

STATEMENT OF  
HONORABLE MICHAEL D. LUMPKIN  
ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE  
SPECIAL OPERATIONS AND LOW INTENSITY CONFLICT

BEFORE THE 113th CONGRESS  
SENATE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE  
EMERGING THREATS AND CAPABILITIES SUBCOMMITTEE

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## **Introduction**

Chairman Hagan, Ranking Member Fischer, and distinguished members of the Committee, thank you for allowing me to join you today, and for all your steadfast support for our Special Operators and the U.S. Special Operations Command. I am very pleased to be before you with Admiral Bill McRaven, who has expertly led USSOCOM over the past three years. I say without reservation that Admiral McRaven has made a strong command even better. He's been a visionary leader for decades. The programs and initiatives he's put in place to provide premier special operations capabilities to our Geographic Combatant Commands, to oversee and synchronize global counterterrorism operations, and to take care of our Special Operators and their families, will serve the nation for years to come.

## **Evolving Threats**

The nature of the threat that we are facing, especially regarding al-Qa'ida, is changing. Pressure from the U.S. and our allies has altered al-Qa'ida's campaign plan. Al-Qa'ida has been forced to relinquish control over its affiliates, which allows threats from these groups to develop more quickly. Although the scale of threat to the U.S. homeland has diminished, threats to U.S. persons and interests overseas are increasing. We're also seeing an increase in the use of technology, perhaps a function of a younger generation of terrorists who are more adept with smart phones and social media services.

Although their leadership cadre has been depleted, al-Qa'ida and its affiliates retain sanctuaries in the Afghanistan-Pakistan border region and in remote areas of Yemen and Somalia. It is also working to co-opt insurgent movements and violent extremists in Syria, North Africa, and the Sahel. From these regions, the threat of al-Qa'ida attacks against U.S. interests and personnel overseas has grown. Al-Qa'ida is a resilient organization that has become adept at exploiting lapses in security during and following political transitions, civil wars, and periods of unrest. This is particularly true across the Middle East and in Africa. The threat posed by al-Qa'ida and like-minded groups will continue to evolve and it is essential that we remain vigilant, prepared and resourced to meet the threat. We must maintain pressure on al-Qa'ida and its affiliates to ensure they cannot reconstitute a capability to attack the homeland.

The threats we face are not limited to al-Qa'ida and terrorist organizations. North Korea continues to present a threat by proliferating weapons of mass destruction. As we have seen play out over the past few months in the Central African Republic and South Sudan, political instability exacerbated by ethnic and or religious differences can escalate into violence requiring international intervention. We are also called upon to support regional issues, such as the effort to eradicate the Lord's Resistance Army from Central Africa. These demands will continue and we must be prepared to conduct a wide range of operations, often with little notice.

### **Time of Transition**

The Department of Defense is in a time of transition. We are ending the longest prolonged period of war in our nation's history. The future of Afghanistan - as we go through negotiations

on the Bilateral Security Agreement - is yet to be determined. If we are unable to achieve an acceptable agreement and withdraw our forces, it will be much more difficult to maintain pressure on al-Qa'ida in Kunar and Nuristan, which are the traditional al Qa'ida safe havens. Secretary Hagel has told us to plan for all contingences and the department is doing just that.

We are at the end of a long period of historic growth in military budgets and manpower, and must increase our effort to make the most efficient and effective use of the taxpayer dollar without diminishing America's safety. The President's Budget submission for Fiscal Year 2015 levels SOF growth at 69,700 Service Members. ADM McRaven and USSOCOM have done an excellent job finding efficiencies within the Headquarters and realigning billets and capabilities to support the seven Theater Special Operations Commands that are under the combatant command of USSOCOM, but operate in direct support of the Geographic Combatant Commanders.

As ASD SO/LIC, I watch very closely how cuts to the services impact the readiness of USSOCOM. As the Department continues to review and make adjustments to size the force correctly, we are closely monitoring and assessing the availability of critical enablers. For example, we are working with the services to ensure that cuts to the current ISR fleet will not erode our core capability to find, fix, and finish targets. At the same time, we are continuing to balance our organic enabler capabilities to allow SOF to deploy with speed, precision, and lethality to a broad range of contingencies anywhere in the world.

After some very tough decisions during this year's budget review, USSOCOM's base budget request for FY 2015 is less than the levels projected in the five-year budget plan submitted by the President last year but greater than the amount enacted for FY 2014. As we transition operations in Afghanistan and redistribute SOF into other theaters, we will need to ensure that our Operations and Maintenance (O&M) accounts are sufficiently resourced to support these deployments.

We will also watch our Investment accounts carefully. We must maintain the ability to recapitalize and update current platforms such as the efforts underway with both the MC-130J and MC-130P tanker fleets, and to develop and procure SOF specific platforms and systems for both ground and maritime mobility. We must also ensure we invest in the future. Investment in research and development is much like investment in education; the benefits are most often seen a decade down the road. A critical element in the research and development enterprise for special operations is the Combating Terrorism Technical Support Office (CTTSO) which is part of SO/LIC. CTTSO brings together, SOF, the interagency, industry and the Services to find the best solutions to existing and future requirements. Their efforts complement and enhance those of USSOCOM's Special Operations Research, Development and Acquisition Center.

### **Improving our Oversight**

It is imperative from an oversight perspective that SO/LIC look across the department and find material, acquisition and manpower options that ensure our Special Operations forces are trained, ready and postured to meet the rapidly evolving threat.

We have reinforced our supervisory capabilities by leveraging the subject matter expertise of the Joint Staff and the OSD Staff to include the offices of AT&L, P&R, Comptroller, OUDI and CAPE. This effort reflects the FY 2014 NDAA which calls on ASD SO/LIC and USD AT&L to strengthen their defined roles in the oversight of USSOCOM.

We have a number of established processes that bring USSOCOM, the Joint Staff, and the OSD Staff together to ensure we maintain proper oversight of USSOCOM strategy and policy initiatives and maintain oversight responsibilities of Major Force Program 11 (MFP-11) funds. These include, but are not limited to routine interaction between my staff and the USSOCOM Washington Office, daily coordination with the Joint Staff on operations – ongoing and planned, senior level SO/LIC attendance at the monthly USSOCOM Commander’s Decision Round Table, and frequent dialogue between myself and Admiral McRaven.

The oversight responsibilities of my office take on added importance in an environment of fiscal constraint and technological growth. By partnering with OSD AT&L through a SOF acquisition senior level forum, we are enabling the Department to share technology information with the Services, resolve issues, and provide opportunities to leverage technology and resources for SOF.

## **Strategic Options**

In times of uncertainty, we owe the President and the Secretary of Defense the best strategic options to accomplish our national security objectives. This is conducted in close coordination and honest discussion with Congress as you exercise your oversight, authorization and appropriation responsibilities. In the best case, we develop options in advance of crisis, but we must also maintain the ability to quickly react to and support national defense objectives during the heat of crisis.

We must develop options that allow SOF to operate forward in this increasingly population-centric fight that centers not on terrain, but within the human domain. We are moving from a state of “perpetual war” to “perpetual engagement” – engaging with partners to build their capacity; engaging with problems before they become too big to fix without breaking the budget – and, yes, engaging in action, direct or indirect, whenever necessary to keep our enemies off-balance or eliminate continuing/imminent threats.

We must build upon our existing network of bilateral alliances and partnerships and seek opportunities to develop additional partnerships. We must address the sources of potential conflict before they create larger problems. This new network approach involves interagency support to foster bilateral ties.

This work – which focuses on security cooperation, building partner capacity, and a keen awareness of local conditions - relies heavily on the capabilities of our Special Operations

Forces. The ability of SOF to operate with a small footprint in the human domain and in contested environments will only become more important in a future of globally dispersed and irregular threats.

As we build networks with our willing partner nations, SOF is very reliant upon congressionally authorized and properly appropriated programs. I want to thank Congress for continued support for Section 1208 and 1206 authorities. Section 1208 is a critical tool that extends the reach of our forces by allowing them to work more closely with foreign forces, irregular forces, groups or individuals supporting U.S special operations to combat terrorism. The demand for programs under these authorities from the Geographic Combatant Commanders is high and we are approaching the \$50 million annual authorization cap. With the challenges and limitations of U.S. unilateral direct action operations, we believe the need for 1208 authority - as a complementary force multiplier - will extend past its' current expiration at the end of fiscal year 2015.

Section 1206 authority allows the Secretary of Defense to build the capacity of foreign military forces to conduct counterterrorism or stability operations. Section 1206 has had notable successes in Afghanistan as we prepared our NATO partners for combat operations. The challenge before us now is to attain the same level of success we have enjoyed through this authority in Afghanistan in other parts of the globe. Programs under this same authority are now focused on the terrorist hot spots of Yemen, East Africa and North Africa.

Programs under both of these authorities are examples of our continued close cooperation with the Department of State. Programs under 1208 must have concurrence from the relevant Chief of Mission and 1206 must have concurrence from the Secretary of State. We have already notified Congress for the first two tranches of 1206 authority programs for this fiscal year.

The Global Security Contingency Fund (GSCF), a pilot authority entering its third year, was established as a joint Department of Defense and Department of State administered program. The fiscal year 2014 Appropriations Act provided \$30 million for GSCF, the first time money was appropriated for the authority. We appreciate your support for this, as it will greatly improve our ability to execute GSCF programs. Along with the Department of State, we are committed to identifying high priority programs for GSCF.

### **Past Operations and Future Successes**

As we move towards a state of globally-networked perpetual engagement, increased reliance on partner nations, and reduced footprint operations, our efforts are grounded in experiences that demonstrate the success of this approach. Colombia and the Philippines are case studies in how a small investment of SOF, resourced for an enduring time frame, can have positive results.

In the Philippines, with a task force of about 500 SOF and general-purpose force enablers, we helped degrade what was once considered to be a serious transnational terrorist threat from Abu Sayyaf and Jamaah Islamiyah. Our efforts helped deny al-Qa'ida a strong regional presence in

Southeast Asia, and made it harder for terrorists to carry out high profile attacks such as the 2002 Bali bombing.

In Colombia, we provided significant military aid, counter-insurgency training, and humanitarian assistance in a broad-based initiative to prevent narcotics traffickers from developing sanctuaries in that country. Plan Colombia was a sustained commitment to building the capacity of an important partner. It involved long-term efforts to help Colombia build a more professional, more accountable, more capable military – giving that nation the ability to solve its own security challenges, and to take ownership of the vital process of eliminating terrorist and insurgent sanctuaries within its own borders. Plan Colombia was an interagency effort to assist the Colombians in eradicating narcotics and building stronger financial institutions.

This work has paid off. Colombia is not only a far more secure and prosperous nation now; it has emerged as an exporter of regional security.

We have the same opportunities before us now in Africa and parts of the Middle East. As we did in Colombia and the Philippines we must be willing to accept the risk of placing small numbers of specially trained forces forward to develop the trust of our partner forces and enable them over the long term to adequately deal with violent extremists and terrorists that threaten our mutual security goals. These relatively small investments come in many forms and can be tailored to support U.S. security objectives. Our logistical, intelligence and, when required, operational support to the French and African partners in the Sahel has been critical in stemming the tide of violent extremism in Mali. Modest investments supporting AMISOM troops in the Horn of

Africa have helped to reverse the trajectory of al-Shabaab. In Yemen, we have had successes but require a more robust and sustained effort to turn the tide of AQAP's expansion.

These discrete activities and operations, in support of Geographic Combatant Commanders, in close concert and with the concurrence of Ambassadors and country teams, anchored through liaison with the inter-agency and in partnership with willing allies is what comprises a global SOF network. What we do in Yemen has effects across the Gulf of Aden in Somalia. Our activities in the Sahel to support regional armed forces efforts to interdict smuggling and resupply lines have effects in Mali and Libya. We do not always have to take unilateral direct action, but the nature of the threat does require that we must always be engaged.

## **Conclusion**

Within SOF, we have five axioms that we call the SOF Truths. The first of which is, "Humans are more important than hardware." The SOF operator is our primary weapon system, and it is my goal and the goal of all in SO/LIC to ensure they are resourced and prepared for today's fight and the battles we will face in the future. The same can be said of taking care of our families. USSOCOM's Preservation of the Force and Family (POTFF) program, takes a whole-person approach to the mental, physical, spiritual and psychological welfare of the force. With the great demands we place on our SOF operators, the pro-active nature of this program builds resilience and strength both for the SOF operator and for our families.

As ASD SO/LIC, I am proud to represent the Soldiers, Sailors, Airman, Marines, and Civilians that are assigned to USSOCOM. Their sacrifices in this war are immense – since October 2001, 385 Special Operators have been killed in action, and another 2,160 have been wounded. We have asked a lot of the men and women assigned to our SOF formations since 9/11, and we will continue to ask much of them in the future. I am committed to doing everything I can to ensure these brave warriors have the best training, equipment, and overall support we can possibly provide and to work closely with Congress and my senior Policy colleagues across the government to ensure we have the right strategies and policies in place to employ them effectively.

I thank Congress for your continuing support to our men and women in uniform and look forward to your questions.