



National Public Radio <http://www.npr.org>

Pentagon Sees Rise in 'Special Ops' Forces

February 6, 2006 from **Morning Edition**

This is MORNING EDITION from NPR News; I'm Steve Inskeep. The budget request that President Bush sends to Congress today includes an increase in spending for defense. If granted, that will put the Pentagon's next annual budget just over \$439 billion. On Friday, the Pentagon released a four-year strategy report for U.S. forces. It's called the Quadrennial Defense Review, or QDR. One recommendation is an increase in the number of commando forces to help fight terrorism. NPR National Security Correspondent, Jackie Northam reports.

JACKIE NORTHAM reporting:

The language peppered throughout this Quadrennial Defense Review recognizes that the threat to the United States has changed dramatically since the last review in 2001. This QDR uses terms such as the long war, new breed of warrior, irregular army, and global war on terror. It highlights the need to think beyond the realm of conventional warfare, as the U.S. faces a new type of enemy, says Wade Ishimoto, a senior advisor to Secretary of Defense for **Special Operations** and Low-Intensity Conflict.

Mr. WADE ISHIMOTO (Senior Advisor, Secretary of Defense for **Special Operations** and Low-Intensity Conflict): The nature of the enemy now is that they are fleeting; they do not meet us with traditional military formation. They are less concerned about seizing and holding terrain; and so, we have to deal with them in a different fashion.

NORTHAM: Over the past few years, the Pentagon has strengthened skills that are the hallmarks of **Special Operation** Forces, giving them more training in foreign languages in unconventional warfare. Now the QDR recommends that **Special Operations** Forces be given an even bigger role in the war on terrorism. To do that, the report calls for a 15-percent increase in the number of **Special Op** Forces to about 60,000. They have a number of strategic roles to play, says Michelle Flournoy, a Senior Advisor at the Center for Strategic and International Studies.

Ms. MICHELLE FLOURNOY (Senior Advisor, The Center for Strategic and International Studies): They've been given a leadership role in the man-hunting part, or the direction action part of the war on terrorism, actually tracking down terrorists and dealing with them. They also have a very important role that's highlighted in this review, in terms of working closely with other militaries to build their capacity for counterterrorism and counter insurgency.

NORTHAM: The Pentagon is also expanding the so-called indirect action side of the **Special Operations** Forces, which are sometimes referred to as SOCS. About 3,700 more people will be added to the Psychological Warfare and Civil Affairs Units. **Christopher Lamb**, a senior fellow at the National Defense University, says the PSYOPS and Civil Affairs Units put more emphasis

on building long-term relationships with local populations to help hunt down terrorists and insurgents.

Mr. CHRISTOPHER LAMB (Senior Fellow, National Defense University): In their own traditional social networks, they're well hidden from us. We have a hard time separating them from their local supporters. One of the advantages of **Special Operation** Forces in combating these kind of irregular warriors, whether they be insurgents or terrorists, is to often develop the relationships with the local security forces and populations that allow you to ferret out where the terrorists are and how they're operating.

NORTHAM: But, Lamb says, there's language in the QDR that suggests a significant number of PSYOPS and Civil Affairs Units will be absorbed into the regular military, which could dilute their effectiveness. At the same time, there's an effort to make already stretched regular forces learn skills usually associated with **Special Operations** Forces, such as the foreign language proficiency.

Bob Martinage, a senior defense analyst at the Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments, says none of the changes proposed in the "Quadrennial Defense Review" will happen over night.

Mr. BOB MARTINAGE (Senior Defense Analyst, Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments): Even if we start to increase recruitment now, it's going to likely be 2013 or so before we meet the manpower goals that are being set by the QDR; and even then it's going to take several years probably beyond that until you have really seasoned operators.

NORTHAM: Martinage says decisions made now about increasing the size and reshaping the role of the **Special Operations** Forces will not bear fruit until at least 2015. By that time, the war on terrorism will be well into its second decade.

Jackie Northam, NPR News, Washington.