conflict.

12 As you all have pointed out in your statements, our SOF
13 have a key role to play in this type of warfare. So as you
14 look at what will be asked of our special operations forces
15 for the next, say, 10 to 15 years, what do you believe will
16 be the most important skill sets and capabilities, and which
17 of these will be the most difficult to develop?

18 And we will start with General Slife.

19 General Slife: Thank you, Senator. As integrated
20 deterrence is the framework concept, one of the things that
21 we talk about in AFSOC is that "deterrence" is the noun and
22 "integrated" is the adjective. Deterrence is the thing we
23 are trying to do but integrated is how we are going to do
24 it.

25 And I think when you think about what integration means

1 there is no force in the DoD that is more integrated than
2 SOF. We are jointly interoperable at much lower levels.
3 All four of us have operated with one another in combat
4 since we were much, much more junior in our careers. And so
5 SOF is integrated internally.

6 Furthermore, SOF has a set of relationships around the
7 globe, both with partner militaries and also with embassy
8 teams that is unrivaled. AFSOC was present in 74 countries
9 since the last time we had the opportunity to speak to this
10 committee.

11 And finally, across the U.S. government, no part of the
12 DoD force is more connected to the interagency and the
13 intelligence community than our special operations forces.
14 So I think that is going to be where our competitive
15 advantage lies is our ability to integrate internally,
16 across the U.S. government, and also with our partners.

17 Senator Kelly: Thank you. General Braga?

18 General Braga: Senator, I would echo the critical
19 importance of making sure we work with our international
20 partners and intel community and interagency. It is even
21 more important as we face strategic challenges of China and
22 Russia. We have to rethink everything we do, how we live in
23 a contact layer and look to seek to provide options, both
24 during competition, and should it transition to high-end
25 conflict, how do you survive, how do you shoot, move, and

1 communicate, how do you live in a different electromagnetic
2 spectrum that our adversaries are invested very heavily in.

3 So we are relooking at everything from our capabilities
4 to how we train people to ensure their survivability, still
5 maintain a focus on smaller units of action having an
6 outsized effect, being able to operate, though, in austere
7 locations with those partners in the contact layer.

8 Senator Kelly: Admiral?

9 Admiral Howard: Our contribution to integrated
10 deterrence is principally the irregular ways and means that
11 we deter our peer adversaries. We are prioritizing
12 irregular partners, irregular global partners, irregular
13 denied access capabilities for hard targets, irregular and
14 scalable effects.

15 In terms of capabilities that support this effort,
16 lethal and survivable access platforms, both on the surface
17 and the subsurface domains, unmanned systems that are
18 increasingly autonomous and interoperable, and then cyber
19 and electronic warfare.

20 Senator Kelly: Thank you. General?

21 General Glynn: Senator, as you are aware deterrence
22 and deterrence theory can get pretty complicated. But the
23 biggest thing, the most significant thing in deterrence that
24 we find, as has been alluded to, comes from our allies and
25 partners and their perspective of risk, and what is most

1 risky to our adversaries, be they China or Russia?

2 And so the most important part of deterrence is going
3 to remain the relationships and the allies and partnerships
4 that we specifically invest in in the special operations
5 community.

6 To the other half of your question, the hardest part, I
7 believe, is going to be the technical aspects. We have all
8 already alluded to information operations and cyber
9 capabilities, and there has been one allusion to space thus
10 far. That is going to take education and training over
11 time, that is a substantial investment on all of our parts.

12 Senator Kelly: thank you. When General Slife
13 mentioned the MC-130 amphibious operations I thought that
14 might be on the list. An Air Force guy potentially landing
15 on an aircraft carrier might be a skill set that would be
16 hard to develop.

17 General Slife: I have done it. It is easy.

18 Senator Kelly: It is easy?

19 General Slife: It is overrated.

20 Senator Kelly: Well thank you for that, and I will now
21 recognize Senator Ernst for 5 minutes.

22 Senator Ernst: Thank you so much, and, of course, as
23 we all sat down and visited during your office calls we
24 talked extensively about POTFF. And so maybe in my second
25 round of questions I can ask each of you a little bit more

1 about POTFF and your specific programs.

2 But General Slife, there was something that you brought
3 up in your office call that I would love to hear a little
4 bit more about, your efforts within POTFF to address the
5 moral hazard. And it is something that I had not put a lot
6 of thought into, but if you could explain to the members of
7 our subcommittee what your intent would be as you continue
8 to delve into this area.

9 General Slife: Thank you, Senator. I am happy to do
10 it. The conversation that Senator Ernst and I had
11 yesterday, we talked about the three types of invisible
12 wounds that many of our servicemembers suffer from because
13 of their experiences over the last 20 years. The first one
14 is neurocognitive injury. So this is really TBI, concussive
15 effects. It is a physical damage to the brain. And so we
16 understand that and we are focused on that. SOCOM has a
17 DoD-leading program around neurocognitive health.

18 The second invisible injury is psychological injury,
19 and this manifests as post-traumatic stress. It is the
20 manifestation of witnessing or being part of a significantly
21 traumatic event and the long-term effects that has on you.

22 But I think there is a third type of invisible injury,
23 and it is moral injury. These are the injuries that are
24 incurred when we act in a way that is contrary to our moral
25 system, and we do damage to ourselves as we reflect back on

1 the things that we have done over the last 20 years. And so
2 I have experienced some of this myself, having made
3 decisions in the moment to take people's lives that I then,
4 you know, afterwards wonder, was that the right decision.
5 It seemed like the right decision at the time, but what does
6 that mean to me now?

7 And so as we have looked at moral injury as a third
8 type of this invisible wounds kind of triad, we have been
9 engaged directly with the Air Force to invest in that leg of
10 our POTFF program that would attend to these moral injuries.
11 And we have gotten commitment from the Air Force to embed a
12 religious support team, a chaplain and a chaplain assistant
13 NCO, into every squadron-level formation in Air Force
14 Special Operations Command. This does not exist anywhere in
15 the Air Force. You know, I had to work hard with the Air
16 Force to get there. But we do have that program coming down
17 in the pike.

18 So that is a big win for us in the POTFF front, and
19 coupled with some of the other things that we may talk
20 about, Senator, that is really the answer to your question.

21 Senator Ernst: Yeah, no, thank you, General Slife, and
22 I am anxious to hear more about that as you continue to
23 develop that.

24 And General Braga, thank you so much again. During the
25 office call you had the opportunity to visit with me and my

1 team about the Ukrainian forces that you have been able to
2 train and work with over 7 years or so. It was an
3 investment that now we see is paying large, large dividends.

4 And what are the follow-on risks from the invasion, in
5 particular when we look at Moldova and Kosovo, and just in
6 your judgment where do we need to expand our footprint and
7 presence in EUCOM?

8 General Braga: Well, ma'am, certainly I do not want to
9 speak for EUCOM and their current prioritization, but I
10 would say we have had longstanding, generational
11 relationships in some places across Eastern Europe, both in
12 NATO and non-NATO countries, that I think pay huge dividends
13 and return on investment, for, honestly, small amounts of
14 physical footprint on the ground, as we expand their
15 capabilities.

16 We mentioned resistance and resiliency but it is also
17 interoperability, and I believe Senator Kelly mentioned
18 that, expanding the access presence and influence.

19 And when I mentioned the scale and scope of the threat
20 of Russia and China, we will not be able to do this alone.
21 That is why I talk about the international partners and
22 increasing their capacities and their capabilities is so
23 critical. And that is from information operations. That is
24 unconventional warfare. That is asymmetric tactics,
25 techniques, and procedures that you are seeing unfold right

1 now in the Ukraine. I will not go into it in this forum but
2 would be absolutely willing to go into it in perhaps a
3 closed-door session of other partnerships we are expanding
4 right now, and certainly the world is paying attention to
5 what is unfolding in Ukraine that is adding emphasis to
6 that.

7 Senator Ernst: Wonderful. Thank you, gentlemen.
8 Thank you, Mr. Chair.

9 Senator Kelly: Thank you, Senator. Senator Kaine.

10 Senator Kaine: Thank you to all of you, your
11 testimonies. A couple of points that I find interesting and
12 just kind of want to underline. General Glynn, you talked
13 about, when you were asked about deterrence you said the
14 lead deterrence that we have is our network of alliances and
15 partners, and it truly is an edge where Russia and China,
16 they are just not really in the same ballpark with us on
17 that. They do not have that network. And now they are
18 seeing how powerful a network of alliances can be, so that
19 is a takeaway.

20 And then, General Braga, I like the fact that you
21 started with talking about your enlisted leader colleague
22 carrying the FDNY patch for 20 years, because it has been 20
23 years where I think we have leaned really heavily on special
24 forces. Sort of disproportionate to your slice of the
25 budget or the size of the component, we leaned very heavily

1 on you.

2 So I have really one question that would take much
3 longer than 5 minutes to answer, and maybe I will start with
4 General Glynn and go right to left around the table, from my
5 side. During these 20 years where we were leaning very
6 heavily on you, large in missions against non-state
7 terrorist organizations, they have had a lot of lethal
8 capacity but they have not had the ability to like challenge
9 us in the air, challenge our communications dominance,
10 challenge some other just strong areas of expertise we have.

11 As we are now looking at a National Defense Strategy,
12 that focus is on peers that do have the ability to, you
13 know, not have a permissive air environment or challenge us
14 on the communications side. I suppose, as special
15 operations leaders, you have to think about new strategies
16 and make new investment decisions too, to recognize the
17 reality of that kind of a challenge.

18 Talk a little bit about how, within your commands, you
19 are sort of looking at the battle against great-state
20 competition and how that affects the planning and investment
21 decisions you make.

22 General Glynn: Thank you, Senator, for that question,
23 and I think I will tee it up and then as we go around the
24 horn we can probably expand on it.

25 The notion of the gray zone is I guess where I will

1 start, and it is defined as gray for a reason, because it is
2 where, if we looked at ourselves for 20 years and decided
3 how we would want to combat the strengths that the United
4 States brings in the manner in which we have for the last 20
5 years, we would probably come to many of the conclusions
6 that our strategic adversaries have as well.

7 And so to your question, the choices that we are having
8 to determine right now is what of the counterterrorism skill
9 sets, the stuff that we have invested and developed very
10 well over the last 20 years, how much of it translates, how
11 well does it translate, and what else do we need to be able
12 to do.

13 In sitting alongside these gentlemen in the past, I
14 think I will conclude for the moment with our examination of
15 cyber capabilities, our examination of space capabilities,
16 and the integration with special operations going forward to
17 narrow that gray zone. If you will allow me to stop there.

18 Senator Kaine: Admiral Howard, you and I have talked
19 about the cyber dimension of this before, but I would love
20 to hear your answer on this as well.

21 Admiral Howard: We have, and with cyber and electronic
22 warfare, with our proximity to access to hard targets we see
23 ourselves as a part of that kill chain, in extending the
24 reach of the cyber and electronic warfare enterprises.

25 But we are clearly at an inflection point. I think

1 within special operations we are entering, I call it the
2 fifth modern era of special operations. For Naval Special
3 Warfare, we over-rotated on counterterrorism clearly, and we
4 lost some ground in the distinctive things that only we can
5 do. And we are moving with urgency to make the main thing
6 the things that only we can do in the maritime domain.

7 And I would also say that we are investing in time and
8 space to conduct experimentation and concept development
9 with combat-validated forces, and that is important to
10 embrace what is in front of us, put pressure on ourselves,
11 and deliver step changes. Move faster. Learn faster. We
12 can do that at lower training risk with combat-ready forces.

13 And then, finally, the fleet integration, using the
14 fleet and the Joint Force to red-team ourselves in terms of
15 survivability and lethality.

16 Senator Kaine: Great. General Braga:

17 General Braga: Senator, I will just mention two to add
18 on there. First, information advantage and information
19 operations. I think we are watching it daily, the strategic
20 impact this has. I cannot envision a future where that does
21 not increase in importance, affecting targeting audiences,
22 general populations, governments, armies, morale, and
23 eroding their overall effectiveness.

24 Secondly, we have started a campaign of learning. The
25 other component commanders mentioned it. But I really look

1 at SOF, space, and cyber as the modern-day triad. I think
2 we owe you best military advice and options and national
3 command authority for flexible deterrent and flexible
4 response options that involve and optimize those three legs
5 of the triad for options, both in deterrence but also
6 maintaining dominance in the domains for high-end conflict
7 and supporting the Joint Force.

8 Senator Kaine: I am out of time but can I let General
9 Slife answer? Are you okay, Coach? Thank you.

10 General Slife: Thanks, Senator. I will just briefly
11 highlight one other thing. You know, I believe that the
12 service components of SOF are most effective when we are
13 closest to our parent services, and I think you have heard
14 some of that from Admiral Howard talking about his
15 relationship with the fleet. It is no different for us.

16 And so I think one of the places where we see a value
17 proposition for SOF is enabling, particularly in conflict-
18 type scenarios, enabling our broader service, you know,
19 parent, to be effective. And so I think for AFSOC there is
20 a lot of work to be done in the integrated air defense area
21 as well as the counter-space mission area. There are a lot
22 of very critical capabilities that our adversaries rely on
23 in those areas that I think SOF brings unique capability to
24 effect. Thank you, Senator.

25 Senator Kaine: Thanks, Mr. Chair.

1 Senator Kelly: Senator Tuberville.

2 Senator Tuberville: Thank you very much, gentlemen.
3 Thanks for being here today. Thank you for your service.
4 It is such a tough time for the world that we live in.

5 This is for all of you. What resources, if any, have
6 you asked for but not have been provided? And I am asking
7 it for this reason. In November 2020, Acting Secretary of
8 Defense Chris Miller enacted the fiscal year 2017 NDAA
9 requirement to elevate the SO/LIC position to be on par with
10 other service secretaries. But last May, Secretary Austin
11 reversed this decision, burying SO/LIC back under the Under
12 Secretary of Defense for Policy. SO/LIC is still
13 understaffed and is not getting the routine direct access to
14 the Secretary the Deputy Secretary should, as directed by
15 the NDAA.

16 So just any comments any one of you have on that?
17 General, I will start with you.

18 General Slife: Senator, thank you. So each year I we
19 find ourselves trying to balance our budgeting
20 recommendations among modernization, readiness, personnel
21 programs, these types of things, and every year we come up
22 short. I think we could all find additional areas where we
23 would like to invest in order to reduce risk.

24 The budget that was submitted -- I think Senator Ernst
25 described some of the fiscal realities of it -- but it

1 represents a balance of risk among those areas. And to
2 directly answer your question, I think each of us have
3 contributed to the SOCOM Commander's unfunded priority list,
4 which reflect those areas where if additional resources were
5 available those would be the things we would recommend that
6 Congress might consider investing in.

7 Senator Tuberville: Thank you. General?

8 General Braga: Senator, I would echo. We have
9 submitted that in the congressional unfunded priority list
10 and it touches upon a lot of some of the capabilities we
11 were talking about previously. But there is absolutely an
12 impact if you just take inflation alone. Inflation alone
13 has certainly affected our supply chain, no different than
14 any other facet of society right now. I mean, the average
15 increase in parts, when you are talking for our helicopter
16 fleet, has gone up 31 to 35 percent, and that comes at a
17 tradeoff.

18 So there are always tradeoffs and prioritization
19 decisions to be made where you balance risk to force, risk
20 to mission, training readiness, or deploying through
21 operations, activities, and investments. So that is
22 continual, but just like the rest of the world, we are
23 dealing with that impact of inflation right now, with, as
24 Senator Ernst said, the flat budget.

25 Senator Tuberville: Thank you. Admiral?

1 Admiral Howard: What is before the Congress now is an
2 opportunity within Naval Special Warfare to make some
3 additional investments, in denied area of access, across the
4 maritime flank, where we maintain comparative advantage with
5 peer adversaries, irregular and scalable, kinetic and non-
6 kinetic effects, so a suite of effects across a range of
7 attribution options there, and the survivability and
8 lethality of our sub-sea and surface platforms.

9 So given the opportunity to make some growth in our
10 community, pending the congressional judgments there, we are
11 on the right trajectory for what I outlined before, in terms
12 of what we are aiming for, for regular deterrence.

13 General Glynn: Senator, thanks for the opportunity to
14 comment on it. I would say that the most acute area, the
15 place where we face the hardest choices, and they are well-
16 known at ASD(SO/LIC) and at the SOCOM level, that is a good
17 team. It is a good relationship that supports all of us, I
18 believe.

19 But where it really comes down to a hard choice is when
20 we have to make choices between equipment and people. I
21 think you heard that in our opening statements. And what do
22 I mean by that? Modernization, the investment in the
23 technology that is required to compete with the likes of
24 Russia and China, while taking care of current operations
25 and supporting the force and the family. And I think that

1 is somewhat where we are at now, in terms of how will we pay
2 for modernization going forward.

3 Senator Tuberville: Thank you. Just one more quick
4 question here. A recurring theme here in the Senate is that
5 our commanders in the field do not have enough ISR. Just
6 your quick thoughts, you know, commercially, the available
7 options such as Maxar. What capabilities do they bring? As
8 anybody got any thoughts on that?

9 General Slife: Senator I would offer to you that
10 commercial capabilities are growing at a rate that rivals
11 organic military capabilities, and I think a key part of our
12 ISR enterprise going forward is going to be leveraging the
13 various modalities of intelligence collection available from
14 orbit. So I am interested in pursuing every one of those as
15 part of a holistic air- and space-based ISR architecture.

16 Senator Tuberville: Anybody else got a thought on
17 Maxar or any other capabilities?

18 General Braga: Senator, as the world becomes more
19 connected we need to rethink modern-day ISR, so it is not
20 just from things in orbit, off-sea LEO, NEO, and space, but
21 also just how the world becomes more connected and rethink
22 and experiment with ways to have better situational
23 understanding out there. Again, I think SOF can be part of
24 that solution, with our innovation-type mindset of employing
25 commercial capability as well as government-procured

1 capability.

2 Senator Tuberville: Admiral Howard, have you heard of
3 cell drone?

4 Admiral Howard: Yes, I have.

5 Senator Tuberville: What do you think about it?

6 Admiral Howard: Unmanned capabilities are absolutely
7 critical for autonomous systems that give us situational
8 awareness, decision dominance, and in the cast of that
9 platform specifically, maritime domain awareness.

10 Senator Tuberville: General Glynn, have you got
11 anything to say about it?

12 General Glynn: I would offer, Senator, that I think
13 when we think ISR we typically think of that vehicle, and
14 really General Slife is the one who has educated me over the
15 course of the last year that really the way forward we need
16 to think about the manner in which those vehicles are
17 controlled, rather than a single operator with a single
18 control system on a single platform, offered referred to as
19 "swarming," but how will a single operator, through a
20 control system, have access to any number of platforms that
21 can do what is needed, when it is needed.

22 Senator Tuberville: Thank you.

23 Senator Kelly: Thank you. We will go through our next
24 round of 5-minute questions. I want to start with Admiral
25 Howard and talk a little bit about undersea capabilities

1 here.

2 You know, it is pretty much understood that our
3 undersea capability, we have got a comparative advantage to
4 Russia and China in the ability to operate under the ocean.
5 And I understand this is one of SOCOM's priority investment
6 areas for fiscal year 2023 is the development of a new
7 undersea insertion and exfiltration capability.

8 So, Admiral, can just kind of step through us here how
9 the development process is going, how you are working with
10 SOCOM to extend the undersea reach of naval special
11 operators, and also a little bit about integration with the
12 regular Navy. You know, often as you are developing a
13 system and you are trying to get it to work with something
14 you might not -- it is not part of the development program
15 but it needs to work with existing hardware, that can be a
16 challenge. So if you can comment on that as well.

17 Admiral Howard: Thank you. Our relationship with our
18 submarine force has never been closer. We learn from
19 working with our submarine force. You know, they are an
20 exemplar of a highly reliable organization, which we always
21 strive to be. We also have an advantage as a country in the
22 undersea with our allies and partners. I was recently in
23 Europe with several of our allies, where we are
24 collaborating on new capabilities and combined operations.

25 For acquisition and oversight and execution and due

1 diligence of these programs we are investing with SOCOM and
2 SOCOM's AT&L inside of my own command so that we bolster the
3 workforce around the execution of the program. The
4 integration, we have a dependency with the Navy. There is a
5 great alignment with Admiral Gilday's staff and OPNAV N9
6 under Admiral Conn, and then, of course, at NAVSEA. I am
7 confident that we are on a trajectory to deliver the nation
8 capabilities that are distinctive and access the denied
9 targets in a way that is survivable and persistent.

10 Senator Kelly: Can you talk a little bit about some of
11 the requirements that, unclassified, you know, what you are
12 looking for in this system and how the integration with the
13 Navy is going? I know in prior systems we have had
14 difficulty integrating hardware onto submarines, and I want
15 to make sure that that is not something we encounter here
16 with this program.

17 Admiral Howard: We are on the right course in that
18 regard with the Navy to expand the kinds of capabilities
19 that we can integrate onto our submarine posts. With future
20 capabilities we are looking at extended ranges, increasing
21 payloads, teaming with unmanned systems. That is generally
22 our strategy. We see the undersea as absolutely critical to
23 deterrence. I think that it is a place that we maintain
24 advantage, and it is a place where we must maintain
25 advantage to critically deter our peer adversaries.

1 Senator Kelly: Thank you. Senator Blackburn.

2 Senator Blackburn: Thank you, and thank you all. We
3 appreciate your time so incredibly much.

4 General Braga, thank you for your time yesterday. We
5 appreciate that. And we talked a lot about China and the
6 Chinese Communist Party. And I want to talk a bit more
7 about that because, as you know, when we look at what is
8 happening with this new Axis of Evil -- Russia, China, Iran,
9 and North Korea -- and look at the way that Russia and
10 China, and North Korea also, with hypersonics, the way they
11 are looking at space and nuclear and cyber and hypersonics
12 autonomy, there are concerns that have arisen.

13 So talk to me a little bit about how you are leveraging
14 early research in emerging technologies to prevent some of
15 technological surprises across different warfighting
16 domains, and how are you drilling down on that? Because it
17 is going to require an intentionality that sometimes may not
18 have been required in other disciplines.

19 General Braga: Thank you, Senator, for the opportunity
20 to discuss that. I think one of the transferrable lessons
21 learned from the last couple of decades is the power of
22 network analysis and network defeat in identifying critical
23 vulnerabilities, whether it is supply chain or high-end
24 weapons systems, as really the whole Joint Force is looking
25 at maintained dominance, whether it is JADC2 or the joint

1 warfighting concept.

2 SOF's role in that is, I think, clearly to seek out
3 some of those vulnerabilities, work amongst our Joint Force
4 partners, and specifically in support of the geographic
5 combatant commands, but leveraging perhaps the other
6 strengths of, I mentioned earlier about cyber and space, for
7 more holistic effect to hold at risk some of their critical
8 vulnerabilities and nodes, be it in C5 ISR&T, their mission
9 command platforms, or weapon systems. We would absolutely
10 appreciate the opportunity, in a closed-door session, to go
11 into more detail at some of the operational aspects that we
12 are looking at, but have confidence that we are continually
13 experimenting and looking at and analyzing how to best take
14 advantage of those -- learn more first and then look how to
15 take advantage of those possible vulnerabilities in support
16 of the Joint Force.

17 Senator Blackburn: And I think it would be helpful to
18 hear from each of you, and you can just give this to us in a
19 written response. I think it is probably a bit too much for
20 here, and then we can dig a little deeper on that in a
21 closed session at some point. But hear from each of you
22 where you feel like there are shortfalls in capacity and
23 capabilities and then how we need to change. Each year we
24 are working on the NDAA, and as we change that focus to look
25 at what we are going to do in the future, how we are going

1 to utilize new capabilities, hypersonics, how we are going
2 to utilize some of the technological innovation that is
3 coming our way, I think it would be helpful to us as we go
4 through to figure out, you know, where you all see, where
5 the differences in what we perceive and what you are dealing
6 with every day as you are going about your task. So if I
7 could ask you all for a written response I would appreciate
8 that.

9 I also want to turn a little bit to AI and assisted
10 decision-making. We have, I would say, probably at this
11 point, because of ISR we have volumes of data and video
12 feeds that could be used to establish really kind of a
13 routine and also an abnormal activity line. And I think it
14 is important for us to know how you all are using big data
15 analytics to look at this and how you are going to expand
16 the utilization of big data in order accommodate and
17 backfill limited personnel. And knowing what you are going
18 to do with those analytics and how you are going to utilize
19 AI would be helpful to us.

20 I guess I have got five pages of questions here and I
21 am out of time. So, Mr. Chairman, I will send it back to
22 you and will have some things for the record. Thank you
23 all.

24 Senator Kelly: Thank you, Senator. Senator Ernst.

25 Senator Ernst: Yes. Thank you so much. And I am

1 going to go right back to POTFF. I think as we all have sat
2 down and visited about the things that are important for our
3 forces, especially in the realm of SOCOM, it does come back
4 to Preservation of the Force and Family. And so I know,
5 General Slife, we had started with you. You talked a little
6 bit about moral injury and what you are doing to combat
7 those effects. And what I would like for each of you to do
8 as well is talk a little bit about POTFF, and if you have
9 any special initiatives that you have started we would love
10 to hear about those, as well as other avenues that you would
11 like to see adopted throughout your forces.

12 So, General Slife, do you have any additional that you
13 would like to add, and then we will go to General Braga.

14 General Slife: Briefly, Senator. So POTFF resourcing
15 is appropriately spread a little unevenly across AFSOC.
16 Some of our units have greater demands for one aspect than
17 another. But one thing that we have generally seen is the
18 units with POTFF resources embedded at the unit level have
19 lower incidences of ill discipline, they have lower
20 instances of sexual assault and sexual harassment, they have
21 lower instances of suicidal ideation or attempted suicides.
22 And so based on some of this there is certainly a
23 correlation. We are not yet sure about causation. We
24 continue to collect data to be able to draw that.

25 But based on the very positive results we have seen out

1 of our POTFF program there is an increase in AFSOC's POTFF
2 investment. We have taken internal offsets in order to
3 increase our POTFF resources across more of our units inside
4 of AFSOC because of the very positive results we have seen.

5 Senator Ernst: That is good. Go where they are.

6 Yeah, thank you. How about USASOC?

7 General Braga: Senator, first of all, thank you for
8 your stalwart support of POTFF over the years. The men and
9 women of USASOC absolutely thank you.

10 I think it has been easy to sell when you show the
11 physical manifestation of someone who has had a grievous
12 physical wound, and we have those types of vignettes, but I
13 do think we need a better job on the data collection phase
14 of it. So we are starting different initiatives, from
15 baselining our incoming students -- again, we have about
16 3,000 at any one time at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, going
17 through our school system -- and identifying a digital
18 profile of them to help them be the best possible person
19 they can be, across all pillars of POTFF.

20 We are investing and trying to be more data-driven,
21 even on spiritual and falling in line with the Army's lead
22 for spiritual assessment tool, which is at least in the
23 academic research proven to increase resiliency and lower
24 rates of depression and suicide and the like. I am a
25 personal huge believer of the behavioral health impact that

1 both our operational psychologists and my clinical workers
2 have just made an untold amount of impact. And when we even
3 look at our formation from suicidal ideations and the like
4 we have a lower rate of usage rate for acute care for those
5 coming into the formation who have been specifically
6 assessed and selected and those who have just been assigned
7 to United States Army Special Operations Command.

8 But we need to do a better job on the data collection,
9 get that to really everyone to tell the story, the good-news
10 story of POTFF. So we are making efforts in that, to not
11 only to smarter-base the SOCOM solution but also human
12 factors dashboard that we are working on at the USASOC
13 level.

14 Senator Ernst: Thank you. Admiral?

15 Admiral Howard: Thank you. One of our data advantage
16 initiatives is around POTFF and seeing the data in a way
17 where we can more accurately articulate measures of
18 effectiveness, understand needs. I would just say a
19 tremendous effort on our team to destigmatize mental health
20 issues. The care that we have embedded is transformation
21 from our ops psychologists to our chaplains, with emphasize
22 on neurocognitive health as well.

23 And then lastly I will just say that veteran health,
24 and thinking about POTFF into our veteran population. This
25 is where we are partnering with outside-of-government

1 entities and bringing those best practices to our veteran
2 teammates.

3 Senator Ernst: Yeah, great. Thank you, Admiral.
4 General Glynn?

5 General Glynn: Senator, I will likewise thank you for
6 your continued support of POTFF. I think I will take a
7 different tack and just flag an area where I think all of us
8 should pay attention, with the shift in the future of what
9 military health care is likely to be. We find ourselves
10 focused on potential gaps between POTFF as we have known it
11 and the areas where it has extended that and our need to
12 walk it back, if you will, to fill in gaps that seem to be
13 created. And I will give you an example.

14 You have heard several references to mental and
15 behavioral health. That specialty care is an area that we
16 are paying very close attention to going forward. You can
17 see that that is going to be a persistent need, and access
18 to that is -- I know it is challenging across the
19 enterprise, not just military health care, but that is an
20 example of an area.

21 On the plus side, we talked about this in office call
22 but for wider awareness. SOCOM's investment and our
23 opportunity to work on the cognitive performance side, our
24 ability to baseline folks who join MARSOC, and now we can
25 watch them over time is already interesting. I think it is

1 going to become fascinating over the course of 5 to 10
2 years.

3 Senator Ernst: Absolutely. Thank you so much. Mr.
4 Chair.

5 Senator Kelly: Thank you, Senator. So I just returned
6 from visiting our allies and servicemembers, a couple of
7 stops in Poland and Germany. It is clear that U.S. Special
8 Operations Forces can act as a significant force multiplier
9 for our strategic partners, including when facing off some
10 well-armed adversaries. And I think nowhere is this more
11 apparent than in what is going on in Ukraine today.

12 As I mentioned, and I think General Braga mentioned
13 during our opening remarks, reports have indicated that
14 Putin's army here has stalled in Ukraine because of the
15 direct support in training special operations forces of the
16 Ukrainian military since the invasion of Crimea in 2014.

17 General Braga, I know that you cannot comment on the
18 specifics in this training but can you discuss some of the
19 lessons learned from Ukraine regarding the use of Army
20 special operations capabilities as the U.S. military
21 continues in this pivot towards great power competition with
22 Russia?

23 General Braga: Senator, thank you for the opportunity.
24 I think there are lots of lessons learned that can be
25 applied elsewhere, although other parts of the globe are not

1 certainly the same, from our information ops and
2 psychological operations, civil affairs teams on the ground
3 right now working with the multitude of international non-
4 governmental organizations supporting the people of Ukraine,
5 and certainly our special forces teams who have been there,
6 again, for multiple years now, helping them. I mean, the
7 credit really goes to the Ukrainian people and the Ukrainian
8 military. We just helped them a little bit along that
9 journey.

10 But I do think what is an untold story is the
11 international partnership with the special operations forces
12 of a multitude of different countries. I will not name the
13 number right now but they have absolutely banded together in
14 a much-outsized impact to support Ukrainian SOF and
15 Ukrainian military in their efforts right now that I think
16 is a great new story. And I think that really bore out from
17 the last 20 years of working together, sweating together,
18 bleeding together in different battlefields, on different
19 continents. And some of these partners are new. There has
20 been a coalescence and a joining of that unity of effort.
21 It is absolutely inspiring to see. That, itself, is -- I
22 think you mentioned earlier -- is something that our
23 adversaries desire to have, that we have, and that is really
24 a gold standard, those international partnerships, that can
25 be part of the solution moving forward.

1 Certainly we are taking tactical lessons learned and
2 immediately trying to apply them to our schoolhouses and our
3 other foreign partners for everyone to learn as this
4 unfortunate conflict continues to unfold.

5 Senator Kelly: Yeah. Sometimes it is not ideal to
6 share those lessons learned. Do you have any examples that
7 you are comfortable --

8 General Braga: Well, it is impressive to see, just in
9 open press, you see the impact that manned and unmanned
10 drones and teaming is having. I think that is an absolute
11 critical growth area for United States Army Special
12 Operations Command. It is one of our modernization
13 priorities, one of our seven modernization priorities. I
14 cannot envision a future battlefield without ever-increasing
15 manned, unmanned robotics and the application of AI to
16 maximize their effect and impact across all warfighting
17 functions. That is something we are looking at extremely
18 closely and only seeing growth in future prioritization
19 resources training. And even possibly we are experimenting
20 what type of MOS or branches or specialties are inside the
21 Army Special Operations Command, so it is not just an
22 additional duty. It is an actual specialty.

23 Senator Kelly: Can you comment on a little bit about
24 how the cultural and language, you know, training that Army
25 special operators receive and how that has helped in

1 training our special operations partners in other countries?

2 General Braga: Senator, it is imperative that we are
3 both culturally attuned and speak the language. Now, do we
4 speak the language of every country we go to? We cannot
5 really match that up, but we try, and we put a lot of effort
6 into it. It is a baseline requirement, coming out of the
7 special forces pipeline. It is maintained throughout,
8 through sustained training. And perhaps most importantly,
9 as we geographically align -- I mean, our special forces
10 groups and their civil affairs and SYOPS teams, they stay
11 regionally aligned.

12 We are working in all geographic combatant commanders
13 to this day, and many of them have not taken their eyes off
14 the ball to support the GCC commanders' priorities there, be
15 it SIMC [phonetic] teams, military information and support
16 teams, our special forces ODAs, or even aviation detachment,
17 advisories detachments. They are operating around the globe
18 in support of every GCC commander's priorities, but language
19 is absolutely critical to being part of that
20 interoperability. It is not just equipment, and it also
21 shows that you care.

22 Senator Kelly: Before I turn it over to Senator Ernst
23 here for the third round of questions, and I know this has
24 been a focus that the Army has had for decades, this
25 language capability, but for General Slife, Admiral Howard,

1 and General Glynn, is this something that your special
2 operators are also focused on, or is it a capability you
3 would like to integrate into the force in the future?

4 General Slife: Senator, specifically for AFSOC,
5 because most of our operations deal either directly with
6 aviation or with the integration of air and ground
7 capabilities through Joint Terminal Attack Control and
8 things of that nature, English is the international language
9 of aviation, as you know, and so what we have found is that
10 our partners generally prefer to do those security force
11 assistance type activities in English because it is what
12 they deal with in the aviation world.

13 So we do not see a demand signal for increased language
14 capability, although to General Braga's point about cultural
15 training, cultural awareness, and those types of things,
16 that is an area of investment for us as we think about
17 security force assistance.

18 Admiral Howard: Thank you, Senator. We have a modest
19 investment, I think it is calibrated the right way, and we
20 also make an effort to increasingly identify candidates that
21 are coming in with natural language capability.

22 General Glynn: Senator, language and culture have been
23 part of our training pipeline since inception, and so every
24 critical skills operator that is created, or has been
25 created over the course of the last 15 years, goes through a

1 language unique to the theater in which we intend, or they
2 are most likely to deploy. So as you would hope, like we
3 have recently shifted to some of the more significant
4 languages in the INDOPACOM AOR, to include Mandarin Chinese.

5 Senator Kelly: Thank you. Senator Ernst.

6 Senator Ernst: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Chair, and I know
7 our vote has been called so I will just be brief, and if you
8 can provide brief answers as well.

9 I did mention a little bit in my opening statement the
10 fact that SOCOM's budget is flat for this year in what the
11 President has submitted. So we know that that is less
12 buying power with the rate of inflation out there.

13 If you can, talk through the impact that that will have
14 on your ability to train and resource and mobilize then your
15 forces. I also noted that SOCOM submitted \$650 million in
16 unfunded requirements to buy down risk and to accelerate
17 modernization, which really further reinforces the
18 inadequacy of the budget as presented by the President.

19 So if you can, just very briefly again, General Slife
20 we will start with you, if you could talk about the impacts
21 and what that will have on training modernization
22 resourcing.

23 General Slife: Yes, Senator. Briefly, it delays --
24 you know, any resource shortfall delays our ability to
25 modernize. It delays our ability to maintain the force at

1 the highest state of readiness. These are all balances.
2 They are part of the risk calculus. And so I think you see,
3 as you characterized it, the SOCOM unfunded priority list
4 are those things that SOCOM believes will buy down that risk
5 to a lower level than where we are carrying it right now.

6 Senator Ernst: Great. Thank you.

7 General Braga: Senator, I echo, obviously, the
8 unfunded priority list will help buy down that risk by
9 accelerating some of the capabilities we are looking to
10 expand upon that we have been talking about. I mentioned
11 briefly that inflation is absolutely having an impact. It
12 affects our flying hour programs, repair parts, repair
13 engines, and that certainly has an impact, and what that
14 ultimately results in is at the other end, reduced readiness
15 if you do not have the way to keep your aircraft maintained
16 and your crews up to speed, just from an aviation type
17 aspect.

18 So it certainly has an impact, and at the ultimate end
19 of the day can you put forward less into the theater to
20 support the geographic combatant commanders if there is less
21 resources, and I would say that would be something we have
22 to look at as we maintain and restack our prioritization
23 between training, readiness, modernization, and employment.

24 Senator Ernst: Yeah. Thank you. Admiral?

25 Admiral Howard: Where I have a concern is really in

1 readiness and the ability to -- what we are seeing with the
2 focus on experimentation and concept development for step
3 changes to be ready for what is ahead. You know, we are
4 seeing an increase in requirements for that experimentation
5 and concept development, and to get ready.

6 Where I see concern going forward is in unmanned
7 systems, multi-demand with an emphasis on software, not
8 hardware. That gets to the autonomy and interoperability.
9 We have to win as a nation in that capability space.

10 Senator Ernst: Thank you. Major Glynn, or General
11 Glynn? Excuse me. Major Glynn. Sorry. I demoted you
12 horribly. I am so sorry. General Glynn.

13 General Glynn: I would go back and do that all over
14 again.

15 Senator Ernst: A better day and age, maybe.

16 General Glynn: Senator, as a component without major
17 platforms it boils down to people in our case. So what the
18 choice is in modernization, investments in modernization,
19 how quickly can we go after the technological capability and
20 expertise to understand our electromagnetic signature and
21 our digital footprint, and to have an awareness of our
22 adversaries? That would be one.

23 The pace at which that change will occur is going to be
24 impacted by resourcing. The alternative is to maintain a
25 less -- as has been alluded to by the other commanders -- a

1 less-ready force or present a smaller force offering around
2 the globe, which is obviously not what we want to do because
3 we have longstanding relationships with allies and partners
4 that we want to sustain. But that is where we are at, as a
5 component, when it comes to that budget situation.

6 Senator Ernst: Thank you. So I think all of your
7 statements just further emphasized that we do need to have
8 growth within this component, within SOCOM, and the budget,
9 to make sure that you are able to modernize, to make sure
10 your readiness does not suffer, to make sure that we are
11 able to fill the ranks and continue to fill the ranks in the
12 future.

13 You know, I have always had it hammered in my head to
14 assume prudent risk, but at what point does that risk no
15 longer present itself as prudent? And I think we need to
16 continue to move forward with a robust budget, and it is
17 something that I will be pushing for as we move into our
18 budget cycle through appropriations and with this National
19 Defense Authorization Act.

20 And with that I will have no more questions, and so I
21 will turn it back to you, Mr. Chair. Thank you.

22 Senator Kelly: Thank you, Senator Ernst. I have got a
23 few more. I want to try to get through them briefly so we
24 can get to this vote. At 30 minutes people start to get
25 nervous.

1 General Slife, SOCOM is nearing a contract award for
2 maybe up to 75 Armed Overwatch airframes, and this would
3 provide reconnaissance and strike capabilities to small,
4 geographically disaggregated teams of special operations
5 forces. Can you articulate the requirement for the Armed
6 Overwatch Program and explain why a new platform is more
7 affordable and effective than existing platforms, including
8 certainly for ground attack the A-10 but also for
9 reconnaissance, something like the MQ-9, and just a little
10 bit about on the requirements and the affordability
11 effectiveness aspect of this.

12 General Slife: Thanks for the opportunity to talk
13 about it, Senator. So a couple of aspects of that. First
14 of all, our methodology for supporting our forces on the
15 ground over the last several decades has really boiled down
16 to the development of what we call an air stack over
17 objective areas. And so you will typically have single-
18 role, specialized platforms, AC-130s, A-10s, MQ-9, U-28s.
19 You have this stack of airplanes over an objective, each
20 platform providing a niche capability to the force on the
21 ground. That averages, in terms of cost per flying hour,
22 over \$150,000 an hour is what it costs to generate kind of
23 the typical stack for that.

24 As we look at having a multi-role platform in the Armed
25 Overwatch concept, that kind of multi-role set of

1 capabilities comes down to something less than \$10,000 a
2 flight hour. So it is a much more efficient way to do that.
3 Further, it allows us to push those platforms further
4 forward into more austere areas where they can operate co-
5 located with the ground teams that they are partnered with.

6 And so not having them have to fly from, you know,
7 hundreds of miles away but rather being partnered with the
8 ground team that they will be supporting in places that have
9 very austere aviation support with a very light logistics
10 footprint is really what we are after, Senator.

11 Senator Kelly: How do you resolve the issue of
12 something like an AC-130 gunship being able to lay down a
13 massive amount of fire to the ground with something like an
14 AT-6 with a limited? Has that been well planned and thought
15 out?

16 General Slife: Senator, I think I would say it depends
17 on the mission that is being contemplated. And so clearly
18 there will be missions that require more deep magazine fire
19 support than what an Armed Overwatch platform might have.
20 But the idea of the Armed Overwatch platform is it is a
21 modular capability, and so you can outfit the aircraft with
22 a robust suite of sensors that will exceed what is available
23 with most dedicated ISR platforms today, or you can outfit
24 the platform with a robust suite of precision munitions. It
25 really depends on the mission.

1 And so clearly the Armed Overwatch platform is not a
2 panacea for every tactical situation that a ground force
3 might find themselves in, but for what we envision the
4 enduring counter-VEO mission looking like we think it is
5 prudent investment.

6 Senator Kelly: When do you feel that the contract
7 award will be made?

8 General Slife: Senator, I think in months, so this
9 summer I expect to see a contract award. All the back-and-
10 forth with industry, the proposals have been received, all
11 the questions have been answered. And at this point the
12 source selection team is going through their deliberations
13 and is going to make a recommendation to the milestone
14 decision authority at SOCOM here in the coming weeks, and
15 then a contract will probably be awarded prior to the end of
16 the summer.

17 Senator Kelly: Thank you. I have one final question
18 for General Braga. You know, at present sometimes obtaining
19 approval to drop a bomb is a lot easier than getting the
20 permission to send a text message. So have you seen any
21 improvement in the ability of your psychological operators
22 to gain the authorities and permissions necessary to operate
23 effectively in the information environment, and if you have
24 not, what more do you think we need to do?

25 General Braga: Senator, I have seen some improvement.

1 In my professional opinion, in order to match the sheer
2 capability and capacity of adversaries, collectively all of
3 us need to expand that capability, and we need to be able to
4 move at the speed of the information environment, which is
5 faster than perhaps we have been used to in the past. So I
6 think it requires new relationships. Certainly we are
7 investing our own resources into expanding that capability
8 in information ops to support our psychological operations
9 forces. It is new ground for all, but it is what we need to
10 do in order to succeed, both in competition and I actually
11 see it for a role in high-end conflict as well.

12 So we have a long way to go. We are on a journey. We
13 have seen some improvements. We are dedicating resources,
14 time, effort, and training towards it, but I absolutely look
15 forward to working with the leadership at the Pentagon and
16 our interagency partners to inform you of any recommended
17 changes moving forward.

18 Senator Kelly: Please do, and my door is always open
19 to all of you. I know Senator Ernst's as well. So anything
20 you need we want to help.

21 I also want to thank you, Generals, Admiral, for
22 participating in this hearing today, and I look forward to
23 continuing to support you and all the men and women at
24 SOCOM, all 74,000.

25 This hearing is adjourned. Thank you.

1 [Whereupon, at 4:03 p.m., the subcommittee was
2 adjourned.]

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

11

12

13

14

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

25