

STATEMENT OF

LIEUTENANT GENERAL KENNETH TOVO, U.S. ARMY

COMMANDER

UNITED STATES ARMY SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND

BEFORE THE

SENATE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE

EMERGING THREATS AND CAPABILITIES SUBCOMMITTEE

APRIL 11, 2018

Opening Remarks

Madam Chairwoman Ernst and distinguished members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to highlight the phenomenal men and women of the Army Special Operations community and the great work they do on behalf of the Nation, every day, around the world. USASOC provides more than 51% of the Nation's Special Operations Forces and consistently fills over 60 percent of all U.S. SOF deployments worldwide. USASOC is made up of Special Forces, also known as Green Berets, who are our premier practitioners of irregular warfare; Psychological Operations, who use the power of influence to shape operational environments; Civil Affairs, who conduct civil reconnaissance, mapping of human terrain, and conduct governance and counter governance activities; Rangers, who specialize in direct action raids and joint forcible entry; and Army Special Operations Forces (ARSOF) Aviators, who provide a SOF unique rotary wing and ISR capability. USASOC has the mission to man, train, equip, educate, organize, sustain, and support all ARSOF.

I would also like to thank this Congress for its continued support of Special Operations Forces, the Army, and DOD as a whole. Congress's efforts to provide budgetary relief to DOD is greatly appreciated down to the individual Soldier level. Your continued endorsement of critical USSOCOM programs such as the *Preservation of the Force and Family* (POTFF) are essential to the resilience and readiness of ARSOF. Additionally, I would like to specifically thank the Senate Armed Services Committee for its advocacy for SOF in the 2018 NDAA. The new authorities provided under Section 1202 of the 2018 NDAA gives SOF the irregular warfare tools and resources required to impede the progress of near peer advances in the competitive space short of war.

You have asked me today to discuss what USASOC is doing to prepare ARSOF for both the current and the emergent range of threats that our Nation faces. At a macro level, our Nation's threats can be categorized as countering violent extremist organizations (counter-VEO) and building readiness for near peer adversaries. The counter-VEO fight has monopolized our global efforts for 16 plus years;

however, it is clear that competing nations such as Iran, Russia, China, and North Korea will continue to challenge the current international security dynamic to seek greater regional influence.

Although the possibility of a near peer or peer conflict remains a persistent aspect of the future environment, competing nations are challenging the stability of regions and U.S. interests through indirect means in the competitive space between peace and conflict. Adversarial actions in the competitive space will seek to achieve irreversible gains at the expense of U.S. interests, as competing nations leverage asymmetric technologies, disenfranchised minority elements of populations, and exploit weak governance. This changing character of war is being enabled by the hyper-connected nature of the global environment, allowing hostile entities to influence vulnerable populations and hijack local grievances in ways that threaten regional security. Threats to stability in the competitive spaces will likely emerge more rapidly, requiring the U.S. to have immediately employable options to counter the actions of competing nations. Ultimately, these challenges have driven, and will continue to drive, the need for ARSOF's unique capabilities and skills. USASOC is sustaining the current counter-VEO fight, while building readiness for peer and near peer threats, by investing in three major efforts: restoring balance to the force, investment in the intellectual space, and publishing strategic guidance (USASOC 2035).

Effort I: Restoring Balance to the Force

Since 2015, USASOC has been on a path to reestablish a balance between time on deployment with time at home station for our Soldiers. There were two purposes of restoring balance to the force. The first purpose was improving the overall health of the force and the second was to provide additional time for units to train on a broader range capabilities, to address the peer and near peer threats that our Nation faces. On a daily basis ARSOF are operating in over 70 countries around the world, executing missions in support of Geographic Combatant Commanders or other elements of the US Government. USASOC forces have always been in high demand; however, during the last 16 plus years of combat, meeting

operational requirements surpassed our ability to maintain a sustainable resource model. USASOC's crucial weapon system is the specially selected and uniquely trained ARSOF Soldier. We must carefully balance the demand for ARSOF to meet today's requirements with the necessity to preserve the health and welfare of our Soldiers, and by extension, their families. With USSOCOM's assistance, USASOC has implemented a sustainable resource model. USASOC is on glide path to achieve the SECDEF's directed 1:2 deployment to dwell ratio by the end of 2018. Additionally, we are using tools such as Defense Ready to accurately track and manage the personnel tempo of our individual Soldiers, which gives us a more accurate assessment of the demand that we have placed on our Soldiers and their families.

Since implementing our efforts to restore balance to the force, we have seen positive returns on investment in the health of the force. Although there has been recent scrutiny regarding the health of ARSOF, in my view our force is healthy and getting healthier every day. Two positive trends that USASOC has observed are a decrease in suicide rates and sexual assaults.

USASOC has observed a decrease in the number of suicides each year for the last three years, with a total of five in 2017. Although one suicide is too many, this is an improvement compared to 16 in 2013. I accredit this decrease in suicide to the benefits of the POTFF Program and a cultural change within our units encouraging our Soldiers to seek help when they, or their families, are having emotional issues, and emphasizing the duty for teammates to act on if they suspect issues. Additionally, USASOC's sexual assault incident rate across ARSOF formations (recent assaults) is declining, while latent reporting has increased. The increase in latent reporting reflects an increased trust in the Command and the Army's Sexual Harassment/Assault Response and Prevention (SHARP) program and a reduced perception of a negative stigma associated with reporting sexual assaults.

A significant challenge to rebalancing the force is USASOC's identified manning deficits. However, in accordance with the POM 19-23 Program Decision Memorandum, USASOC will gain an additional 1585 manpower positions that will begin to address those manning deficits. In the 19-23 POM

USASOC will gain manpower positions for expanded functions in expeditionary Command and Control, military intelligence, cyber, institutional training, and aviation. A primary example of the importance of this growth will be realized within our 1st Special Forces Command (1st SFC). 1st SFC was reorganized as a deployable division level headquarters capable of providing mission command to a Joint Special Operations Task Force for contingency operations. 1st SFC executed their design purpose by deploying to provide SOF mission command in Iraq and Syria 2016-2017. However, 1st SFC's identified manning shortages created significant strain on the command. 1st SFC's programmed growth in the POM 19-23 Program Decision Memorandum will provide an additional 272 (222 Military/ 50 Civilians).

A second example of the positive impact of USASOC's approved growth is in our Military Intelligence Soldiers. The programmed growth in military intelligence will expand USASOC's organic processing, exploitation, and dissemination (PED) capability (+396: 250 Military/146 Contractors), which has been an enduring challenge for our formations. Our ability to internally conduct PED will provide a more capable and efficient force to Combatant Commanders and increases our readiness for peer and near peer threats in both armed conflict and the competitive space short of war.

The second purpose of restoring balance to the force was to allow units time to train on a broadened range of capabilities to address the peer and near peer threats that our Nation faces. USASOC has been able to refocus its training readiness efforts by reviewing and updating Mission Essential Task Lists (METL) across ARSOF, and training those updated METLs during unit level training events, at multiple exercises, and at the Army's Combat Training Centers (CTC). USASOC's review of its operational and tactical METL has ensured that ARSOF Soldiers remain ready for counter-VEO missions globally and also sustain readiness for peer and near peer threats in competition and conflict.

ARSOF is now a consistent participant in CTC rotations with conventional forces. CTC scenarios challenge ARSOF and conventional forces to work together in complex threat environments that include degraded communications, weapons of mass destruction threats, subterranean complexes, cyber threats,

and electronic warfare (EW) challenges that we would expect in a peer or near peer conflict. In the past year, 1st Special Forces Command has executed 11 CTC rotations, USASOC's multi-state irregular warfare exercise Jade Helm '17, and will execute their first, ARSOF 2-star Division-level Army War-fighting Exercise 18-04 in this month; the 75th Ranger Regiment executed four CTC rotations, five battalion level mission readiness exercises, and 14 realistic military training (RMT) exercises; and the United States Army Special Operations Aviation Command's 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment executed five CTC rotations and seven RMTs.

ARSOF aviators are now conducting annual training in anti-access/ area denial (A2AD) environments where adversaries possess robust EW capabilities that can identify and target our aircraft. New tactics, techniques, and procedures for operating in an A2AD environment are being developed and proliferated across the Department of Defense (DOD) by ARSOF Aviators in preparation for the challenges of this threat environment. ARSOF Aviators are also completely nested with the Army's Future Vertical Lift initiatives to develop the next generation of helicopters and are incorporating the lessons learned training in an A2AD environment to inform that process.

Our potential adversaries are well aware of the power of our ability to exercise mission command through robust satellite communications; and consequently will seek to deny or disrupt this network. USASOC Units are exercising lessons learned from our virtual wargaming and are training in communications denied environments, preparing for the anticipated mission command challenges of this environment. Additionally, we are re-investing in clandestine communications platforms to decrease our digital footprint.

The proliferation of chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear, high-yield explosive weapons, and the means by which they are delivered will pose an increased threat to U.S. interests and international security in the future. The decreasing costs associated with WMD technology make these weapons a lucrative option for both VEOs and peer/near peer adversaries. USASOC is investing heavily in our

chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear, and enhanced conventional weapons (CBRNE) counter measures, ranging from Soldier protection systems to aircraft decontamination systems and training.

USASOC is also addressing the cyber threats that are now present on today's multi-domain battlefield, by establishing a tactical cyber course in 2017. The Special Operations Center of Excellence (SOCoE) now provides tactical cyber training to both ARSOF and conventional forces (CF), with the ability to train 600 personnel per year. ARSOF and CF Soldiers are training together and procuring the requisite skills to monitor, in a non-attributional manner, their tactical level environment and decrease their cyber footprint, enabling increased force protection and situational awareness when deployed.

Effort II: Investment in the Intellectual Space

Four years ago USASOC identified the need to address gaps in the development of new concepts and capabilities in order to maintain a competitive edge over our Nation's adversaries. In 2014, USASOC created the G9 "Futures" Directorate through an internal reorganization to fill this void in the intellectual space. USASOC's human capital investment in the G9 was an acknowledgement of the criticality of understanding what the implications are of the current and future operating environment, and what would be an appropriate ARSOF solution, particularly against peer and near peer competitors.

SILENT QUEST (SQ) is USASOC's virtual wargame experiment led by the USASOC G9. SQ assesses the concepts, capabilities, and capacities required to meet strategic and operational challenges ARSOF can expect to encounter in the current and future operational environment. SQ identifies existing ARSOF doctrine and capabilities that require updating through USASOC's Strategic Planning Process. The SQ wargame scenario utilizes a Special Operations-Centric Campaign supporting a Theater Special Operations Command, characterized by its multi-year, small-footprint, scalable design, nesting ARSOF operations with Conventional Force, Joint, Multinational, and Interagency unified actions set against peer and near peer competitors.

The G9 also leads USASOC's efforts in Army and Joint senior leader forums. Beginning with the Modern Russian Unconventional Warfare forum in March of 2015, these USASOC sponsored forums have explored ARSOF's response to the changing character of warfare and are designed to broaden strategic options for our National leaders. Our most recent Senior Leader Forum addressed Multi-Domain Maneuver. Multi-Domain Maneuver is the Army's concept of Joint Force employment of the physical, cognitive, and virtual aspects of maneuver at all levels, in and through all domains, across the operational framework, through time, and across the range of modern warfare challenges to maintain a competitive edge over our Nation's adversaries. The forum set conditions for further institutional exploration of Operational / Strategic maneuver and campaigns to prevent, deter, and / or defeat adversary strategies below the level of armed conflict.

The USASOC G9 is currently developing the *ARSOF Operating Concept for 2035 and Beyond*. The ARSOF OC addresses the challenge:

In a constrained future environment of peer, near-peer, and non-state competitors, with technologically advanced threats, ubiquitous surveillance, AI-enabled battle networks, an accelerating pace of change, globally scaled and interconnected information, and the increasing relevance of people and populations in competition and conflict, how does ARSOF gain and maintain an enduring competitive advantage over our Nation's adversaries?

It is our goal, through our investment in the intellectual space, for ARSOF to employ empowered Soldiers and integrated units capable of delivering ARSOF Combined Arms across the range of modern warfare challenges, as it leverages adaptive and innovative institutional capabilities to provide the joint force an enduring competitive edge over our Nation's adversaries. That edge comes from a synergy arising from campaigns and operations that combine the abilities of conventional forces and special operations forces to maneuver against our Nation's challengers.

Effort III: Publishing Strategic Guidance (USASOC 2035)

In 2017 USASOC published its strategic guidance to ARSOF, *USASOC 2035*. *USASOC 2035* provides guidance for the further development of ARSOF institutional and operational capabilities needed to counter threats across the spectrum of conflict, especially in the competitive spaces between peace and overt war. *USASOC 2035* incorporates the previous USASOC Commander's initiatives that are still in progress and builds upon those capabilities already established. *USASOC 2035* presents objectives for developing future capabilities that will move ARSOF from the force of today to the force of tomorrow.

In *USASOC 2035* we define ARSOF's strategic value to the Nation through four complementary capabilities — the *Pillars of ARSOF Capability*: an Indigenous Approach, Precision Targeting Operations, Developing Understanding and Wielding Influence, and Crisis Response. ARSOF are employed throughout the operational spectrum and across all campaign phases, including interagency- or Coalition led campaigns and operations. Together, the Pillars of ARSOF Capability provide options to shape or prevent outcomes in support of our national interests. These capabilities, coupled with tailorable mission command nodes and scalable force packages that are low-signature and employ a small footprint, are particularly suited for employment in politically sensitive and irregular warfare environments.

The *indigenous approach* is a means to address challenges to regional stability with and through populations and partner forces empowered by persistent ARSOF engagement. Through this approach, ARSOF leverage nascent capability within populations, *transforming indigenous mass into combat power*. Since World War II, ARSOF elements have amassed unique institutional and operational expertise in living among, training, advising, and fighting alongside people of foreign cultures, achieving effects with and through partner forces. Today, ARSOF training pipelines produce regionally oriented, culturally astute, and language-capable personnel who can apply an indigenous approach across the spectrum of conflict in permissive, uncertain, and hostile environments. The indigenous

approach provides low-cost, high-impact options to address state and non-state threats, set conditions for conventional force success, and execute sensitive activities through minimal force commitment.

Precision targeting operations involve both kinetic and non-kinetic direct action and counter-network activities enabled by SOF unique intelligence, targeting processes, and technology, to include ARSOF rotary wing capabilities, armed unmanned aerial systems, and psychological operations. Precision targeting operations create ***precise physical and psychological effects and can be used to collapse human or physical networks through deliberate targeting of critical nodes***. Precision targeting operations are employed against uniquely difficult target sets that may require operating in uncertain or hostile environments, careful and focused application of force, and significant intelligence and operational preparation. These operations are executed by highly trained, rapidly deployable, and scalable ARSOF personnel and formations that are employed to buy time and space for other operations to gain traction, such as transforming indigenous mass into combat power.

Developing understanding and wielding influence are essential aspects of the value ARSOF capabilities provide joint force commanders and the Nation. The SOF network of personnel, assets, and international partnerships represents the means to ***obtain early understanding of emerging local, regional, transregional threats, and/or where opportunities exist for advancing U.S. objectives***. The SOF network provides capabilities needed to influence outcomes in all campaign phases and especially in conflict short of overt war. Engagement worldwide allows ARSOF to develop long-term partnership relationships, and an advanced understanding of complex environments. Operating in culturally and politically complex environments requires ARSOF personnel to be adept at interacting and coordinating with multiple agencies and partners. Institutional training and education programs unique to ARSOF, along with long-term regionally aligned employment, provide the expertise necessary ***to understand complex environments and the ability to influence people and circumstances***.

Crisis response, provided through CONUS and OCONUS stationed alert forces and persistently deployed and dispersed units, provides national decision makers with ***agile, tailorable, and rapidly***

employable ARSOF formations necessary to respond to emergencies. These forces provide options to rescue people under threat, to recover sensitive materials, to provide humanitarian relief, or to address other short notice contingencies. ARSOF crisis response capabilities leverage the SOF network and partner-nation relationships established before crisis occurs. Persistent engagement develops relationships and the advanced understanding needed in times of crisis for ARSOF to effectively employ unilateral capabilities and those created during partner-force development. Through ARSOF crisis response, a small number of operators can rapidly address emergencies in an effort to enable host nation solutions to local or regional security challenges.

Conclusion

In summary, after more than 16 years of war, the operational effectiveness of ARSOF remains high. We have acknowledged that the future operating environment will continue to evolve with highly adaptive state and non-state adversaries seeking to challenge the status quo and our National interests. USASOC has refocused our training priorities to remain ready for the global counter-VEO mission, while also building and sustaining readiness for peer and near peer threats, in both armed conflict and the competitive space short of war. Preventing or deterring hybrid conflict short of all-out war is demanding. It requires persistent forward engagement at points of vulnerability around the world. It requires Soldiers to understand the political, cultural, and geographic complexities of austere operating environments and the unique challenges faced by our allies and partners. It also requires an advanced understanding of adversaries and how they are evolving in an effort to shift the competitive space to their advantage. In order to meet these requirements and to counter irregular and conventional warfare threats of the future, USASOC will continue to provide the Nation with a portfolio of complementary capabilities enabled by institutional and operational agility. We remain committed to embodying the USASOC motto: “*Sine Pari*” - Without Equal.