

**OPENING STATEMENT OF U.S. SENATOR JACK REED  
CHAIRMAN, SENATE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE**

**ROOM SD-G50  
DIRKSEN SENATE OFFICE BUILDING  
Tuesday, April 5, 2022**

*To receive testimony on United States Special Operations Command and United States Cyber Command in review of the Defense Authorization Request for Fiscal Year 2023 and the Future Years Defense Program.*

*(As Prepared for Delivery)*

**REED:** Good morning. The committee meets today to receive an update on the readiness and posture of U.S. Special Operations Command and U.S. Cyber Command. Our witnesses are Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations and Low-Intensity Conflict Christopher Maier, Commander of U.S. Special Operations Command General Richard Clarke, and Commander of U.S. Cyber Command, National Security Agency Director, and Chief of the Central Security Service, General Paul Nakasone. I would note that this is likely General Clarke's last appearance before the committee, and I would like to express my appreciation for your 38 years of service to the nation, including as the Commandant at West Point and Commanding General of the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division. On behalf of the committee, I hope our witnesses will convey our appreciation to the men and women you represent, and their families, for their dedication and professionalism.

For the first time since Congress reformed the responsibilities of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations and Low-Intensity Conflict, or ASD SOLIC, more than 5 years ago, the office has a Senate-confirmed Assistant Secretary and full-time Director of the Secretariat for Special Operations focused on the advocacy and oversight of special operations forces. These positions are critical to ensuring our special operations forces are trained, equipped, and organized to adequately support our National Defense Strategy. I appreciate the Department's efforts over the past year to institutionalize the role of the ASD SOLIC, but I remain concerned that the number and expertise of the personnel assigned to supporting the office's "service secretary-like" responsibilities continues to fall short of what is required. I hope the Department will prioritize and accelerate these hiring efforts in the coming months.

The threat from violent extremist groups like ISIS and al Qaeda, while diminished, remains real and will continue to require the sustained application of special operations capabilities that have been honed over the last 20 years. Additionally, long-term strategic competition with China and Russia as well as the challenges posed by Iran and North Korea increasingly require the tailored and often clandestine capabilities that only our special operations forces can provide.

Following our withdrawal from Afghanistan, the special operations community is at an inflection point. Assistant Secretary Maier, General Clarke, I look forward to an update regarding your efforts to focus and prepare our special operations forces for the challenges ahead. In particular, I would ask that you discuss the capabilities we need to build an enduring advantage over our strategic competitors, how you are shaping the force of the future through recruiting, retention, and building a culture of accountability, and how you are addressing the unique challenges faced by special operations families.

Turning to Cyber Command. General Nakasone, the Commander of U.S. European Command recently testified to the Committee about his appreciation for the performance of your Command and the National Security Agency prior to and during the Russian assault on Ukraine. Please convey our gratitude to the personnel under your command for their exceptional work. I also want to commend General Nakasone, the President and his staff, and the leaders of the Intelligence Community for the unprecedented and skillful release of intelligence over the last several months that exposed Russia's aggressive intentions and deceitful activities. Intelligence officials are understandably cautious about revealing hard-won insights on adversaries, but this current strategy has proven highly effective in strengthening the international community's response and creating dilemmas for Vladimir Putin. This is a great example of competing effectively in the information domain, and I hope we will continue to make this kind of creative use of intelligence information.

General Nakasone, you have been working to mature the cyber force and advance its capabilities to conduct defensive, offensive, and supporting intelligence operations to counter our adversaries. I know that improving the readiness of our Cyber Mission Forces is your highest priority. For you to succeed, however, the military services must increase their numbers of qualified and trained personnel for this mission set. Compounding this challenge, the private sector has realized the immense value of our highly skilled military cyber operators and is offering them very high compensation to leave the military. The services must adjust accordingly by providing a combination of incentives to retain these personnel. I would note that Senators Manchin and Rounds are holding a Cyber Subcommittee

hearing focused on this critical topic this afternoon, and I would welcome your thoughts on the issue.

Over the past several years, Cyber Command and the NSA, working jointly, have taken vigorous and sustained actions to defend our elections from foreign interference and malign influence operations. General Nakasone, with the 2022 mid-term elections approaching, I would ask for your assessment of our election defense efforts, which you have described as an “enduring, no-fail mission.”

Finally, I would note that, in accordance with changes in the global security environment and President Biden’s heightened focus on the Indo-Pacific region, Cyber Command has shifted a task force to focus on competition with China and has created the China Outcomes Group under senior-level leadership. The work of these organizations will be of keen interest to the Committee.

I again want to thank the witnesses for their service and appearance before us today. I look forward to your testimony.

Let me now turn to the Ranking Member. Senator Inhofe.