

STATEMENT OF
REAR ADMIRAL TIM SZYMANSKI, U.S. NAVY
COMMANDER
NAVAL SPECIAL WARFARE COMMAND

BEFORE THE

SENATE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON EMERGING THREATS AND CAPABILITIES

APRIL 11, 2018

WRITTEN STATEMENT

Chairwoman Ernst, Ranking Member Heinrich and distinguished Members of the Committee, I am honored to appear before you, and proud to provide an update on your Navy's Special Operations Force and the U.S. Special Operations Command's maritime component.

As you are aware, the security challenges facing our nation today are numerous, and are made more difficult by adversaries who are exploiting emerging technologies and gaining ground. We will continue to face Violent Extremist Organizations (VEOs), while the battlefield expands and becomes more complex and chaotic. Today, our most pressing security concerns involve the aggressive, coercive, and disruptive actions of near-peer competitors and rogue regimes. Exerting power by fighting below the level of armed conflict favors these players to the point that they are gaining advantages that threaten our national security. We must continue to be smarter, stronger, quicker, and more lethal than our adversaries, in order to protect our nation in a world that grows more complex every day.

As an enterprise of nearly 10,000 personnel— 2,810 SEALs; 780 Special Warfare Combatant-craft Crewmen; 4,100 support personnel; 780 reservists; 1,240 civilians – your Naval Special Warfare (NSW) Command accounts for only 2.4 percent of the Navy's personnel. Our budget accounts for less than one percent of the Department of the Navy's budget, and approximately 12 percent of U.S. Special Operations Command (USSOCOM) budget.

We continue to have a global presence – operating in more than 35 countries on any given day. We are networked with the U.S. Navy and Joint Forces, the interagency, and allies and foreign partners, executing missions in support of USSOCOM, the U.S. Navy, geographic Combatant Commanders, and ultimately, national objectives across a full range of political and operational environments.

NSW's ALIGNMENT TO THE NATIONAL DEFENSE STRATEGY

The National Defense Strategy (NDS) published earlier this year charged the Department of Defense (DoD) to be more agile, more lethal, and more innovative in order to maintain our competitive advantage. The Chief of Naval Operations, in turn, laid out the maritime responsibilities articulated in the NDS, focusing on increasing Naval Power through balancing capability and capacity with readiness and sustainment.

As the Commander, my challenge is to man, train, and equip the Force to be better positioned to support the NDS, the National Military Strategy and the Navy's Strategy for Maintaining Maritime Superiority, while supporting the operational requirements of the theater commanders. Furthermore, the long-term sustainment, health, and well-being of our people remains my highest priority.

NSW RESOURCING

After nearly 17 years of war in Afghanistan and Iraq, we are focused on reasserting our capabilities as the maritime component to Special Operations, properly postured to meet the threats of the future, enhancing our partnership with the Navy and exploring opportunities for increased integration and interoperability, while building capabilities and capacity with fleet, submarine, aviation and cyber forces.

Acknowledging that manpower requirements have outpaced authorized and actual growth, we have spent the last year taking a hard look at our force structure to determine how we can best use the resources we have to optimize the impacts we are making on the battlefield. We looked at how to eliminate redundancy, redirect resources and merge assets to build depth and agility and how to meet transregional threats and provide increased combat lethality to the

Theater Special Operation Commands. Optimizing our Force is paramount to meeting current operational requirements and provide greater agility to meet future requirements.

We recently collaborated with the Naval Post graduate school to conduct a maritime, multi-thread experiment in Southern California. The exercise allowed us to explore a realistic scenario using unmanned systems in a multi-domain (sea, air and land) environment. We learned a lot and advanced the potential use of artificial intelligence and human-machine teaming in current conflicts which will eventually increase our lethality while reducing risk.

We have made necessary investments aimed at increasing our lethality, and refining our capabilities that enable access to contested areas.

We have made significant increases in our unmanned aerial vehicle lethality by adding targeting capabilities, increasing the capabilities of current sensor suites, and using algorithms and artificial intelligence to speed up the targeting cycle.

We have modernized numerous small arms systems, including procuring a purpose built, full-time suppressed, medium range weapons system; a lighter weight medium machine gun that matches and, in some cases, surpasses the effective range of a .50 caliber machine gun; a sniper weapons system with optics and wind sensing technology; and shoulder-launched munitions that allow for very precise engagements through hardened structures.

We have made great strides in modernizing our maritime mobility platforms. In fact, our partnerships with maritime industries has never been stronger.

We have introduced high performance surface combatant craft into our fleet to serve across the spectrum of maritime operations. They include our new Combatant Craft Assault which replaced the NSW 11-meter rigid-hull inflatable boat and our Combatant Craft Medium

which replaced the Mark V Special Operations Craft and the introduction of the new Combatant Craft Heavy.

Special Operations Force (SOF) undersea mobility platforms provide uniquely capable, clandestine means to access peer/near-peer locations. To that end, we expect to introduce two new undersea submersibles this year– the Shallow Water Combat Submersible (SWCS), which will replace our legacy SEAL Delivery Vehicle (SDV), and the Dry Combat Submersible (DCS), a new platform to our inventory.

Nearly a year ago, we piloted a deliberate effort to realize the Secretary of Defense’s guidance of exploiting Industry’s investment in technology to relentlessly pursue innovative and advanced operational capabilities for our warfighters at a greater speed, relevant to the pace of technology in order to outpace our adversaries. This venture allowed us to understand and take advantage of new DoD contracting and procurement authorities as well as maximizing the utilization of DoD and USSOCOM outreach-to-industry platforms such as Defense Innovation Unit Experimental (DIUx) and SOFWERX.

NSW has learned and applied how to effectively make use of these and other new and emerging opportunities to rapidly bring future operational concepts to the present: such as our realization of Artificial Intelligence-Autonomy of ISR Drones. This example among others, show promise to have exponential impacts on our capabilities to accomplish our mission in a more agile, lethal and sustainable manner. Our efforts -- to rapidly prototype, experiment with and lead in new and emerging technologies are aimed at delivering capabilities at the speed of relevancy to our warfighters.

Finally, bottom up, operator-inspired innovation drives experimentation during exercises, and training eventually equates to relevancy and leads to greater success on the battlefield. With

our component partners and throughout USSOCOM, innovation is happening at the unit level up and through headquarters. Our focus on innovation is driven by our people – buying down risk to our force while increasing our speed, accuracy, and lethality.

PEOPLE: THE FIRST SOF TRUTH

Our primary weapons system remains The Operator. We continue to invest heavily in our personnel, whether it's to train, retain or sustain them. We select, train and maintain persons of character, who are mature, highly skilled, culturally attuned and trusted to execute our nation's most sensitive missions.

Thank you for your role in the preservation of our Force with the 10-year, \$1 billion Silver Strand Training Center-South, the single most important military construction effort impacting the current and future operational readiness of the NSW Force. Once complete, the complex will consolidate the training requirements of today's force, creating efficiencies and synergy of improved operational planning and preparedness, but also allow our operators to spend more time with their families and communities.

We remain committed to the physical and mental health of our operators, as we have a moral obligation to ensure their well-being. Preservation of the Force and Families, our Human Performance Program, and our most important initiatives involving Cognitive Health are about keeping our warriors in the fight, extending their service life, and giving them a high quality life post-service.

With strong Congressional support, the USSOCOM Preservation of the Force and Family program continues to meet and exceed the intent to build resilience and facilitate the long-term care of our operators and their families, while never forgetting our fallen teammates with ongoing support to our Gold Star Families.

Embedded professional care providers working within validated programs have helped turn the corner on many of the negative trends that have impacted those who have been in this long fight. Our usage data shows an increase in service members and families going to see clinical psychologists, licensed clinical social workers, nurse case managers, which speaks directly to de-stigmatization and trust. Similarly, there is a high number of cross referrals among the various care providers that demonstrates mutual support and clinical trust and reliance.

In regard to Human Performance, our athletic trainers, strength coaches and physical therapists provide tailored and operationally relevant programs have resulted in injury reduction and increased recovery time from injuries with a direct impact to overall team readiness.

Our Warrior and Family Support staff provide hands on, personal touch and connection to our families and children, connecting them to all the Service-provided and SOF-unique programs that are so vital to the strength and resilience of our family members.

We have also learned that long-term physical and psychological challenges may result in impacts to one's memory, attention, processing speed, problem-solving, visuospatial function and impulse control which can affect operational performance and mission accomplishment. Given that we are in the longest continuous stretch of armed conflict in our history, learning about the cognitive health of our force is a critical initiative.

We have initiated a Cognitive Surveillance Program that will be a more pre-emptive approach to intervention where cognitive impacts are indicated. More broadly, this initiative will seek to identify injuries earlier, track individual trends, and assist in developing comprehensive treatment plans to aid in the recovery of our service members. The end-state is to get NSW operators back into the fight while contributing to their long-term wellness.

The Surveillance Program entails an initial baseline screening of all SEAL/SWCC operators within NSW by 30 June 2018; and ongoing re-testing every two years to assess significant change, similar to other routine exams such as dental or audiogram.

Aggressive efforts include increasing awareness of potential issues and not waiting for perfect solutions. Therefore, we are actively ‘driving the science’ through our blast exposure research efforts, ultimately looking to create a ‘dive-table-like’ approach to heavy weapons/breaching exposure levels and mitigation needs.

NSW continues to seek and offer best practices as we develop our cognitive health emphases. We rely on education, informed research efforts, and leadership support across the continuum of care to help mitigate the range of brain injuries and increase recovery rates for our members.

Part of that continuum of care focuses on our transitioning veterans, whether at four years or after forty, with a holistic, SOF-unique initiative called Future Former Frogmen, or F3. F3 focuses on ensuring the successful transition of our active duty into civilian life by leveraging our neurocognitive science initiatives, continuum of leadership development efforts, readiness support programs, and veteran's resources. F3 provides structure, process and guidance throughout the complex transition experience giving the service member access to existing programs to ensure NSW veterans remain resilient. SOF for Life, a powerful support network, continues from active duty life to veteran life.

Today in Coronado, California, at the Basic Underwater and Demolition / SEAL school, otherwise known as BUD/S, there are approximately 100 of America’s best and brightest going through training to be part of the Navy’s elite special operations maritime force as part of the most recent class, Class 330.

Just like those seeking to be part of my brethren's communities, those seeking to be part of the SEAL community, those who succeed in the 63-week course will earn their Trident.

At the end of 63 weeks, each student will have swam 48 miles; hiked or patrolled over 150 miles; and conducted at least 40 dives while spending a minimum of 60 hours, or two and a half days under water. As a class, at the end of those 63 weeks, they will have completed the equivalent of swimming from Cuba to the southern tip of Florida, then running to New York City.

And that is just a snapshot of what we ask them to do before they have taken their first step into their first operation in defense of our country. It is precisely because of what we ask them to do, starting in Coronado, then around the world, through operation after operation, that we are focused on their long-term health, and the well-being of our Force and Families.

Naval Special Warfare Command will continue to place priority on strengthening, equipping and protecting our people; outpacing our enemies in the employment of new technologies and accelerating trends, enabling us to compete below the threshold of conflict. We will refine and adapt our organizational structure to ensure Naval Special Warfare remains relevant and lethal, and when necessary, stands ready, willing and able to engage in combat to fight and win decisively for many years to come.

Thank you for your time, your care for our Naval Special Warfare community, and I welcome the opportunity today to answer your questions.