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Before the

Subcommittee on Emerging Threats and Capabilities

COMMITTEE ON  
ARMED SERVICES

## **UNITED STATES SENATE**

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 28, 2021

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5 Wednesday, April 28, 2021

6  
7 U.S. Senate

8 Committee on Armed Services

9 Subcommittee on Emerging

10 Threats and Capabilities

11 Washington, D.C.

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13 The subcommittee met, pursuant to notice, at 2:32 p.m.  
14 in Room SR-232A, Russell Senate Office Building, Hon. Mark  
15 Kelly, chairman of the subcommittee, presiding.

16 Subcommittee Members Present: Senators Kelly  
17 [presiding], Shaheen, Peters, Ernst, Fischer, Blackburn, and  
18 Tuberville.

19 Also Present: Senator Sullivan.  
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1           OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. MARK KELLY, U.S. SENATOR  
2 FROM ARIZONA

3           Senator Kelly: The Emerging Threats and Capabilities  
4 Subcommittee meets this afternoon to receives testimony from  
5 the leaders of the U.S. Special Operations Command, the  
6 service components, and we look forward to hearing how you  
7 are preparing and sustaining your forces to conduct critical  
8 missions that range from competition with China and Russia  
9 to countering violent extremists to hostage recovery in the  
10 most remote corners of the globe.

11          I would like to welcome our witnesses today, Lieutenant  
12 General Beaudette, Commander of U.S. Army Special Operations  
13 Command; Lieutenant General Slife, Commander of U.S. Air  
14 Force Special Operations Command; Rear Admiral Howard, the  
15 Commander of Naval Special Warfare Command; and Major  
16 General Glynn, Commander of U.S. Marine Forces Special  
17 Operations Command. Thank you for attending today. Thank  
18 you for your testimony.

19          I also want to take the opportunity to thank you all  
20 not only for being here today but for your continued service  
21 to the nation and for your able leadership of more than  
22 70,000 men and women of SOCOM and their families. As SOCOM  
23 Commander General Clark highlighted during his posture  
24 hearing, our Special Operations Forces are expected to  
25 contribute to solving national security challenges across

1 the full strategic landscape. As General Clark put it, and  
2 I am going to quote him here, "SOF are problem solvers and  
3 their enduring values reside in their ability to adapt and  
4 combat asymmetric threats, employ precision and surprise to  
5 achieve strategic effects in conflict or crisis, and build  
6 access, placement, and influence through sustained  
7 partnership with foreign forces, all providing discrete  
8 options when conventional action is impractical."

9 The precision strike capabilities honed by special  
10 operators over the past two decades are unparalleled and  
11 have played a key role in disrupting and dismantling violent  
12 extremist groups across the Middle East, Africa, and the  
13 Indo-Pacific. It is clear that, going forward, our special  
14 operators will not only be expected to maintain pressure on  
15 terrorist networks but also to apply their capabilities  
16 across the spectrum of competition, crisis, and conflict  
17 with near-peer competitors and rogue regimes.

18 During today's testimony, I hope you can address how  
19 your commands are preparing our special operations forces to  
20 support the requirements of the geographic combatant  
21 commands and what future capabilities will be necessary to  
22 optimize special operations' contributions to these  
23 missions.

24 As our combatant commanders have testified, their top  
25 priorities are to build our alliances and partnership,

1 counter malign influence and coercion, and deter aggression.  
2 I believe our special operators will be central to those  
3 efforts, but they will require new skill sets and require  
4 new concepts of employment and capabilities and authorities.

5 We have asked a lot of our special operations forces in  
6 recent decades. Going forward, it will also be necessary to  
7 ensure that they and their families are not stressed to the  
8 breaking point.

9 While SOCOM has made progress in achieving a more  
10 sustainable deployment rate for its forces, it will be  
11 critical to maintain the balance as new requirements for  
12 special operations capabilities emerge.

13 Before I turn it over to Senator Ernst, I wanted to say  
14 how much I have enjoyed working together to lead our first  
15 hearing on this subcommittee. Senator Ernst, your own  
16 military experience and the insight you have gained through  
17 your able leadership of this subcommittee in prior  
18 Congresses are indispensable, and I look forward to our  
19 continued partnership and working together to ensure we  
20 maintain our competitive edge over our adversaries.

21 I will now turn it over to Senator Ernst for any  
22 opening comments that she may have.

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

2 Senator Ernst: Right, and thank you, Senator Kelly, so  
3 much, and I am just pleased to be here with you and to hear  
4 from today's leadership. And thanks to our witnesses very  
5 much for being here and for your many, many years of  
6 dedicated service to not only the men and women within your  
7 commands but our great nation.

8 The Armed Services Committee has heard, in recent  
9 months, from our combatant commanders on the growing  
10 security challenges within their areas of responsibility,  
11 and, of course, we see a rising China and a reckless Russia  
12 to a continuing threat from terrorist groups aligned with  
13 ISIS and al Qaeda. Our military must contend with an  
14 increasingly complex and dangerous world. Critical to the  
15 success of the Joint Force in this demanding security  
16 environment will continue to be our Special Operations  
17 Forces, who bring the unique and transformation capabilities  
18 to the fight.

19 The intent of today's meeting of the Emerging Threats  
20 and Capabilities Subcommittee is to hear directly from our  
21 Special Operations Command component commanders on how they  
22 view the operating environment that their forces are likely  
23 to encounter in the coming years, and what their priorities  
24 are for ensuring the men and women under their command are  
25 organized, trained, and equipped to compete and to win.

1 I also hope our witnesses will detail how they are  
2 updating operational concepts, particularly in protracted,  
3 near-peer competition, and how they are being integrated  
4 into broader Department of Defense planning, especially the  
5 joint warfighting concept.

6 Lastly, and most importantly, I look to our witnesses  
7 to describe how they are taking care of our special  
8 operators and their families. As the first soft truth  
9 rightly says, "Humans are more important than hardware." I  
10 see a lot of nodding heads. Thank you.

11 The preservation of the force and families, also known  
12 as POTFF, is absolutely essential to ensuring the readiness  
13 of the force. I hope our witnesses will detail how they are  
14 using POTFF, how the program is evolving to best meet the  
15 needs of the force, as well as let this committee know if  
16 there is anything Congress can do to be helpful.

17 Thank you, gentlemen, very much for your testimony  
18 today. Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

19 Senator Kelly: Thank you, Senator. I will now  
20 recognize Lieutenant General Beaudette for any opening  
21 remarks.

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1           STATEMENT OF LIEUTENANT GENERAL FRANCIS BEAUDETTE,  
2   COMMANDING GENERAL, UNITED STATES ARMY SPECIAL OPERATIONS  
3   COMMAND

4           General Beaudette: Chairman Kelly, Ranking Member  
5   Ernst, and distinguished members of this committee, thank  
6   you for this opportunity to represent the 35,000 women and  
7   men of Army Special Operations Forces. I am proud to  
8   testify alongside my Joint Force special operations  
9   component commanders. Here with me today is my teammate,  
10   Command Sergeant Major Mark Eckert, whose counsel and  
11   leadership strongly reflect the talent and quality of the  
12   NCOs serving across our formations.

13           I would like to begin by recognizing the tremendous  
14   contributions and sacrifices of our Army Special Operations  
15   Forces, especially over the last 20 years of sustained  
16   combat operations. Our teams deploy in small, cost-  
17   effective footprints, and deliver strategic impacts around  
18   the world. We are able to accomplish the missions asked of  
19   us because of our people. We believe our women and men are,  
20   without question, the best in the world at what they do.  
21   They conduct their missions with humility, professionalism,  
22   and integrity. We are thankful for their valor, for their  
23   dedication, and for their service. These traits are what  
24   make us truly special and guarantee our success on any  
25   battlefield, alongside our allies and partners. We are



1 humbled by the sacrifices borne by our military families.  
2 We owe them so much, and we thank this committee for your  
3 continued support of them. We will never forget our fallen  
4 heroes and the sacrifices of our cherished Gold Star  
5 families. Please keep in your hearts the over 1,700 Gold  
6 Star mothers, fathers, spouses, grandparents, and children  
7 we hold dear in our Army Special Operations family.

8 Our soldiers carry burdens of combat that few will ever  
9 know, much less fully understand. And so I would like to  
10 thank this committee for your steadfast support of the  
11 preservation of the force and family program. Our human  
12 performance and wellness initiatives take care of those who  
13 are hurting and ensure our incredible talent is mentally and  
14 physically stronger and more resilient to face the threats  
15 of tomorrow. With POTFF resources, we can respond to the  
16 needs of our force quickly and flexibly, and we hope you  
17 will continue your sponsorship of this impactful program.

18 We understand the nation's continued trust in SOF is  
19 paramount, a responsibility that we do not take lightly.  
20 Diversity is fundamental to what makes us special. We are  
21 stacking the deck with the best athlete, best innovator, and  
22 best leader, and we must be intentionally inclusive. My  
23 message to the rising talent of any background is this: you  
24 are welcome, and we want you in our formations.

25 To the committee, thank you. We look forward to

1 sharing our progress over the past 2 years and discussing  
2 the persistent challenges that we face, and I look forward  
3 to answering your questions.

4 [The prepared statement of General Beaudette follows:]

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1           Senator Kelly: Thank you, General. Lieutenant General  
2 Slife.

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

3 General Slife: Well good afternoon, Chairman Kelly,  
4 Ranking Member Ernst, distinguished members of the  
5 committee. I am joined today by my teammate, Chief Master  
6 Sergeant Cory Olson. He and I are honored to appear before  
7 you as the Commander and Command Chief of the Air Force  
8 Special Operations Command.

9 As we testify here before you today, AFSOC, and SOC  
10 writ large, stand at the precipice of a third strategic  
11 inflection point in the post-Vietnam era. The first  
12 occurred in April of 1980, 41 years ago, in the desert of  
13 Iran. In the aftermath of catastrophe, we realized that the  
14 Air Force SOF that we had was not the Air Force SOF we would  
15 need. In response, committed professionals, some of your  
16 predecessors on this committee, built an inherently joint  
17 force which was able to respond to short-notice crises and  
18 contingencies around the globe. This force served us  
19 exceedingly well for 20 years.

20 But in September of 2001, we reached a second strategic  
21 inflection point, where we once again found that the AFSOC  
22 we had was not the AFSOC that we would need. Ill-prepared  
23 for long-term, sustained combat operation, and woefully  
24 deficient in intelligence and strike capacity, we once again  
25 faced the task of transformation, and once again committed

1 professionals in the Congress and the Department answered  
2 the call. We built the AFSOC that we needed to fight the  
3 wars of the last two decades. Like their predecessors in  
4 the years that followed the disaster at Desert 1, the air  
5 commandos today have performed magnificently on the  
6 battlefields of Africa, the Levant, and central Asia.

7 But now we find ourselves at the precipice of a third  
8 post-Vietnam strategic inflection point. Once again, the  
9 AFSOC we have is not the AFSOC we will need for the future  
10 operating environment. In this environment, the demands of  
11 countering violent extremism and preparation for crisis  
12 response actions will have to be balanced with the need to  
13 compete with global actors who seek to challenge U.S.  
14 interests around the globe while also preparing for conflict  
15 with peer and near-peer adversaries in contested  
16 environments.

17 So how will we transform from the AFSOC that we needed  
18 to the AFSOC that we will need? We will do it the way any  
19 large organization, which undertakes transformation, does  
20 it, by pivoting around our competitive advantage. In AFSOC,  
21 our human capital, our airmen, are our competitive  
22 advantage. To successfully transform ourselves we simply  
23 need to develop our human capital, organize our human  
24 capital, and equip our human capital with concepts and  
25 technologies they will need to compete and win in the years

1 to come. For as long as I remain the Commander of the Air  
2 Force Special Operations Command, this will be my priority.

3 Chairman Kelly, Ranking Member Ernst, distinguished  
4 members of the committee, our airmen are the competitive  
5 advantage that we will need. With your support, we will  
6 once again be able to empower these airmen and transform  
7 ourselves, but this time in anticipation of the future and  
8 not in response to the past.

9 On behalf of all the women and men of AFSOC and their  
10 families, I thank you for the opportunity to address you  
11 today, and for your continued support. I look forward to  
12 answering your questions. Thank you.

13 [The prepared statement of General Slife follows:]

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Senator Kelly: Thank you, General. Admiral Howard?

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1 STATEMENT OF REAR ADMIRAL HUGH HOWARD, COMMANDER,  
2 NAVAL SPECIAL WARFARE COMMAND

3 Admiral Howard: Chairman Kelly, Ranking Member Ernst,  
4 and distinguished members of the committee, I am humbled to  
5 testify on the health and mission readiness of Naval Special  
6 Warfare, alongside Force Master Chief Bill King, whom I have  
7 served with closely for 30 years. I present our update to  
8 the American people with humility, humility sharpened in  
9 combat losses, mission failures, and imperfection. The  
10 humility that drives our sense of urgency to learn, to  
11 evolve, and to always come back stronger and even more  
12 committed to the missions our nation asks of us.

13 Our sacred oath demands that we uphold and defend the  
14 Constitution of the United States against all enemies,  
15 foreign and domestic. We strive to be models of the  
16 steadfast leadership called for in Secretary Austin's  
17 imperative to root out intolerance and extremism, and sexual  
18 assault and harassment. Our standard, the standard we  
19 choose to serve, is the relentless pursuit of excellence,  
20 shared accountability, and stewardship, stewardship of the  
21 incredible trust that the nation places in our force.

22 As the nation's naval commandos, we are urgently  
23 innovating and expanding advantage in defense of the United  
24 States of America. The broad range of new security threats  
25 require that we energetically evolve and also reinforce the



1 bedrock American principles that make our team a timeless  
2 and distinctive national asset. They require that we  
3 exemplify a resilient, resolute, and fully accountable team.

4 Our principal advantage is our people, an authentic  
5 team fused and enrolled with a common purpose, trust and  
6 candor, creativity, and resilience. Our families represent  
7 the highest level of sacrifice and commitment, and among  
8 them, none more so than our Gold Star families. We honor  
9 their sacrifice with our mission focus, integrity, and  
10 stewardship. They will never be forgotten.

11 We integrated new strategies to develop, assess, and  
12 test the Law of Armed Conflict and ethical decision-making,  
13 and strengthened the ways we assess the character,  
14 cognitive, and leadership attributes of our high-performing  
15 and highly reliable team. Our comprehensive approach is re-  
16 engineering leader development, countering biases, and  
17 increasing leader selection precision.

18 We embrace diversity of all kinds as one of our  
19 greatest sources of strength, and seek to broaden it to  
20 reflect the American citizens we defend, to truly bring the  
21 best of American to bear in her defense. We foster  
22 inclusivity to solve the hardest problems together, with an  
23 unyielding pursuit of excellence and an iron-clad commitment  
24 to the nation and all who selflessly serve.

25 Mission complexity and risk require we transform the

1 ways we identify new candidates, establish first contact,  
2 and conduct initial attribute assessments. We are  
3 implementing innovating approaches to directly reach  
4 candidates that might not think of joining our team, and how  
5 our candidates solve their first problems in the Navy,  
6 alongside a diverse cohort to authentically build mutual  
7 understanding, empathy, and respect.

8 Naval Special Warfare aggressively innovates for  
9 military edge and relevance the necessary bold changes for  
10 strategic competition, crisis, and conflict, building on  
11 everything we learned in countering terrorism over the last  
12 two decades, while rapidly integrating the cutting edge of  
13 new technologies for the defining, hard-target missions that  
14 only we can do for the nation. Missions that extend the  
15 reach of the intelligence and cyber enterprises, deliver  
16 dilemmas to undermine adversary confidence, and provide all  
17 domain effects for the Joint Force.

18 At the 2016 Medal of Honor ceremony for Master Chief  
19 SEAL Ed Byers, President Obama quoted William Faulkner,  
20 saying, "I believe man will not merely endure. He will  
21 prevail because he has a soul, a spirit capable of  
22 compassion and sacrifice and endurance," words appropriate  
23 for our extraordinary Joint Force team, words that capture  
24 our resilient journey through highs and lows, through  
25 failure, combat loss, and triumph. We are grateful for the

1 support of the American people, and we will continue to be  
2 stewards of the incredible trust that you and our nation  
3 place in us.

4 I look forward to your questions.

5 [The prepared statement of Admiral Howard follows:]

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1 Senator Kelly: Thank you, Admiral. General Glynn.

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1           STATEMENT OF MAJOR GENERAL JAMES GLYNN, COMMANDER,  
2           UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND

3           General Glynn: Chairman Kelly, Ranking Member Ernst,  
4           and other distinguished members of the committee, Sergeant  
5           Major Loftus and I, on behalf of the Marines and sailors and  
6           civilian of Marine Forces Special Operations Command, thank  
7           you for this opportunity to update you on the status and  
8           posture of MARSOC, alongside our colleagues from the other  
9           SOF service components.

10           Over the past year, our focused and agile formation has  
11           deployed personnel in support of seven named operations  
12           across 14 countries. While forward deployed, your Marine  
13           Raiders were continually called upon to respond to emerging  
14           situations and help advance our nation's interests.

15           MARSOC provides forces tailored to the mission, that  
16           ranged in size in the past year from colonel-level  
17           headquarters down to single individuals highly trained in  
18           specific skills.

19           The inherent flexibility of this organizations allows  
20           us to develop and deploy custom-made teams of impactful,  
21           multi-domain capability to address various threats, and  
22           effectively operate in cooperation, in competition, and, as  
23           necessary, in conflict.

24           MARSOC maintains an operational tempo that has an  
25           average of 20 percent of the command forward deployed at any

1 given time. On any given day, we have approximately 400 to  
2 500 Raiders deployed out of an organization of just over  
3 3,000 active-duty military and 200 civil servants. We  
4 utilize an effective and efficient operating model,  
5 providing outsized return on investment for the resources  
6 provided to this command.

7 MARSOC continues to account for approximately 1 percent  
8 of the Marine Corps' end strength, and about 5 percent of  
9 SOF's personnel, while operating on less than 2 percent of  
10 the annual SOCOM budget.

11 As we look to the future, we continue to work along the  
12 priorities of our people, our mission readiness and  
13 training, modernization and innovation, underpinning the  
14 direction we have been given in the Interim National  
15 Security Strategic Guidance and the National Defense  
16 Strategy. We are assessing methods that enhance existing  
17 capabilities while growing new ones to address our  
18 counterterrorism mission and leverage our placement and  
19 access in support of great power competition and the larger  
20 joint force. As a learning organization, we seek continual  
21 improvement and implement change.

22 A SOCOM comprehensive review's emphasis on leader  
23 development and present, engaged leadership remains as  
24 foundational to our efforts to train and deploy forces, as  
25 it does to our diversity and inclusion efforts, as well as

1 our sexual assault prevention. With a priority to our  
2 people, preservation of the force and families remains at  
3 the forefront, and this certainly includes our commitment  
4 and unwavering support to the families of our fallen, who  
5 have contributed so much to the strength of our team. Each  
6 day I am proud to stand alongside our extended Marine Raider  
7 family that embody the values of integrity, accountability,  
8 and commitment in honorable service to our nation.

9 In closing, I again thank you for your continued  
10 support to providing our nation with Marine Raiders  
11 dedicated to superior special operations capability and  
12 whose actions demonstrate our motto, Spiritus Invictus, or  
13 "unconquerable spirit." Your Marine Raiders remain always  
14 faithful and always forward, semper fidelis, and thank you.

15 I look forward to your questions.

16 [The prepared statement of General Glynn follows:]

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1           Senator Kelly: Gentlemen, thank you for your  
2 testimony. Before we begin questions, let me remind  
3 everyone how we are going to proceed with remote  
4 participants. With some Senators attending remotely, I want  
5 to let everyone know how things are going to be run here.  
6 So since it is not possible to know exactly when our  
7 colleagues who will be joining remotely arrive, we will not  
8 be following the standard early bird timing rule. Instead,  
9 we are going to handle questions by seniority, alternating  
10 sides until we have gone through everyone, and once we reach  
11 the end, if there is anybody we missed, we will start back  
12 at the top and go through until everybody has had their  
13 turn.

14           With that I will begin our first 5-minute round of  
15 questions, and this is for all witnesses on strategic  
16 challenges.

17           The National Defense Strategy states that "interstate  
18 strategic competition, not terrorism, is now the primary  
19 concern in U.S. national security, and the Department has  
20 identified China as the pacing threat." The Defense  
21 Department continues to look to our special operations  
22 forces to sustain pressure on terrorist networks while also  
23 requiring capabilities to confront China, Russia, North  
24 Korea, and Iran.

25           So for each of you, first off, how are each of you



1 balancing these requirements, and then, do you think there  
2 is a risk of suboptimizing our special operations forces by  
3 asking them to be all things to all people?

4 General Beaudette?

5 General Beaudette: Chairman Kelly, thank you. We are  
6 fortunate in many ways in that our force, a large proportion  
7 of our force was initially designed back in the 1950s for  
8 that current era's form of great power competition. So as  
9 we look across our formations today, approximately 60  
10 percent of our men and women are focused on great power  
11 competition, while the remaining 40 percent remained focused  
12 on countering violent extremism.

13 We have regionally aligned formations that have  
14 longstanding relationships with partners and allies in the  
15 respective theaters in which we operate. On any given day,  
16 and I will use today as an example, we have in excess of  
17 3,000 men and women deployed in 71 countries, shoring up  
18 allies and partners, sharing experiences with them, often  
19 those we learned in combat, using our language skills, using  
20 the relationships that we have. I do not feel that we are  
21 suboptimized in one area or another, having the agility, the  
22 responsiveness, the creativity, and, frankly, the readiness  
23 and training to answer the operational needs and  
24 requirements of our nation. Thank you.

25 Senator Kelly: And I want to go around and hear from

1 everybody here, but also think in terms of do we need to  
2 shift that 40/60 at some point to more so towards the great  
3 power side of this. Like is any shift going to be necessary  
4 in the future?

5 General Slife?

6 General Slife: Thank you, Senator. As I indicated in  
7 my opening remarks, this is the challenge of our time, is  
8 how to balance against these mission areas to provide for  
9 the security of the nation.

10 I think one of the competitive advantages that SOF, in  
11 general, certainly AFSOC, that really all the components  
12 bring to the table is our access and placement around the  
13 globe. General Beaudette highlighted the number of places  
14 where his soldiers are serving the globe. The story is much  
15 the same for AFSOC. Last year alone, we were in 62  
16 countries, engaged with partner nations, with an additional  
17 several dozen that we enjoyed access to through overflight,  
18 landing, and persistent aviation operations. And so when  
19 you look at between 80 and 100 countries around the globe  
20 where SOF enjoys access and placement, this is tremendous  
21 leverage that SOF can bring to the table in the realm of  
22 competition.

23 Senator, specifically to your question about  
24 suboptimization, one of the benefits of SOF is that we task  
25 organize in joint formations at very low levels. So it is

1 not at all uncommon for an Air Force captain or a technical  
2 sergeant to have already made friends and developed  
3 relationships with members of the other service components.  
4 And so that task organization will ensure that we are always  
5 able to build the force that we need for the task at hand.  
6 Thank you.

7 Senator Kelly: Thank you. Admiral?

8 Admiral Howard: Thank you, Senator. We will never  
9 underestimate the enduring threat of terrorism to the  
10 homeland. When we look at the threats, the technological  
11 barrier to entry to those threats is dropping. Our concern  
12 is in biotreats, synthetic bio, improvised nuclear weapons.  
13 We can never underestimate those threats to the nation. The  
14 balance, as you describe, we have to find it, and in  
15 counterterrorism, I think to emphasize the point on allies  
16 and partners, absolutely critical to finding both effects,  
17 beyond what we can do alone, but also efficiencies, so that  
18 can address peer threats to the country.

19 On China, specifically, and Russia, we are looking at  
20 how to modernize as rapidly as we can our comparative  
21 advantage in the maritime domain, both on and under the sea.  
22 And it is the access for intelligence operations, it is the  
23 access for dilemmas that undermine confidence and provide  
24 escalation offramps. That is the main thing that Naval  
25 Special Warfare is focused on. My sense is we will always

1 contribute to counterterrorism. I think the nation will  
2 need our capabilities there. But the distinctive  
3 capabilities we have in the maritime domain for peer  
4 threats, that is our main effort.

5 Senator Kelly: And over the last 20 years there has  
6 not been a big focus on that, so we could see how, going  
7 forward, we have got to return to that specific capability  
8 that Naval Special Warfare does so well. So thank you,  
9 Admiral, for recognizing that.

10 I am out of time. I am going to come back to General  
11 Glynn in a second, but let me recognize Senator -- General  
12 Glynn? We are going to go over.

13 General Glynn: Okay. Senator Kelly, thank you.

14 Senator Kelly: So we know who is really in charge  
15 here.

16 General Glynn: Succinctly, I will say, to summarize  
17 what my colleagues have said, that I do not believe that  
18 counterterrorism and great power competition are mutually  
19 exclusive. Our allies and partners are living it every day.  
20 Our closest allies and partners, Australia, for example,  
21 have to contend with both simultaneously, and we believe it  
22 is our responsibility to be side-by-side with them. And,  
23 quite honestly, around the world, in the places where we  
24 are, we learn considerable lessons from being alongside them  
25 in how to leverage, as has been alluded to, the placement

1 that we have uniquely around the world, to enable  
2 competitive actions on our behalf.

3 And I think the responsibility that we have as  
4 commanders in the SOCOM enterprise is to develop the  
5 capabilities at pace, going forward, with these peer  
6 competitors, specifically in areas where they have  
7 purposefully invested while we have been focused elsewhere,  
8 on the electromagnetic spectrum, in cyber domain, in  
9 operations in the information environment, and in place  
10 where you are very familiar, in space. And that is where we  
11 have to continue to emphasize our actions, to make sure that  
12 it isn't balanced, that it remains tilted in our favor.  
13 Thank you.

14 Senator Kelly: Thank you, General. I now recognize  
15 Senator Ernst.

16 Senator Ernst: Thank you, Mr. Chair, and this  
17 committee, as you all know, has been very consistently  
18 supportive of the preservation of the force and family  
19 program, and I am very thankful for the positive results  
20 that it has had in the lives of your troops and their  
21 families. And you all touched upon that, and I want to  
22 thank you for really focusing in on this area.

23 Modernization has also been a consistent focus of this  
24 committee. Though we often think about it in terms of  
25 equipment, of our vehicles, airplanes, various weapons

1 platforms and systems, those things are all important.  
2 However, as we discussed earlier, people are our most  
3 critical asset.

4 So, gentlemen, again, we will do a round robin, and if  
5 you could tell us about the impact of your efforts over the  
6 last few years to modernize your own POTFF program, and  
7 where you see it going in the future. General Beaudette, if  
8 you would please, sir.

9 General Beaudette: Senator, thank you. My assessment  
10 is it is singularly the most impactful program on the lives  
11 of our soldiers and their families that we have had, so I am  
12 extremely thankful for your leadership and the committee's  
13 leadership in getting us going in this way.

14 For us, POTFF is continued self-improvement and an  
15 understanding of how we can do even better for our soldiers.  
16 The next ridgeline to us looks like more research, more  
17 partnership with academia for comprehensive brain health, as  
18 an example. In the physical space, we have made  
19 improvements to our facilities, where I have never seen our  
20 men and women as strong or as fast, agile, and we are  
21 looking at this from a tangential view, the entire career of  
22 a special operator, from initial baselining in our  
23 assessment and selection programs, also from a  
24 neurocognitive perspective, through 20 year-plus in service  
25 in special operations.

1           So we see continued partnership, continued enhancement  
2   in our ability to generate resiliency, to enable faster  
3   decision-making, better skills, better attributes, and to  
4   continue to increase the resilience of our world-class  
5   families and their ability to support their special  
6   operators forward in defense of the nation. Thank you.

7           Senator Ernst: Fantastic. Thank you. General Slife?

8           General Slife: Thank you, Senator. In addition to the  
9   comments General Beaudette offered, I would say that one  
10  area that is of particular interest to me, at AFSOC, is  
11  being able to disentangle the so-called invisible wounds of  
12  war. So we have traumatic brain injury, which manifests in  
13  a certain number of ways. We have psychological injury,  
14  that manifests in many similar ways. But we also have moral  
15  injury, which manifests in some of the same ways. And these  
16  three invisible wounds of war are frequently misdiagnosed,  
17  they frequently interact in ways that we do not fully  
18  understand.

19          So I would just foot-stomp General Beaudette's point  
20  about the research needed to help us understand the wounds  
21  that our servicemembers have endured.

22          Senator Ernst: Thank you, sir. Admiral Howard?

23          Admiral Howard: The impact on destigmatizing mental  
24  health has, I think, brought to bear in the force the  
25  conversations that need to happen. And it is through these

1 resources that the Congress has authorized and appropriated  
2 that we have been able to make gains there.

3 Where we are seeking to go further is in neurocognitive  
4 health, how we baseline and track, and that feeds into  
5 another area that we are looking to improve and explore is  
6 in transitional support, and how we transition our teammates  
7 to be effective leaders in civil society in their  
8 communities. And the continuity of care through that  
9 vulnerable time of transition is a place where we are  
10 looking to go further in effectiveness.

11 Senator Ernst: That is fantastic, and Admiral Howard,  
12 I was able to visit with Admiral Greene a number of years  
13 ago at Coronado, and really had a really great presentation  
14 given to me that was the basis of our cognitive domain. And  
15 I think that Naval Special Warfare has really grabbed ahold  
16 of this, and we want to thank you for working so hard and  
17 diligently in that area. Thank you.

18 And, General Glynn, in the last few seconds that we  
19 have.

20 General Glynn: Senator Ernst, thank you. In addition  
21 to what has already been offered, I would say that bringing  
22 together all of the resources that you are aware of in  
23 preservation of the force into a one-stop has definitely  
24 contributed in a number of ways to destigmatizing as well as  
25 to enabling a pre-habilitative mindset, at least in my mind



1 coined by one of the folks in our program. It certainly  
2 provides the rehabilitative resources, but in many ways it  
3 is pre-habilitative.

4 And beyond the impact on the SOF components, it is  
5 absolutely informing our services. I can speak on behalf of  
6 the Marine Corps. I mean, there are aspirational desires to  
7 replicate some of it in many of the areas. We, likewise,  
8 are focused with SOCOM's priority on the cognitive health  
9 going forward, in order to baseline early in your experience  
10 in the SOF, community, so that we can provide improvement  
11 down the line. And that is where most of our effort is.  
12 Thank you.

13 Senator Ernst: I thank you all so much, and I yield  
14 back.

15 Senator Kelly: Thank you, Senator. I now recognize  
16 Senator Shaheen for 5 minutes.

17 Senator Shaheen: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank  
18 you to each of you for your service and for your testimony  
19 this morning.

20 All of you mentioned diversity, or almost all of you  
21 mentioned diversity as part of your opening remarks, as  
22 being important to the work that you do. But a 2016 RAND  
23 study found that 85 percent of special operators opposed  
24 allowing women into their specialties, and 71 percent  
25 opposed women in their units. And as of last year, more

1 than 50 women have completed the rigorous Ranger school, and  
2 in July 2020, the first woman was made a Green Beret. So  
3 progress is being made, but it is clear that there are still  
4 challenges for women.

5 So can you talk about what you think the value is of  
6 having a diverse special operations force and what women can  
7 contribute, and what can be done to address some of those  
8 obstacles that women are still facing as they are trying to  
9 participate in special forces operations?

10 General Beaudette: Senator, thank you. We must be as  
11 diverse in our formations as we are in American society, and  
12 we have a tremendous amount of pride in the fact that we are  
13 ethnically, statistically representative of what society  
14 looks like. And it is very impactful and powerful for us,  
15 particularly when we travel overseas, spend time and meet  
16 with our allies and partners, to show them what we look  
17 like, and in our opinion, what right looks like.

18 We also have a lot of pride in the fact that our Army  
19 Special Operations formations are 100 percent integrated,  
20 and as you point out, we have women Green Berets and women  
21 Rangers and Night Stalkers. And we also acknowledge the  
22 fact that we can do more. So to that end, we instituted a  
23 Women in SOF survey. We had over 5,000 respondents  
24 recently, over 1,000 of whom were women. We are learning a  
25 tremendous amount about what we can do better to support

1 them in their efforts in our formation. But, in addition,  
2 in something that was particularly important to me, over 70  
3 percent of the total number of respondents would recommend a  
4 career in special operations for their daughters.

5 So where we can remove barriers as they exist, where we  
6 can present what life in our formations look like, we want  
7 you, you have an opportunity to serve and to flourish in our  
8 formations. We treat everyone with dignity and with respect.

9 Where we have equipment challenges, where we have  
10 postpartum care challenges, we are addressing a lot of these  
11 issues as we speak, and are making fundamental changes. We  
12 have spent a lot of the last 6 months listening very, very  
13 closely to our women special operators, and we take a  
14 tremendous amount of pride in the contributions that they  
15 have made for the nation. Thank you, Senator.

16 Senator Shaheen: So what percentage of your forces are  
17 women?

18 General Beaudette: So we have, in our formations, and  
19 the last time I testified we had 55 women in our leadership  
20 positions at the team sergeant level and above in Army  
21 Special Operations. We are almost --

22 Senator Shaheen: Out of how many?

23 General Beaudette: -- we are almost 90 women in some  
24 of our formations, Civil Affairs and CYOPS, are almost 20  
25 percent female special operators.

1 Senator Shaheen: So when you talk about in those  
2 leadership roles, 55 out of how many?

3 General Beaudette: Fifty-five -- I will have to take  
4 the question for record and get back with a total number,  
5 but it is from master sergeant through full colonel.  
6 Currently, we have five women in battalion or squadron  
7 command positions, as an example, and a similar number in  
8 command sergeant major, senior NCO leadership positions.

9 Senator Shaheen: Does anyone else want to add to that,  
10 what you are doing and what you are seeing?

11 General Slife: I do, Senator. The largest tactical  
12 formation in the Special Operations Command is Hurlburt  
13 Field's 1st Special Operations Wing, with nearly 6,000  
14 airmen. It is commanded by a woman. In fact, this summer,  
15 if you are a young woman in the 34th Special Operations  
16 Squadron, which is one of our U-28 squadrons at Hurlburt,  
17 and you look at the chain of command board that exists in  
18 every unit in AFSOC, you have to get to the three-star  
19 general level before you find a man in your chain of  
20 command.

21 So what we have seen in AFSOC, because as an aviation  
22 component, primarily, most of our cockpits were open to  
23 women in 1993, and so women have had a chance to matriculate  
24 through the ranks and kind of grow as a part of our  
25 formation.

1           So I think it is important that the young women in our  
2 formations see icons and role models ahead of them, and we  
3 are beginning to see that now. So we are very passionate  
4 about this. To your specific question about why is this  
5 important, it is important because 50 percent or more of the  
6 talent in American society lies in women in the population,  
7 and so we need the most talented human beings we can get.  
8 If that is our competitive advantage, then we have to invest  
9 in all the human beings.

10           Senator Shaheen: Thank you. Anyone else? Admiral  
11 Howard or General Glynn?

12           Admiral Howard: Thank you, Senator. Four quick  
13 points. This fundamental principle of reflecting the nation  
14 is absolutely critical. We are establishing an outreach  
15 command to go proactively to candidates. This is a new  
16 approach, and my sense is it is exactly what we need to do  
17 to meet our objectives for a more diverse force. We have  
18 integrated female cadre into our assessment selection, now  
19 fully integrated, to prepare for integrating women  
20 candidates.

21           And the last point, and I would appreciate the  
22 opportunity, in a classified setting, to talk to the  
23 committee about what our women have done, and the women that  
24 we have assessment selected, in different programs within  
25 special operations, and the compelling stories of courage,

1 of warfighting competence that they have demonstrated and  
2 delivered to the nation, on strategic mission outcomes.

3 Senator Shaheen: Thank you. General Glynn?

4 General Glynn: Senator Shaheen, the things I would  
5 offer here, the things that we have discovered in observing  
6 both Fortune 500 companies as well as our own experience,  
7 are, as a volunteer organization -- and everyone comes to  
8 MARSOC as a volunteer and goes through assessment selection  
9 -- our attractiveness to the women you are describing in the  
10 first place. So there is more coming, the direction, and  
11 how we, to the point General Beaudette made, how women can  
12 see themselves in our formation is one of the areas. And  
13 one example is our visual imagery and how it is portrayed.  
14 Can you see yourself, first and foremost.

15 And then the other half of it is -- well, it is more  
16 than half -- is retention. The retention of that talent.  
17 Frankly, one of the challenges I know we all face is that  
18 the kind of talent we are talking about has a lot of  
19 options, and it is actively sought. And so our ability to  
20 engage early, and not have to worry about transition  
21 readiness, frankly, is make sure they stay on the team. But  
22 that is an area of pretty considerable investment on our  
23 part right now.

24 Senator Shaheen: So do you know -- and I know I am  
25 over time, Mr. Chairman -- but what percentage of women are

1 involved in MARSOC?

2 General Glynn: In MARSOC it is currently about 4  
3 percent.

4 Senator Shaheen: And 20 percent, did you say?

5 General Beaudette: In some parts of our formation.  
6 Our O-6 level commands average 150 women in the formations,  
7 in all types of positions within the force.

8 Senator Shaheen: And --

9 General Slife: Ours is about 18 percent, which closely  
10 tracks the Air Force averages.

11 Admiral Howard: Our force is 10 percent female.

12 Senator Shaheen: So, well, thank you. I appreciate  
13 all of the efforts to increase opportunities for women in  
14 the ranks. As you point out, as we look at the people we  
15 need to attract to serve in our military, if we do not  
16 expand the numbers of women we are not going to have the  
17 people we need to do the jobs. So thank you all very much.

18 Senator Kelly: Thank you, Senator. I now recognize  
19 Senator Blackburn for 5 minutes, via Webex.

20 Senator Blackburn: Thank you so much, and how much we  
21 appreciate each of you giving us your time today.

22 General Beaudette, I want to come to you on your  
23 modernization line of effort. You had a line in here I  
24 really like. "We will reduce bureaucracy and optimize our  
25 processes to deliver what the warfighter requires at the

1 speed of need." And in my opinion, that is something that  
2 we absolutely have to do, and that requires that we get rid  
3 of some of the stovepipes that exist within the Pentagon,  
4 and that we begin to look more cross-platform.

5 We were just talking about having the human capital  
6 that we need to do the job, and what is necessary for 21st  
7 century warfare. And some of these skill sets you are going  
8 to draw from different areas, and they need to be able to  
9 work together.

10 So in this endeavor, have you encountered processes  
11 external to your headquarters element that are stifling any  
12 modernization efforts?

13 General Beaudette: Senator, thank you, as well as for  
14 your tremendous leadership in support of our Special Forces  
15 group and Night Stalker community.

16 My aspiration is for us to have the ability to buy,  
17 try, decide new technologies, developing, burgeoning,  
18 harness the innovative engine of America at the lowest level  
19 humanly possible. And we are explicitly team focused, and  
20 for us trust and empowerment goes down to absolutely the  
21 lowest level of our special operations formations.

22 So any opportunity we may have to best connect with  
23 America's innovation engines out there, at speed, in post-  
24 industrial age processes, will be hugely important to us,  
25 whether we are partnering with academia or we have



1 opportunities to learn from young men and women across  
2 America, by presenting our problems, our challenges, and  
3 give them the opportunity and the ability to help us out. I  
4 think we are making progress in that space, but we could  
5 always use as much flexibility as possible and as much  
6 opportunity, if you will, as possible, to do this early and  
7 often. Thank you.

8 Senator Blackburn: Let me ask you this. To date, do  
9 you have any internal successes that you have said, "We  
10 tried this. This worked. We can replicate." Any successes  
11 you want to report on?

12 General Beaudette: Senator, absolutely, we do. So I  
13 will use some of our opportunities by partnering with  
14 academia, for example, at MIT and Tufts. We present  
15 students with challenges that are complex, somewhat  
16 intractable to us, and difficult to solve, whether it is  
17 operating in denied environments, using small sensors,  
18 unmanned sensors, if you will, the ability to breath, to  
19 operate, to communicate, to see in spaces in which we are  
20 not operating, to advantage our men and women to sustain  
21 lethality.

22 We have had a great opportunity with Vanderbilt, as an  
23 example, to work on some mission command and control  
24 systems, if you will, for the 160th Special Ops Aviation  
25 Regiment, which ties in our synthetic training

1 opportunities. It is cost effective, and it is also nested  
2 with our live and other virtual training venues. We could  
3 really challenge, as much as possible, our men and women in  
4 the training phase in order to optimize their success.

5 Senator Blackburn: You mentioned that Pathfinder  
6 program, which University of Tennessee and Vanderbilt are  
7 involved in that, and they are working to solve some of  
8 those issues that the 160th faces. And I would be  
9 interested to know if you take unit-level and individual  
10 feedback as you are looking for these reforms and for new  
11 ways to approach this technology utilization.

12 General Beaudette: Senator, absolutely. Thank you.  
13 We are blessed with an extremely talented and insightful  
14 population, and they are not shy about their opinions of how  
15 I can do my job better in order to best support them. So we  
16 get a tremendous amount of feedback, and they do have great  
17 ideas. And we find that often with the system and process  
18 that you mentioned, if we, frankly, just get out of the way  
19 and we connect America with our young men and women  
20 operators who have those operational problems there, we get  
21 the best results.

22 And so we have restructured our force modernization  
23 environment with the support of the Army Futures Command as  
24 well, and, frankly, a lot of our local initiatives and  
25 efforts, by getting out of the way of the units and allowing

1 them to contact and to learn and associate and partner and  
2 problem-solve with elements of the local community, we are  
3 finding our best results.

4 Senator Blackburn: Okay. Thank you so much. And my  
5 time has expired. I am actually over time. But  
6 Administration Howard, I have a question I am going to send  
7 to you on NWS, and, General Glynn, I have a MARSOC question  
8 that I am going to send to you. It is a recruiting  
9 question.

10 So, Mr. Chairman, I yield back. Thank you.

11 Senator Kelly: Thank you, Senator. I now recognize  
12 Senator Gillibrand via Webex for 5 minutes.

13 Senator Gillibrand: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I want  
14 to talk a little bit about mental health issues. Obviously,  
15 with the type of deployment that special operations forces  
16 do and the intensity of their work they are very much  
17 exposed to a great deal of intense and hard work.

18 There is an issue now with an increased suicide rate.  
19 In 2018, the suicide rate amongst SOF personnel tripled, and  
20 we know that our special operators continue to deal with the  
21 effects of injury and trauma, including negative behaviors  
22 that can be linked to brain damage and other injuries they  
23 receive in the field.

24 As we discuss the future of special operations forces,  
25 I would like to know what suggestions you three may have and

1 how we can work together to improve the quality of care and  
2 also to remove the stigma associated with receiving mental  
3 health assistance.

4 General Beaudette: Senator, thank you. From the Army  
5 Special Operations perspective, we have been blessed with  
6 the opportunity to increase our behavioral health support  
7 staff through our POTFF program by 40 percent. We feel that  
8 that is having an impact already.

9 I mentioned a little bit some of the brain health  
10 initiatives that we are working with academia with, and,  
11 frankly, with our medical communities, to ensure that we  
12 have got the best understanding possible of what it means to  
13 serve in our formations at scale, whether it is through  
14 micro TBI accrual, exposure to blast, or exposure to any of  
15 the other traumas, as you mentioned, that we face out there.  
16 We are looking to bring on, as a result of the POTFF  
17 program, trauma therapists as well, and we need to, in  
18 partner with academia, better understand the complexities of  
19 the brain. I think that we on 5 percent power in our  
20 knowledge of what we can better do in order to best develop  
21 resiliency, and frankly, just take care of our soldiers in  
22 that space.

23 And so any initiatives that help us understand what  
24 blood biomarkers mean, what brain injury looks like, and/or  
25 how we can better generate resilience and enable decision-

1 making is critically important to us. But thank you so much  
2 for your support in what we have attained already. Our  
3 standard is zero suicides across our formations, and that is  
4 what we will continue to fight to attain. Thank you.

5 Senator Gillibrand: Thank you. I want to talk a  
6 little bit about the future of special operations forces  
7 recruitment. I know that we rely, and we deal with  
8 enormously difficult environments, but some of our  
9 challenges continue to change, where we now need more  
10 information operations, there are influence campaigns to  
11 deal with, cyber intrusion, and other technological elements  
12 that are likely to have a greater role in future operations.

13 I am curious how these changes may affect recruiting  
14 for our SOF personnel, for the future. In order to recruit  
15 the best personnel for these types of security changes, how  
16 do you think we should reorient special operations forces  
17 recruitment in order to continue to diversify the collective  
18 skill set?

19 General Beaudette: Senator, thank you. The best  
20 talent, and generating the best talent remains incredibly  
21 important to us, and so some of the things that we have done  
22 is, again, we have pushed down to the lowest level access to  
23 potential recruits by our men and women already in the  
24 formations, explaining what a day in the life looks like,  
25 explaining skill sets that are critically important to us,

1 whether it is from STEM backgrounds or forensic accounting  
2 or, as you point out, influencing operations or information  
3 warfare. So we are going to colleges and universities and  
4 high schools and we are trying to capture the imagination of  
5 talented young men and women, and explain to them what it  
6 means to serve in our formations. And we have federated  
7 that approach as much as possible, working with the Army's  
8 recruiting capabilities, so that young men and women can see  
9 themselves in our formations and know that their skills are  
10 needed, they are respected, and it is what we are going to  
11 need to continue to attain operational success.

12 Senator Gillibrand: Thank you. One last question. As  
13 you all know, the current special operations force structure  
14 is largely derived from counterterrorism and foreign  
15 internal defense operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. Do you  
16 think that this structure has created gaps in special  
17 operations capabilities to win against global rivals such as  
18 China or Russia, and do you believe there should be an  
19 increased emphasis on unconventional warfare capabilities to  
20 support irregular warfare to deter Chinese and Russian  
21 aggression?

22 General Beaudette: Senator, thank you. I do believe,  
23 and we have put a continued emphasis and, frankly, a re-  
24 emphasis on irregular warfare, unconventional warfare over  
25 the last 18 months, through really deliberate, disciplined

1 work at the combat training centers, all through a lens of  
2 what it will be like for great power competition, ensuring  
3 that everything we have learned in the CT and CVEO fight  
4 that we can use in GPC is brought to bear. We continue to  
5 innovate, we continue to experiment, and we are continuing  
6 to ensure ourselves that we will remain with a lethal,  
7 competitive advantage against any adversary, on any  
8 battlefield. Thank you.

9 Senator Gillibrand: Thank you all, and thank you, Mr.  
10 Chairman.

11 Senator Kelly: Thank you, Senator. You know, as we  
12 think about the force services and their special operations  
13 capabilities I think it is easy to recognize that the Army,  
14 Air Force, Navy and have very different areas where they  
15 operate in and skill sets. So I want to give General Glynn  
16 an opportunity here, about differentiating the Marine Corps  
17 skill sets and capabilities from the special operations  
18 forces in the United States Army, specifically. General  
19 Glynn, just to have the opportunity to talk a little bit  
20 more about the Marine Corps and what they bring into the  
21 theater.

22 General Glynn: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate  
23 the opportunity to expand a little bit about MARSOC's  
24 contributions to the force. And as you know, we were born  
25 as a special operations component in the midst of

1 counterterrorism, and so from our early days many of the  
2 core competencies bore a semblance of similarities to the  
3 other components by virtue of necessity.

4       As we look to the future, however, the need to develop  
5 competitive capabilities against those very same adversaries  
6 that you opened up with, the Russians and the Chinese, begin  
7 to bring out the uniqueness of our service as well of our  
8 special operations component. And I think it is important  
9 to emphasize, at least it is to us, the strong and  
10 purposeful bond between our special operations component and  
11 our service, as they look specifically at the INDOPACOM AOR,  
12 and what it means to be an inside force, what it takes to be  
13 competitive in an environment where you are operating inside  
14 the weapons engagement zone.

15       The thing that MARSOC currently possesses that is  
16 unique and expanding is command and control at echelon with  
17 an appreciation for the areas that I mentioned early on, in  
18 your first question, which were the electromagnetic  
19 spectrum, specifically the radio frequency range, cyber, the  
20 cyber domain, operations in the information environment, and  
21 increasingly in space. And specifically, the command and  
22 control of that, the awareness of how we operate, what our  
23 signature looks like in the electromagnetic spectrum, so  
24 that we know how our adversaries view us.

25       And so at MARSOC we see ourselves on a quest to be what



1 the Pentagon would call JADC2, to the all-domain awareness  
2 and increasingly bring effects that are competitive to our  
3 adversaries. And with the Raider lineage and our experience  
4 over the last 15 years in countering violent extremist  
5 organizations, it is a force that great powers -- our  
6 aspirational view of this is we are the force that great  
7 power watch, and know we can hold them and their critical  
8 capabilities at risk going forward. Thank you.

9 Senator Kelly: Thank you, General. I now recognize  
10 Senator Peters for 5 minutes.

11 Senator Peters: Well, thank you, Mr. Chairman, and,  
12 gentlemen, welcome. It is good to see all of you here.  
13 Thank you for your testimony, and I certainly thank you for  
14 your service each and every day, and the men and women that  
15 you command.

16 General Slife, the first question is for you, and  
17 something that I noticed in your testimony. I will just  
18 kind of preface it is that this is the Emerging Capabilities  
19 and Threats Subcommittee, and we know innovation is moving  
20 rapidly, and we have to be able to move rapidly as well and  
21 think of creative ways to come up with those great ideas.  
22 And I was interest in your Evil Genius competition that you  
23 talk about in your opening testimony. Talk to me a little  
24 bit more about that, and some of the results. How do you  
25 take those ideas? How do you then make sure they get

1 implemented? If you could walk through that, because it is  
2 intriguing, and that seems unusual to your force. Is that  
3 correct?

4 General Slife: Thanks, Senator. So one of the  
5 benefits that each of us, as service components, bring to  
6 SOCOM is our close relationships with our parent service. I  
7 think the service components of SOCOM are most effective for  
8 SOCOM when we are closest to our parent service.

9 And so about a year and a half ago, I was speaking to  
10 the then acquisition executive of the Air Force about  
11 opportunities for AFSOC to serve as a pathfinding force for  
12 the broader Air Force. And at the time the acquisition  
13 executive, you know, highlighted a number of things that he  
14 was frustrated that he could not get started, and I said,  
15 "We will take that on for you." And, you know, we have been  
16 able to use the kind of rapid requirement and rapid  
17 acquisition systems in place at SOCOM with service funding  
18 to move things forward fairly quickly.

19 And one of the things he and I discussed was, you know,  
20 we really need to turn this innovative force of yours loose  
21 on one of our pacing threats. And so we did a classified  
22 competition where we said to our entire force, how could we  
23 create dilemmas and uncertainty for our pacing threats? And  
24 so we got several hundred submissions back that truly were  
25 reflective of a force of 20,000 evil geniuses that I get to

1 interact with on a day-to-day basis. And some of them were  
2 quite intriguing.

3 And so what we did was we whittled this down to under a  
4 dozen proposals. The service acquisition executive and I  
5 took essentially pitches from these folks that had developed  
6 these intriguing ideas, and we decided, with five of them,  
7 to put some money behind them and fund those.

8 And so that is really the genesis of the Evil Genius  
9 contest. It was successful. We are going to do it again  
10 this year. I would be happy to talk more about it in a  
11 closed session with you, Senator. Thank you.

12 Senator Peters: Yeah, that would be great. That  
13 sounds really innovative. Congratulations on that, and you  
14 are going to continue to do it, so clearly there is some  
15 major benefit there for you and for the country, so thank  
16 you.

17 General Beaudette, my next question is for you, and it  
18 relates to open source intelligence analysis. There was a  
19 story in The Wall Street Journal just a few days ago about  
20 tracking phones used by U.S. military personnel in Syria. I  
21 am sure you saw it. In 2018, Strava, a San Francisco-based  
22 company, released heat signature data from devices like  
23 Fitbits. And there was a university student on Twitter who  
24 pointed out that you could glean the size and scope of U.S.  
25 presence overseas by analyzing that type of data. And

1 certainly open source intelligence analysis has been used to  
2 geolocate, I know special operations in Africa, based off of  
3 pictures posted on social media.

4 So I understand we are also in an open hearing here  
5 now, but what measures are you taking to reduce these  
6 digital signals, particularly with the men and women who  
7 serve with you that are young and these tools are just part  
8 of their body, basically. So how do we work through that?

9 General Beaudette: Senator, thank you. It is critical  
10 to us that we gain the ability to hide in plain sight, and  
11 so as a result of some of those and other things, frankly,  
12 that we have learned about ourselves, we think we have honed  
13 in on better ability, greater opportunities to be able to  
14 hide in plain sight, if you will, within an existing  
15 electromagnetic spectrum that allows us to, frankly,  
16 flourish and not just be able to exist wherever we go.

17 So part and parcel to that, we put significant efforts  
18 into enhanced training, some technical capabilities for our  
19 men and women to give them the opportunity to do that. And  
20 we start, frankly, day one in our basic assessment and  
21 selection processes to give folks an understanding of what  
22 those digital footprints or fingerprints or signatures look  
23 like, how long they can stay with you, and how we feel like  
24 we can optimize protecting them and ensuring that this is a  
25 fundamental component of force protection today in the

1 digital area. We are not making it easy. In fact, we are  
2 making it much more complicated for our adversaries to  
3 figure out what we are doing and where we are doing it.  
4 Thank you.

5 Senator Peters: You are right. Thank you. I  
6 appreciate your answers. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

7 Senator Kelly: Thank you, Senator. I now recognize  
8 Senator Ernst for 5 minutes.

9 Senator Ernst: Great. Thank you, Mr. Chair, and as  
10 General Clarke had testified earlier this year, our  
11 adversaries are increasingly using asymmetric tactics to  
12 undermine longstanding U.S. conventional advantages. And  
13 Lieutenant General H.R. McMaster memorably said, one of my  
14 favorite quotes, "There are two fundamental ways to fight --  
15 asymmetrically and stupidly."

16 So SOF is uniquely suited to operate in the regular  
17 warfare domain. That is your focus, your area. So,  
18 gentlemen, how do you view the role of your forces in  
19 operating in the irregular warfare domain during competition  
20 with our near-peers? And General Glynn, I will start with  
21 you, and we will go the other direction.

22 General Glynn: Thank you, Senator, and it is a very  
23 good question. We just had Lieutenant General McMaster join  
24 us virtually for a symposium we call Cognitive Raider, and  
25 he had a similar comment to make in that setting. It was

1 good.

2 What I would begin with, at least, and then let the  
3 other commanders comment, what I would begin with is to say  
4 that yesterday's irregular symmetric warfare is, as General  
5 Slife had in his opening comment, is behind us, that the  
6 folks that have had the opportunity to study how we have  
7 done business for the last 20 years have come to the  
8 conclusions that lead us to an emerging threats discussion  
9 like we are having today, which is why, increasingly, SOCOM  
10 is an enterprise and MARSOC as a part of it, is focused in  
11 the areas that I mentioned earlier. For starters, the  
12 question that was just brought up, electromagnetic spectrum.

13 How do we look in that environment today, and what is it  
14 that our competitors see in us today?

15 And so to think about how irregular warfare will be  
16 going forward, for us we look at how is it that our digital  
17 footprint can be both a source of deception to an adversary  
18 as well as a source of knowledge for us, so that we do not  
19 break squelch, in unclassified terms, and we can continue to  
20 operate, as General Beaudette mentioned, in plain sight.  
21 And I will stop in the electromagnetic spectrum and let  
22 others talk about cyber and other areas.

23 Senator Ernst: Great. Thank you. Admiral Howard?

24 Admiral Howard: Thank you, Senator. In strategic  
25 competition, irregular approaches, as you said, that is

1 distinctive to special operations. That is what we provide  
2 to the Joint Force, and it is irregular approaches to do  
3 what? To solve hard problems and shape and deter  
4 adversaries. And it is irregular approaches to communicate  
5 in ways that undermine their confidence and strengthen  
6 diplomatic leverage. And taking what we learned in  
7 counterterrorism, our understanding of network development,  
8 integration of operations and intelligence, to shape  
9 irregular approaches for peer and near-peer adversaries,  
10 absolutely what we are focused on as an enterprise, and to  
11 bring our creativity to bear to the nation in ways that can  
12 be not just asymmetrical or regular but also cost effective.

13 Senator Ernst: Good. Thank you.

14 General Slife: Senator, historically the special  
15 operations forces have been supporting to the broader Joint  
16 Force, with unique capabilities and skills that are not  
17 resident elsewhere in the force. Over the last 20 years, in  
18 many ways we have become a supported force, but I think as  
19 we look towards the future, much of our value proposition  
20 will be as a supporting force to the broader Joint Force.

21 And so when you look at the things that are important  
22 to the broader Joint Force, in the event of conflict, many  
23 of them will require long lead activities to hold those  
24 targets at risk, and that is where I think the unique value  
25 proposition of SOF is with our unparalleled access and

1 placement around the globe. We can use that access and  
2 placement to set the conditions for the broader Joint Force  
3 to be successful in conflict.

4 Senator Ernst: Excellent. Thank you. General  
5 Beaudette?

6 General Beaudette: Senator, thank you. We are not the  
7 only practitioners of irregular warfare, but we feel that we  
8 are one of the best, and it is part and parcel to our  
9 culture, and it is fundamental to the excellence of our men  
10 and women, their creativity, their agility, their  
11 professionalism, their discipline. We can create dilemmas  
12 for our adversaries, and we feel that we can be strong where  
13 they are weak.

14 My colleagues mentioned cyber and electronic warfare.  
15 Information warfare is another critically important  
16 component where we feel that we have exceptional, frankly,  
17 the premier practitioners on behalf of the DoD in our  
18 psychological operations formations. And so working with  
19 those skills and attributes through allies, partners, as  
20 General Slife mentioned, access in placement, we can be a  
21 significant force for irregular warfare, in support of  
22 ongoing competition for the nation. Thank you.

23 Senator Ernst: Yes, thank you, gentlemen, and I will  
24 yield back. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

25 Senator Kelly: Thank you, Senator. I think it is



1 important we recognize that we have four military officers  
2 here and between the three of us we have got Army, Navy,  
3 Marine, and we are all lined up correctly. So we just need  
4 an Air Force colleague here.

5 I now recognize Senator Sullivan for 5 minutes.

6 Senator Sullivan: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and that is  
7 one of the reasons I crashed this subcommittee. I am not a  
8 member -- I am a member of the full committee -- but  
9 normally the Marines do not need any reinforcement wherever  
10 we go, General, but I thought I would show up, just to even  
11 it out a little bit. We are pretty good at taking care of  
12 ourselves.

13 I am going to ask a question. I had a really good  
14 discussion with Admiral Howard yesterday, so, sir, I  
15 appreciate that, and General Glynn, as well. I am sure it  
16 has probably been asked already, in some format, but I think  
17 it is a really important question so I will ask it again, at  
18 least from my perspective, and is the shift to the National  
19 Defense Strategy orientation, and I am just going to ask it  
20 of all four of our witnesses.

21 You know, after 9/11, our National Security Strategy  
22 made it very clear that the threat of violent extremist  
23 organizations was the primary threat, particularly if they  
24 were going to obtain weapons of mass destruction. And a lot  
25 of brave young men and women participated in those battles

1 in Afghanistan and Iraq. The tip of the spear, of course,  
2 was the men and women who all of you represent and command.  
3 They did a phenomenal job, exceptional job, remarkable job  
4 over the last two decades, truly.

5 But we are starting to shift. We cannot take our eye  
6 off the CT threat, but the orientation is to great power  
7 competition. So how is that going? It is probably not  
8 easy. My assessment is in the SOCOM world it has been, in  
9 some ways, the hardest to reorient, just because you have  
10 been so front and center prominent in the CT fight. And  
11 then how are the men and women you lead dealing with it? It  
12 is a very, very different mission. They are not going to go  
13 over -- you know, I will say it. A lot of people do not  
14 like talking about it -- to kill and capture bad guys. That  
15 is what most of your members were doing. They do it well.  
16 They were probably motivated by it, which is why they joined  
17 the Special Forces. But that mission is going to be  
18 different. It is going to be less kinetic. It is going to  
19 be more strategic.

20 So how is that going, both from your command  
21 perspective? My assessment is the SOCOM enterprise, in some  
22 ways, has been a little bit late to that reorientation.  
23 Maybe I am wrong on that, but that is just my view. So your  
24 strategic orientation and the morale issue with regard to  
25 the troops you lead, how are they dealing with it? And

1 maybe we will just start, General, with you, and go around  
2 the table.

3 General Beaudette: Senator, thank you. For us it is  
4 progressing positively, as expected. Despite what we have  
5 done for the last 20 years, operationally, we, because of  
6 our regional alignment, retain the responsibility to  
7 continue to deploy between combat rotations to our areas of  
8 responsibility. So in a certain sense we retained a focus  
9 on things other than exclusively CT or CVEO.

10 In a lot of ways, what is old is new again for us in  
11 great power competition. So starting almost 5 years ago now  
12 we reinvested our approach in training towards what has now  
13 become considered large-scale ground combat operations. So  
14 we are in every combat training center rotation, as an  
15 example, and we ask for the full force of what it means to  
16 be in a very decisive and deliberate cyber, EW, kinetic  
17 environment. So our men and women are really adapting to  
18 the challenges of what they are faced with. They are taking  
19 their combat experience, their skills, their attributes, the  
20 lessons that they have learned, many of which, as you point  
21 out, sir, were learned the hard way, and they are bringing  
22 that to what they see as a next challenge for them.

23 And last point, you know, they raise their right hand  
24 and support and defend the Constitution and in a lot of ways  
25 solve hard problems on behalf of the nation, whether it is a

1 CT, CVEO, or great power competition problem. I am very  
2 proud of how they put their efforts into excelling, getting  
3 better, and making sure that they can answer anything that  
4 the nation needs them to do. Thank you, sir.

5 Senator Sullivan: Thank you. General?

6 General Slife: Senator, I spoke earlier about three  
7 strategic inflection points in our history, the first being  
8 in April of 1980 in Iran, the second being September of  
9 2001, and I think we are at the third one. And each of  
10 these strategic inflection points has required a  
11 transformation, and to your point, it is very difficult.  
12 And it is more difficult now, perhaps, than ever before,  
13 because we are facing the prospect of transforming in the  
14 aftermath of success. Our force has been spectacularly  
15 successful at the tactical level, for 20 years, and to tell  
16 that force that, yeah, that is all great but what we need to  
17 do now is different, obviously comes as a bit of a shock to  
18 the system.

19 But what I have found is that our airmen are not  
20 motivated necessarily by killing and capturing terrorists.  
21 They are motivated by relevance. And so if the thing that  
22 makes them relevant to the nation is pursuing great power  
23 competition, you better believe they are all in on moving in  
24 that direction.

25 And so, frankly, as I go around and talk to the force

1 about the requirement to transform in the aftermath of  
2 success, there is actually surprisingly little pushback.  
3 They are ready to get after it because they want to be  
4 relevant to the nation.

5 Senator Sullivan: Good. Great answer. Admiral?

6 Admiral Howard: We see the ownership, the ownership of  
7 the challenge and in embracing the challenge, and seeking  
8 edge. We have to seek edge everywhere. The margins are  
9 thin between success and failure, and they are getting  
10 thinner.

11 Our force is embracing peer-level opposition forces in  
12 our exercise, peer adversary level detection capabilities in  
13 our exercises, putting the pressure on our force. We are  
14 integrated in all of the Navy fleet exercises and  
15 certification work that is done before our fleets deploy.  
16 The large-scale joint exercises, we are integrated, so we  
17 are understanding where the gaps are and where we can, as a  
18 support team force, add value and move the needle for our  
19 joint commanders. And our main effort must be in the  
20 distinctive missions that only we can do, Naval Special  
21 Warfare.

22 Where we have comparative advantage is in the maritime.  
23 It provides access. It provides, as an inside force, the  
24 opportunity to deliver the main effects for the Joint Force.  
25 And so it is in the wargaming, the experimentation, and the

1 exercising where we are making real our concepts.

2 Senator Sullivan: Thank you. General?

3 General Glynn: Yes, Senator Sullivan. Thank you for  
4 the question and the opportunity. As you are well aware,  
5 the opportunity to overcome a challenge is what Marines  
6 thrive in, and so the recognition that we have seen in our  
7 force, at MARSOC, and really in the larger Marine Corps, is  
8 that our adversary has developed capabilities in those areas  
9 that they deem us to be the least capable, so that they do  
10 not have to go toe-to-toe with us, at least initially.

11 And the challenge that Marines, and Raiders in  
12 particular, whole-heartedly embrace, and really the job that  
13 Sergeant Major Loftus and I have every day, is to hold onto  
14 the reins of that horse as it runs, is how to ensure that  
15 the development of capability is unequal, decidedly in our  
16 advantage. And that is where the excitement, that is where  
17 the energy is harnessed right now, and it makes it an  
18 exciting time to be part of a formation, you know, the  
19 larger SOCOM enterprise, but also MARSOC, as folks really  
20 get after understanding what adversary capabilities are and  
21 how we can hold them at risk constantly.

22 Senator Sullivan: Great. Thank you. Thank you, Mr.  
23 Chairman.

24 Senator Kelly: Thank you, Senator. Thank you, General  
25 Glynn, Admiral Howard, General Slife, General Beaudette.

1 Thank you for testimony and for your service to our nation.

2 But before we adjourn I just have one question that I  
3 want to ask, and you can get back to us later, because I am  
4 going to adjourn the hearing after I ask it. But so  
5 Congress has included important reforms in recent NDAA's  
6 designed to enhance the ability of the Assistant Secretary  
7 of Defense for Special Operations and Low-Intensity Conflict  
8 to act as the service Secretary style, you know, civilian  
9 responsible for oversight and advocacy of special operations  
10 forces.

11 So if you could just get back to me on this. Do you  
12 see evidence of progress, and can you let me know how you  
13 feel that properly empowering civilian oversight benefits  
14 the special operations enterprise?

15 And again, thank you so much for your service, for your  
16 testimony today, and I look forward to working with all of  
17 you in the future, and this hearing is adjourned. Thank  
18 you.

19 [Whereupon, at 3:56 p.m., the subcommittee was  
20 adjourned.]

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