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HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE

STATEMENT OF  
REAR ADMIRAL JOSEPH MAGUIRE, U.S.NAVY  
COMMANDER  
NAVAL SPECIAL WARFARE COMMAND  
BEFORE THE  
HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON TERRORISM, UNCONVENTIONAL THREATS  
AND CAPABILITIES POSTURE HEARING  
ON CURRENT MANNING, EQUIPPING, AND READINESS CHALLENGES FACING  
SPECIAL OPERATIONS FORCES  
JANUARY 31, 2007

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Mr. Chairman and distinguished Members of the Subcommittee, it is an honor and privilege to report to you the state of the United States Naval Special Warfare Command. Your Naval Special Warfare warriors, comprised of SEALs and Surface Warfare Combatant Crewmen (SWCCs) and the personnel who support them, are performing superbly around the globe, prosecuting the Global War on Terror (GWOT) and conducting cooperative engagement with our friends and allies. I could not be more proud of who they are and what they do – their level of dedication and mission focus is inspiring – and I am confident in their motivation and continued efforts to defend our homeland by bringing the fight to the enemy.

In your letter of 19 January 2007, you asked me to comment on two major areas; status of manning and end strength requirements; and recruiting and retention standards and challenges. In this discussion I will focus on the operators – officer and enlisted SEALs and enlisted SWCCs. By that, I do not mean to diminish at all the importance of the NSW support personnel – logisticians, intelligence collectors, Explosive Ordnance Disposal technicians, SEABEES and the like - their efforts are critically important as warfighting enablers – however, for the purpose of this discussion, I will review SEAL and SWCC manning , recruiting and retention.

The bottom line that I hope the Subcommittee takes away from my testimony is that I believe it is critical to maintain the highest possible standard of our operators while meeting the increased demand for their specialized skill set. Meeting this challenge

requires: (1) increased, targeted recruiting efforts – to get the appropriate number and quality of recruits in the front door; (2) strong counter-attrition efforts – to keep more of the right trainees in our initial training curricula, the Basic Underwater Demolition / SEAL (BUD/S) course; and (3) last but not least, aggressive retention actions to retain the skilled operators who we have invested in and have proven themselves on the battlefield and in areas where we are not at war.

## **MANNING AND END STRENGTH REQUIREMENTS**

To set the stage for this discussion, on a macro-view, the Naval Special Warfare community is organized around eight SEAL Teams and two SEAL Delivery Vehicle Teams. Of the SEAL teams, two are deployed at any given time on a 1:4 rotation. These two deployed teams, consisting of 6 SEAL platoons each, are allocated among the Geographic Combatant Commanders based on global priorities and commitments – today we have eight in CENTCOM, two in EUCOM and two in PACOM. Each SEAL platoon is nominally comprised of two officers and 16 enlisted personnel. Additionally, there are six Mark V (high speed coastal patrol craft) and 18 Rigid Hull Inflatable Boat (RIB) detachments available for worldwide assignment. Each detachment is comprised of 18 and nine enlisted SWCC personnel respectively. SDVs Task Units (TUs) deploy for purpose. As this is the very core of our operational warfighting capability, ensuring that each platoon, boat crew and TU is fully manned, trained and equipped is my number one priority.

Additionally, there is an increased requirement for our SEALs to be assigned to the Naval Special Warfare Development Group, as well as unified, sub-unified, joint and major staffs.

Enlisted SEALs are extremely crucial in meeting GWOT mission requirements in focus areas around the world, especially in the Central Command (CENTCOM) Area of Responsibility (AOR). The heavy demand for specialized SEAL skills sets is rapidly increasing our enlisted community's workload. NSW enlisted billets are programmed to grow by ~13% between FY 2006 and FY 2009. As of December 2006, the NSW enlisted community is manned at 87% (1771 enlisted SEALs for FY07 2005 Enlisted Programmed Authorizations (EPA)). With the current inventory of 1771 Enlisted SEALs, NSW manning will drop to 77% in FY08 with the 256 EPA growth requirement directed by PDM III. To meet these requirements, our Navy has increased SEAL enlisted accessions annually since 2004. In the first quarter of FY 07, our Navy has recruited 1075 of the 1400 goal (77%) as compared to 859 of 1400 (59%) for all of FY06. Although early for definitive results, this is an encouraging improvement to increase the enlisted candidates beginning their initial training pipeline. SEAL officer billets are programmed to increase by 69% from FY 03 to FY09. SEAL officer manning is currently at 84% (475/564 SEAL unrestricted line officers), with the greatest shortfall being at the mid-grade (O-4 LCDR level). To meet increased requirements, the Navy has increased SEAL officer accessions annually since 2002. In FY07, the Navy will access 83 qualified SEAL officer candidates – an all time high.

Enlisted SWCCs are also in extremely high demand to meet worldwide GWOT mission requirements. My only officer SWCCs (14) are Chief Warrant Officers, accessed

from the enlisted ranks. The increasing demand for SWCC skill sets has rapidly increased this particular enlisted community's workload and operational tempo (OPTEMPO). NSW SWCC enlisted billets are programmed to grow by ~13% between FY 06 and FY 09. As of December 2006, the SWCC community is manned at 87% (614/703 enlisted Special Warfare Boat Operators FY07 EPA). With the current inventory of 614 enlisted SWCC, NSW manning will drop to 73% in FY09 with the 138 EPA growth requirement directed by PDM III. To meet these emerging requirements, the Navy planned increased SWCC enlisted accessions annually since 2004. In the first quarter of FY-07, the Navy has recruited 283 of the 366 goal (77%) as compared to 207 of 320 (64.7%) for all of FY06. This, in addition to SWCC curricula reforms, is an encouraging improvement to increase the SWCC enlisted candidates preparing for their initial training pipeline.

Our inability to meet end-strength requirements in the near term is due to these increased demands outpacing our ability to effectively recruit the quality candidates who can meet the rigorous training standards set. The challenge in meeting these current and future end strength requirements is ensuring that we have absolutely, positively, unequivocally the right individual filling every Special Operations Forces (SOF) billet on the battlefield – and that the warfighter is fully trained to meet every mission that he may face. I would be remiss as the leader of this community if in any way I proposed lowering training standards in order to rectify manning shortfalls. The relatively low casualty rate and battlefield successes experienced by our warfighters in the present conflict speaks loudly to our selection process, our ethos and most importantly the quality of the training



SEAL and SWCC operators receive to prepare them to be the fighting force on which the nation depends.

I think it important to note that we are aggressively scrubbing our manpower base to ensure that we are placing SEALs and SWCCs in only those billets that require their specific warfighting skills, and that to the maximum extent we can, are augmenting our force with critical enablers of combat support and combat service support personnel – organizing them into Support Activity Teams – one per coast - which will go a long way to meet QDR directed growth but not overly stress the SEAL/ SWCC skill sets.

In summary, working with the Chief of Naval Operations and Commander United States Special Operations Command we will achieve required end-strength increases by improving targeted recruiting efforts, continuing to focus on effective counter-attribution efforts and aggressive retention actions. I intend to meet SWCC end-strength requirements by 2009, SEAL enlisted end-strength requirements by 2010 and SEAL officer end strength requirements by 2011.

## **RECRUITING AND RETENTION STANDARDS**

In FY-06 the Navy goal for enlisted recruiting was 1400 SEALs/320 SWCC; of which only 829 and 207 were realized respectively. As a result, our Navy has dramatically enhanced its business practices on SEAL and SWCC recruiting and pipeline training. Changes such as the implementation of the SEAL and SWCC ratings (as of Oct 06) are streamlining the time it takes for a recruit to get to BUD/S. Changes in recruiting business practices, combined with the positive results for the first quarter FY-07 show that we are making progress and moving in the right direction. The average timeline for a

recruited BUD/S candidate to complete all SEAL training to earn his warfare designation and be assigned to a SEAL Team is 14 –18 months, therefore we anticipate measurable results in FY-07. Additionally, it is expected that the Commander Naval Recruiting Command (CNRC)'s commitment to the hiring of the ex-Special Warfare and Special Operations Sailors at each of the 26 Naval Recruiting Districts, with specialized knowledge of this unique community, will continue to improve both quality and quantity of the recruits.

Improving SEAL recruiting processes will have the greatest impact on improving SEAL manning but it is a challenging endeavor, which has been inefficient in the past. However, recognizing the significance of this initiative, the Chief of Naval Personnel has stated that focused and targeted enlisted SEAL recruiting is his number one priority. Previously, the Navy suffered 60-70% attrition of new recruits for the SEAL challenge program even before they arrived at BUD/S for the arduous SEAL training program. In January 2006, the Navy issued a planning order to improve the quality and quantity of SEAL recruits. Specifically the Navy changed several previous policies, such as now requiring SEAL candidates to pass SEAL Physical Screening Test (PST) prior to issuing a SEAL contract. In March 2006, the test included the swim portion of the SEAL PST, which had previously been excluded. This and other bureaucratic barriers have been overcome by the Navy to achieve recruiting goals. Partnering with the Manpower, Personnel, Training & Education (MPT&E) of Navy and SOF communities has led to other recruiting initiatives such as all Navy Recruiting Districts (NRDs) now have a dedicated Special Warfare/Operations program coordinator (ex-SEAL / Special Operator) to act as subject matter experts and facilitate testing, screening and mentoring recruits;

NSW detailed a SEAL Master Chief to the CNRC major staff in September 2005 to coordinate NSW and CNRC SEAL and SWCC recruiting issues; all NRDs must produce a specific goal for SEALs and report weekly. Competitive recruiting bonuses have also played a key role in improving overall metrics -- in Feb 2006, CNRC raised SEAL Enlisted Bonus (EB) to its maximum authorized level (\$40K) for recruits completing SEAL training and SWCC EB was raised to \$25K. Additionally, RTC Great Lakes increased the amount of SEAL and SWCC candidate mandatory Physical Training time by 300% (from 9 to 31 days) during Basic Training to better prepare SEAL and SWCC recruits for the arduous BUD/S and SWCC training. The Navy commissioned a SEAL Selection Working Group to evaluate psychological and mental aspects that will help CNRC focus on identifying the right candidates for SEAL training. Psychologists at various locations are working to identify a screening test for mental acuity required to succeed in BUD/S. Additionally, CNRC has aggressively launched targeted SEAL recruiting ads in TV, movie trailer and print media.

We also need to make sure that we are consistent in the BUD/S standards for those qualified and selected. BUD/S is a physically intense and mentally challenging military training course. Graduates of the course who proudly wear a Trident have a "Never Quit" attitude, confident that they can meet any challenge and solve any problem, on or off the battlefield. During the 26 week BUD/S course and the 27 week additional basic course of instruction there are hundreds of high risk training evolutions, including parachute qualification, 5 mile open ocean swims and 14 mile sand runs, complex tactical problems and a wide range of other demanding requirements. This training has historically had a high attrition rate due to the high standards and physically challenging

regime. The process is continually monitored and revised, to include continually evaluating the curricula and instruction methodology, making changes as needed to gain increased effectiveness - resulting in a 6% graduation rate increase in FY2006 over previous years. Continual improvements are made in instructor and staff development, and leadership training. I am confident with improved recruit screening we can continue to lower the attrition figure without sacrificing quality. We recently contracted with private industry to assist in our review of ALL aspects of SEAL manpower requirements – from recruiting to Boot Camp through awarding of the Trident, to help model pipeline inefficiencies and develop metrics for process improvement.

Regarding retention, we are presently experiencing the highest retention rates of enlisted SEALs in recent history, due to job satisfaction and aggressive measures taken early by the Department as authorized by Congress. Retention rates for SEALs declined in FY-03 and 04 due in some measure to increased opportunities in the private sector. According to “exit surveys” of resigning personnel, this short term anomaly was overcome by a true sense of job satisfaction and working with teammates, as well as the SOCOM Incentive Bonus instituted in FY-05, which targets the SEAL and SWCC enlisted population by improving existing DoD incentives and adding two new pays (CSRB and AIP). The measures are evaluated quarterly but current data reveals an increase in SEAL retention across all zones. In FY05 the specific measures included: Special Duty Assignment Pay (SDAP) increased for SEAL E-4 to E-9 from \$110 to \$375 a month. SWCC SDAP was increased from \$75 to \$225 per month.

Critical Skills Retention Bonus (CSRB) was established in February 2005 for SEAL and SWCC senior enlisted and warrant officers with 19 to 25 years of service. The retention bonus ranged from \$8K for one year to \$150K for six years of obligation.

Assignment Incentive Pay (AIP) provides senior enlisted and warrant officer SEALs with over 25 years of service (YOS) \$750 per month when they obligate for at least one year of service past their 25<sup>th</sup> year (not to exceed 30 years). The Navy currently offers a \$60K to \$75K Selective Re-enlistment Bonus (SRB) to SEALs in Zones A and B, and increased Zone C SRB to \$75K in July 2006. SWCC SRB for Zones A, B, and C have been increased to \$45,000. I could not be more pleased with the aggressive approach SOCOM and my Navy have taken toward retaining our skilled and experienced operators. Operational Tempo (OPTEMPO) or Turn-Around Ratio (TAR) is another retention variable we are addressing. As stated previously, for a typical two- year cycle, SEALs will spend 18 months CONUS-based before a six month deployment. However, of the 18 months spent within CONUS, SEALs typically spend approximately 50% of that time deployed away from their local area conducting training - due in large measure to the non-availability of local training ranges – with a significant impact on our families as well. To lower this OPTEMPO, the Department has approved several military construction range projects within the San Diego and Virginia Beach areas to provide more live-fire training opportunities within these Fleet Concentration Areas.

Mr Chairman, our country is at war and the burden of this war rests squarely on our shoulders. I realize that although much is expected of this community, much is given. I am confident with your support that we can continue to initiate programs that improve efforts to focus recruiting on the correct candidate pool, to fund SEAL and SWCC current

and future retention initiatives, and support policy changes to improve the SEAL and SWCC recruiting, training and mentoring pipeline.

Thank you again for the opportunity to share this information regarding your Naval Special Warfare community and the support that the SOF community has had in the past and continues to receive. I look forward to meeting with you to continue the discussion on 31 January.