

STATEMENT FOR THE RECORD

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BEFORE THE

COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES

SUBCOMMITTEE ON INTELLIGENCE & SPECIAL OPERATIONS

UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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Chairman Jackson, Ranking Member Crow, and distinguished subcommittee members, we are honored to testify before you today on behalf of the United States Special Operations Command (SOCOM) regarding the role of United States special operations forces (SOF) in Great Power Competition. As the Commander of Naval Special Warfare (NSW), I am grateful for the opportunity to address your questions and appreciate the opportunity to explain Naval Special Warfare's (NSW) purpose and our role as the Navy and SOCOM's Maritime SOF.

NSW's purpose is to provide maritime SOF capability to enable Joint Force lethality and survivability in denied and contested areas. Our ability to operate in the maritime provides the Nation with unique access and placement across the globe. With our low observable surface and sub-surface maritime craft, diverse inventory of small unmanned systems and highly trained, small footprint, tactical maneuver elements, NSW provides a remedy to the most dynamic, uncertain, closed and challenged environments. We generate forces in support of Theater Special Operations Commands (TSOCs) and the larger Joint Force. Our success is measured by their ability to fight and survive. Working with Joint Force and Interagency partners, NSW deployed capability can enable efforts to clear maritime lanes for U.S lethality. As part of that same Joint and Interagency force, NSW supports the denial of adversary capability to find and target U.S. ships and submarines. As we enter into what we assess as a new age in warfare, NSW will focus on decisive operations in denied and contested areas and remain a small force with outsized impact.

The United States has always been a maritime Nation, and this next decade will see a renewed focus on maritime security. Our maritime SOF identity is anchored by one constant trait: agility. NSW has remained relevant since the inception of the Naval Combat Demolition Units in World War II. Since then, we adapted and now leverage tactical and technological advancements to constantly improve our fighting position. As a user of unmanned systems for the past 20 years, to counter threats from non-state actors and violent extremist organizations (VEO), we recognize the real asymmetric advantage of the unmanned system by a Stand In Force: the ability to collect, disseminate and assess information for the Joint Force in the most challenged environments to close kill chains.

To support a U.S. Combatant Command (CC) in Great Power Competition, we are engaged in an urgent effort, through the Navy and SOCOM to modernize our unmanned systems portfolio with autonomous maneuver, intelligence and C2 behaviors. This allows us to scale awareness, capacity, and increase precision of our capability in the most challenged kinetic and electronic environments. Our responsibility to deter adversaries and protect our national security interests has never been higher. NSW willingly shoulders that responsibility and accountability. We will own the water, embrace the robots and win every fight.

NSW's purpose is our North Star, and we are focused on three capability areas: (1) enable Joint Force long range fires, (2) provide kinetic effects, and (3) provide non-kinetic effects. The latter may be the most important and decisive capability NSW will provide the Joint Force during competition, crisis and conflict. Our imperative is to man, train, equip, and deploy maritime SOF Task Forces (MSOTF) to employ these capabilities. The MSOTF will deploy as the maritime component of a SOCOM SOF Task Force within a TSOC or larger Joint Force.

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NSW is focused on our ability to gain, maintain, and extend Joint Force access to maritime denied and contested areas to enable tactical actions with strategic effect. We offset our NSW limitations in capacity through an increased scale of autonomous systems, target precision, a deep understanding of U.S. and adversary capabilities and command and control. This focus is tailored to support the Joint Force through NSW operations inside maritime denied and contested areas. We are integrating surface, air and subsurface drone technology, in new ways, into manned / unmanned maritime SOF teams. We continue to design, build and employ the most modern and capable SOF surface vessels and undersea mobility platforms. With the Navy and SOCOM, NSW is incorporating advancements in technology and evolutions in tactics into our training and deployed force capability.

NSW's unity of effort across our formation is paramount. NSW's "5Ws" are:

Who: NSW Maritime Special Operations Task Force

What: Provide maritime SOF capability to enable Joint Force lethality and survivability inside denied and contested areas

When: Now, Deployed MSOTFs

Where: Key maritime and electronic terrain in denied and contested areas

Why: Provide unique capabilities to deliver effects and enable Joint Force maneuver

This clarity has been valuable as we decide what to do – and more importantly – what not to do.

NSW's investments balance a portfolio of exquisite craft and low cost, commercial systems to enable Joint Force Maneuver. Current fiscal constraints and increased deployment costs are challenging NSW's ability to manage steady-state risk as opposed to deferring risk to the future. Yet, NSW has an outsized comparative advantage that solves some of the Joint Forces toughest problems.

Over the past two decades, NSW assumed risk in maritime operations to reduce risk in skills required to win in Iraq, Afghanistan, Syria and Somalia. As we shift in focus away from land warfare Counterterrorism (CT) and Counter Violent Extremist Organization (C-VEO) operations in areas of active conflict, NSW is doubling down on our maritime skill sets. We are prioritizing maritime operations training and equipment to increase proficiency in capabilities to include combat diving, SEAL Delivery Vehicle operations, SOF maritime craft operations and maritime interdiction operations. Because we recognize the critical role that partnerships play in deterring and dissuading malign actors, NSW is expanding our engagements with new Allies and Partners in the Pacific and European theaters. We are investing in relationships with Norway, Finland, Romania, Italy, Germany and the UK with the goal of building real operational capability. We are particularly focused on working with Norway on cold water operations with a focus on the Arctic. We will maintain foundational CT and C-VEO capabilities as we remain required to execute CT and C-VEO during crisis. The command and control, intelligence and surveillance skills we developed and refined through two decades of war remain valuable in Great Power Competition (GPC).

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NSW is unique in our ability to operate and survive in denied and contested areas. Because we have clandestine surface and subsurface maritime mobility platforms, we can go where others cannot. We operate and maintain the Nation's only SOF penetrating maritime mobility capability. These craft provide us with a level of operational freedom and flexibility that is unmatched by any other branch of service. In terms of GPC, these craft are essential for conducting operations in environments where the U.S., Russia and China are competing for access and resources. Our ability to provide decisive capability to ensure Joint Force lethality and survivability depends upon our ability to be on-scene but unseen with enemy vessels and maritime infrastructure. We will maintain our investments in maritime mobility platforms and fleet integration to execute maritime operations. We are moving out on SOCOM's direction to decrease fungibility between our SOF components to maximize specialization and force lethality.

As the Nation's maritime SOF force, NSW will refine our capabilities with a clear-eyed discussion of risk to bridge the gap between operations and resourcing. We will make decisions that prioritize our maritime SOF capability to enable Joint Force lethality and survivability. Our community speaks in terms of risk, and we will accept risk in capabilities that can be covered by other SOF service components.

NSW remains agile, and we are again evolving to meet the requirements of our Nation. The return to the maritime is, for NSW, a return to our roots and our original identity. NSW capability is underpinned by the skill and determination of our combat operators, combat support and combat service support personnel. The importance of each member of our formation is not determined by their proximity to the "X." This means that the value of an individual sailor or government civilian in our ranks is not based on how close they are to the target.

Under SOCOM, NSW is a supporting command to the Navy and Joint Force. We think of ourselves as a "trim tab on the rudder of the Navy" and Joint Force. Like a trim tab, we are small, but we enable the movement of the entire vessel. We mitigate our limited capacity with precision, speed, agility and talent and our unique maritime acumen makes our Force a decisive element to the TSOCs for employment.

In conclusion, NSW has an important and distinct role within SOCOM and the Joint Force to address the challenges presented by Great Power Competition. We provide the Joint Force with access to our competitors' maritime flank. Whether creating dilemmas for our competitors, reassuring Allies and Partners, disrupting VEOs or responding to crisis, NSW will shoulder our responsibility to provide maritime SOF capability to enable Joint Force lethality and survivability in denied and contested areas. Thank you.