

**STATEMENT OF MICHAEL D. LUMPKIN, ACTING ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF
DEFENSE FOR SPECIAL OPERATIONS / LOW-INTENSITY CONFLICT,
TO
THE HOUSE ARMED SERVICES SUBCOMMITTEE ON
EMERGING THREATS AND CAPABILITIES**

**“THE FUTURE OF U.S. SPECIAL OPERATIONS FORCES: TEN TEARS AFTER 9/11
AND TWENTY-FIVE YEARS AFTER GOLDWATER-NICHOLS”
22 SEPTEMBER 2011**

Good morning, Chairman Thornberry, Ranking Member Langevin, and Members of the Committee. Thank you for the invitation to be here today. As we approach the 25th anniversary of the founding and creation of Special Operations Command (SOCOM) and the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations and Low-intensity Conflict (SO/LIC), I want to also acknowledge the unique relationship we have had with Congress and this Committee. Your support, and that of the American people, for our Special Operations Forces (SOF) was essential to the creation of SOCOM and SO/LIC and continues to be one of the key enablers to our success, so thank you.

In order to give you a sense of where we have been and where we are going, I will discuss first, the lessons we have learned from recent conflicts and employment of SOF; second, the strategic environment we see today and in the future; and third, what that means for the future of SOF, SOCOM, and SO/LIC.

I. Lessons Learned from Recent Conflicts and Employment of SOF

As we look at the past decade and the lessons learned, it is critical to put it into the broader context. In 1970, America’s special operators carried out one of the most masterful and daring raids in American military history to rescue American Prisoners of

War suspected of being held at Son Tay, a mere 40 miles from the North Vietnamese capital of Hanoi. Ten years later, our SOF were unable to rescue American hostages in Iran. Thirty-one years after that tragedy, we came full circle with the daring and successful raid at Abbottabad, nearly 40 miles north of Islamabad, that led to the death of Osama bin Laden.

We must retain and hone our proven direct action capability, which is what most Americans think of when they hear the term “SOF”, but it is only one aspect of what Special Operations Forces do. There are less obvious, but equally critical, indirect SOF capabilities that enable us to persistently engage throughout the world, working with partners to build their capabilities before conflicts arise so that they may defend themselves, and by extension, defend us. SOF's ability to persistently engage against our adversaries and with our friends at the small-footprint, village-by-village level is a unique and powerful tool for building the capacity of our partners and allies. Where our enemies or their ideologies are present, we and our partners must also be ever-present. Perhaps the biggest lesson of the past ten years is that we must retain the capability to conduct the full range of Special Operations activities and low-intensity conflict.

9/11 was a wake-up call. Decades old counterinsurgency manuals were dusted-off, revised, and reissued. The Department issued policies placing stability operations on par with combat operations, and requiring the Services to balance their abilities in conventional and irregular warfare. New approaches, Provincial Reconstruction Teams and Village Stability Operations, for example, were developed; and existing capabilities such as civil affairs and psychological operations, now called military information support operations (MISO), were expanded. Critically, in many cases, the U.S. military

made an intellectual and cultural mind-shift from enemy-oriented strategies to more population-centric approaches. These required us to refocus on regional, cultural, and language skills so as to understand the beliefs and aspirations of friends and foes alike. Looking at the past twenty-five years, the Balkans, Somalia, the Philippines, Haiti, Iraq, and Afghanistan have given our military, both SOF and General Purpose Forces (GPF), hard-won experience and skills that we must retain. Those conflicts have also validated the five SOF “Truths.”

First, that “humans are more important than hardware.” You cannot convince people to trust their government by just deploying a high-tech surveillance system. You must put people on the ground to earn that trust and you must ensure that the government is able to meet the needs of its people. In some situations, SOF is the right answer, in others, it is GPF conducting classic stability operations, both to prevent escalating conflict and to recover from post-conflict challenges.

That said, it is important to enable our humans with the hardware they need. Taken in isolation, some SOF-unique items may seem expensive, but when you consider that SOF is a mere 1.6% of the total DoD budget and less than 3% of DoD’s military personnel, it is obvious that the nation is getting a bargain when it properly equips and employs SOF.

Which leads to the second “truth,” that “quality is better than quantity.” SOF are uniquely able to provide the nation with targeted and precise interventions across the spectrum of conflict - whether it is training a partner military or indigenous force; tracking and capturing Saddam Hussein, enemy combatant leaders, or other high value targets;

eliminating terrorist threats; or countering weapons of mass destruction or other high end threats.

The third and fourth “truths” are connected - “SOF cannot be mass produced” and “competent SOF cannot be created after emergencies occur.” We entered the 21st century with approximately 33,000 Active, Reserve, and Guard SOF and we are now at almost 58,000, but it has taken a decade. We are in the final stages of our programmed growth now, with completion expected in Fiscal Year 2016. From 2001 through 2015, our Army Civil Affairs active component will have grown by almost 900% (from 247 to 3,247) and our reserve forces by 70% (from 5,157 to 8,077). We are in the process of building five additional Army Special Forces battalion equivalents, expanding Military Information Support Operations capabilities, maturing the Marine Special Operations Command, adding more SEAL operators, and increasing the capabilities of the Army’s 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment. This larger force is vital as we seek to sustain a force that has had very little time at home and, as I will discuss later, will continue to be stretched thin. On average today, a SOF warrior spends more time in a year deployed or training than at home.

Equally essential to increasing the number of SOF is matching that growth with a commensurate growth in enablers, which leads to the fifth truth, that “most special operations require non-SOF support,” including support from GPF and the interagency. We know the team approach wins the day. When, for example, a SEAL Team needs to conduct an operation on a hostile shore, they must first be able to get there, undetected and ready to execute their mission. In some cases that means having the right submersible fleet. In many cases, movement to the target requires a sequence of

vehicles, some of which are provided by the GPF, such as a Destroyer, and others that are integral to SOF because of their unique features or employment methods, such as a Mark 8 SEAL Delivery Vehicle. Still other operations require traditional piloting skills to fly in and drop munitions on target.

A key enabler is ISR, our eyes in the skies. The advent of more technologically advanced Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance (ISR) capabilities has transformed warfare today. The successes we have had in employing our Special Operators in direct action missions against high value targets has been greatly enhanced by these key enablers. These capabilities, both those organic to SOCOM and in the Services, have allowed SOF to conduct complicated and risky missions with a greater degree of safety and confidence of success.

It is critically important to recognize that SOF success also often requires bringing together interagency skill sets. As such, it is essential to properly resource the interagency for their assigned roles and authorities, so that we can effectively fight the enemy.

In Afghanistan, the expertise and authorities of our U.S. civilian partners has been essential to accomplishing our military objectives. A good illustration is DoD's support to U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration-led efforts to build competent, vetted Afghan law enforcement units to investigate and execute warrants. Those warrants lead to successful prosecution in the Afghan counternarcotics judicial system. The Departments of State and Justice Afghan Counternarcotics Task Force has produced an 85% prosecution rate, sentencing drug traffickers to an average of 16.5 years of incarceration. Not only does this take combatants off the battlefield, it eliminates key

Taliban revenue. Since January 2011, over 445 suspects have been removed from the battlefield as a result of the operations of DoD-supported Afghan counternarcotics forces. These combined military and law enforcement operations have created one of the most effective means of removing combatants from the battlefield.

Another key lesson of the past decade that is not captured in the five SOF “truths,” relates to the old adage than an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. Preventing conflict or enabling partners to deal with conflict saves American lives and treasure. The Philippines is a great example. With a small task force of approximately 500 SOF and GPF enablers, we have assisted the Armed Forces of the Philippines to degrade the terrorist threat from Abu Sayyaf and Jamaah Islamiyah. This type of persistent, low visibility engagement is essential to our future success in other parts of the world. In a global fight, we must have global partners with the skill to act. Partner capacity building programs are both force multipliers and a tremendous investment for the taxpayer. For a relatively small cost, we are able to build partner forces with access to better local intelligence, which creates security without requiring a large, expensive U.S. presence.

Those are some of the lessons of the past decade – that we must retain our ability to conduct the full range of Special Operations missions, from high-end direct action to partner capacity building; that we must continue to hone our stability operations and low-intensity conflict capabilities; that we must ensure key enablers are in place within SOF, the GPF, and the interagency; and that capable partners are force multipliers for the U.S. These are the lessons we must take forward into a dynamic future threat environment.

II. The Strategic Environment – Today and in the Future

As time marches forward, we know that the United States and our international partners will continue to confront many complex challenges. Terrorism around the globe; rogue regimes willing to support terrorists and seeking to acquire weapons of mass destruction; the deadly nexus of transnational criminal organizations and terrorists; the multiple security threats created by fragile states and poorly governed areas; and new manifestations of ethnic, tribal, and sectarian conflict all represent the menu of items we must squarely face. We also know that our adversaries will be creative and that new threats will continue to emerge.

Change is one of the few constants in the new environment, which is why the agile and innovative mindset of SOF and SOCOM is so critical to helping secure the future. It also means SOCOM and SO/LIC are often the default option for new mission sets. We must ensure that as SOCOM and SO/LIC are given new missions, they are the entities best suited for the respective threat. In many cases they are. For example, technology has made the information environment more complex, ubiquitous, and navigable by our adversaries, increasing the need for military information support operations to shape current conflict and prevent future conflict. The virtual world gives our enemies a platform to propagate their extremist ideologies, recruit, organize, and plan. As such, SOF-led information operations, an enduring and traditional military activity, to counter violent extremism (CVE) and enemy combatant messaging are increasingly essential, in peacetime and in conflict.

Counter Threat Finance (CTF) represents another new frontier to SOCOM. SO/LIC provides resources and policy direction and SOCOM is the global synchronizer of DoD's efforts. We provide critical support to interagency CTF efforts in order to diminish enemy capabilities, including efforts such as the DEA-led Afghanistan Threat Finance Cell (ATFC). The ATFC is a whole-of government organization established to identify and disrupt the sources of funding that support insurgent and terrorist organizations operating in Afghanistan. The recognition that "it takes a network to defeat a network" is a powerful concept developed by our forces that will become more important in attacking the increasingly globalized, interconnected, and transnational threats of the future. DoD, through SO/LIC and SOCOM, brings critical analytic skills, planning capabilities, and technology, providing the U.S. a more powerful network to defeat those threats. Now and in the future, our security is directly linked to our ability to disrupt the flow of resources to enemies who rely on non-traditional finances.

Another critical challenge going forward will be the need to execute complicated operations in austere areas with limited infrastructure or minimal U.S. presence. Threats emanate from ungoverned spaces, which means we need to have access to those spaces and the ability to operate within them for periods of time without a great deal of support. It also means we need to engage partners to increase their ability to govern or stabilize those spaces, eliminating havens for radicalism.

This range of challenges blurs the line between peace and war, demanding both persistent engagement and direct action capabilities. In a globally networked world, our enemies are devious and capable of doing great damage with minimal resources. A well-resourced special operations force provides America agility and effectiveness for

pennies on the dollar compared to many other military options. That is important as we look at a future with more constrained resources.

As Secretary Panetta has said, the strength of our military is tied to our economic well-being as a nation. The nation we defend must be fiscally strong. We must continue to produce warriors with a vested interest in the opportunities and freedoms of this great nation. We are prepared to do our part and are conducting a thorough review of all programs and organizations to wring out legacy investments and unnecessary capabilities. We are not asking all elements to contribute a set amount of savings or taking a “Last In-First Out” approach. Instead, we are evaluating the requirements in existing operational, security cooperation, and contingency plans, Secretary of Defense-validated planning scenarios, and future capability assessments. At this point, our analysis indicates that SOCOM will be required to maintain a steady-state, annually deployed presence of between 10,500 and 12,500 SOF, with organic enablers, once we complete the drawdown of conventional forces in Afghanistan. Sustaining that force requires us to continue to move funding from the Overseas Contingency Operations bill to the SOCOM’s base budget. You will see that migration continue in future budget submissions.

III. The Future of SOF, SOCOM, and SO/LIC

Defeating the dark force of Al Qaeda and its associated extremist movements will continue to define OASD SO/LIC and SOCOM. In close collaboration with our interagency partners, we excel at the art and science of pursuing and disabling our enemies. We will continue to support SOCOM’s efforts to refine counter-network

targeting techniques and organizational structures. We will continue to foster the dynamic culture of innovation and interagency cooperation that has blossomed over the past ten years. We will remain the focal point for coordinating Department and national strategic counterterrorism (CT) guidance.

Our second priority is to provide overall supervision of low-intensity conflict activities in the Department to guarantee post-Afghanistan does not mirror post-Vietnam, an era where we reverted whole scale to a traditional war fighting force structure following the end of combat operations. In the past ten years, “Irregular Warfare” (IW) has become the organizing mechanism within DoD for low-intensity conflict. This approach can be summarized as focusing on maintaining or winning the support of the population in a contested area as opposed to the traditional concept of destroying the enemy’s armed forces. Specifically, IW consists of five types of operations: CT, foreign internal defense (FID), unconventional warfare (UW), counterinsurgency (COIN), and stability operations.

SOF are uniquely trained and resourced for carrying out the CT, FID, and UW components of IW and are typically deeply involved with COIN and stability operations. SO/LIC has the broader mandate to ensure the entire Department continues to be capable of conducting COIN and stability operations. The skill sets required for success in these complex operations are a nuanced blending of the Diplomatic, Information, Military, and Economic tools this nation possesses. SOF, with their maturity, language, cultural expertise, and regional focus, provide our Nation with multi-dimensional warriors that understand how to blend these elements with other U.S. government entities along

with partner nation military and political structures to implement creative and effective plans of action.

For the foreseeable future, the most likely contingencies the U.S. will face will involve the messy realities of irregular warfare as America's dominance in traditional warfighting will continue to create powerful incentives for adversaries to use alternate methods to counter U.S. influence and interests. As noted above, DoD has established a baseline requirement of 10,500 to 12,500 deployed SOF to conduct remote, persistent, highly distributed operations supported by organic, SOF-specific Combat Support and Combat Service Support assets. It is also important to remember that as we drawdown conventional forces in both Iraq and Afghanistan, a SOF presence that is similarly-sized, or potentially larger, will likely remain.

In recognition of the future expanded role played by SOF in these complex operations, the 2006 QDR directed the growth of SOF operational formations by roughly 25 percent. As mentioned earlier, this carefully phased growth is almost complete.

This future SOF force structure is designed to be highly flexible and able to operate in a highly decentralized and dispersed manner. They must be prepared to be successful in remote areas where there are no U.S. military bases or even host-nation infrastructure. This requirement was captured in the 2010 QDR's direction to increase organic SOF enabling assets, otherwise known as Combat Support and Combat Service Support capabilities like equipment and infrastructure maintenance, supply and transport, and intelligence and communications, to match the increased force structure and expected mission sets.

SOF operations will continue to depend on a range of ISR assets that increase our ability to see while not being seen. While unmanned land-based assets like UAVs are widely-used, both sea-based and manned ISR are also critical. A sea-based ISR capability increases our access to the vast number of areas where land-based ISR assets cannot reach due to political sensitivities or geographic location. Unfortunately, that capability is still very limited within DoD. Manned ISR aircraft are important because they are often less obvious and more acceptable to partner nations than UAVs. In addition, in some cases, a manned cockpit sharing the same environment as our SOF operators on the ground provides a capability critical to mission success. ISR support to SOF must be persistent, dedicated, and habitual to support the full spectrum of SOF core activities and operations.

SOF air mobility will also continue to be critically important for movement and support. With the support of Congress, Air Force Special Operations Command will soon have a CV-22 tilt-rotor Osprey fleet of 50 aircraft. This dynamic aircraft provides a tactical advantage of a helicopter with speeds and ranges of a C-130 resulting in the ideal machine to conduct a variety of missions to include the “Desert One”-style mission from which SOCOM was born. However, CV-22s alone do not provide the entirety of SOF lift and it concerns me that we have some SOF flying into harm’s way on MC-130 aircraft that are approaching 43 years of age. The Administration has begun to recapitalize the MC-130s, and the equally important AC-130s, with the newer J-model aircraft. Given the enduring importance of SOF mobility, finishing this recapitalization is one of my highest program and budget priorities.

Lastly, SOF will continue to lead the Department's efforts in facilitating interagency solutions to the irregular security challenges of the future. OASD SO/LIC and SOCOM are on the leading edge of our Nation's efforts to apply a whole-of-government approach to current and future threats. For example, our approach to the increasingly lethal nexus between crime, narcotics, and terrorism has resulted in new and effective operations in Afghanistan. This approach will be applicable to the complex challenges and operating environments SOF will face in the future.

SO/LIC is also leading the effort to improve our capacity building tools, training and equipping our partners and allies to defeat evil both within their own borders and globally. We are the stewards of the Department's Section 1206 Global Train and Equip authority and ministerial level capacity-building programs -specifically the Defense Institution Reform Initiative (DIRI) and the Afghanistan-oriented Ministry of Defense Advisory (MoDA) program. DIRI and MoDA show tremendous promise to become highly effective tools in increasing partner nation security and governmental capacity with a relatively small investment. Section 1206 is an essential and effective tool for our CT work and our effort to build more capable partners to conduct stability operations. Through CN authorities such as Sections 1004 and 1033, DoD provides critical training, equipment, infrastructure, and information sharing, to enhance the ability of partner nation CN forces to confront drug trafficking, narco-terrorism, and other forms of transnational organized crime.

We are also working with the Department of State and Congress to create a new Global Security Contingency Fund. Many of our security challenges can be most effectively addressed if we improve partner capabilities in the network of security related

activities, including governance and justice sector capacity. Secretary Clinton and former Secretary Gates proposed this Fund to give the U.S. government an agile tool that is responsive to fluid real-world situations (as opposed to our lengthy budget cycle) and incentivizes true interagency collaboration.

In the future SOF will continue to play a critical role in fighting al Qaeda and other terrorist groups, further developing low-intensity conflict and SOF concepts and enablers, partner capacity building, and executing solo or interagency operations that provide the U.S. the ability to protect and advance our security interests without committing large conventional military formations, with their highly-visible US signature and large fiscal costs.

Conclusion

Our experiences since September 2001 have resulted in the wide-scale recognition within DoD that SOF provides a unique capability for preventing and deterring conflict, and, when that fails, working “by, with, and through” partner nations to establish control over areas of conflict with minimal U.S. military involvement. The ability of SOF to operate in a low visibility or clandestine manner with a very small signature will become increasingly important in a future of globally dispersed and irregular threats.

It is crucial to continue building and strengthening the capabilities, resources, and enablers that will ensure SOF is well-aligned to support the broad national goals of preventing and defeating terrorism, promoting stability in key regions, and providing assistance to allies and partners. We must also continue to insist both SOF and GPF

retain the stability operations skills and partner capacity building tools that can prevent or mitigate conflict.

As I mentioned earlier, SOF are an exceptional value to our Nation—just 1.6% of the defense budget and less than 3% of our military personnel. The characteristics of our SOF warriors—flexibility, resourcefulness, imagination, regional expertise, the ability to work with indigenous forces in politically sensitive, hostile, or denied areas—also guarantee that our military possesses a capability for facing the unknown threats of the future. As we shrink the size of the GPF, a fully-enabled SOF is critical to reducing risk while maintaining the strong posture required to defend U.S. interests globally.

In closing, while there are crucial lessons to be learned from recent conflicts, perhaps the most important lesson is historical. When we think about the success of Son Tay, the failure of Desert One, and the triumph at Abbottabad, we see an era in which we forgot and had to re-learn critical military capabilities. Even as we down-size today's force, we must keep in mind the strategic environment and continue to institutionalize the lessons of the last decade. When our Nation requires our Special Operators to go into "the night to visit violence on those who would do us harm," we must ensure they do so with the best training, equipment, and support we can provide. Equally important, we must do all we can to prevent larger missions from being needed by staying engaged with our partners and committed to preventing our enemies from rest.

On behalf of all of us who are honored to serve in the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations and Low-intensity Conflict, I want to thank

you for your commitment to our Special Operations Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, and Marines and the thousands of civilians that support them every day.