

Good morning Mr. Chairman, Members of the Terrorism Subcommittee... On behalf of General Brown and the United States Special Operations Command, I would like to thank you for the opportunity to testify this morning regarding the personnel situation currently facing our special operators.

While I am prepared today to discuss certain force management issues affecting the Command from a somewhat sterile 'headquarters' perspective, it is important to note that I am joined at the table this morning by four of the most experienced non-commissioned officers serving in the military today. Each of these men has at least 27 years of active service, and their collective operational experience and force management skills are unsurpassed within the Department of Defense. Serving as the Senior Enlisted Advisor to their respective Commanders, each of them is specifically charged with the responsibility of advising the Command's leadership on the proper training, management and utilization of the force. This includes issues involving operational tempo, recruiting and retention, morale and quality of life. I could not think of four better individuals that can address your questions this morning on the matters affecting the men and women of the special operations community.

I would like to briefly address a few points relevant to today's hearing topic.

Mr. Chairman, special operations forces are in high demand and are employed in greater numbers today than at any time in our history. For this reason, General Brown and his Component Commanders continue to give special attention to maintaining a workable OPTEMPO across the force. My message this morning is that our OPTEMPO is manageable. Is it difficult? Yes, but again, it is manageable. We accomplish this by mitigating the stress on the force in several ways.

One way has been to increase our flexibility regarding force utilization. For example, you are aware that we traditionally orient our Green Berets to a specific area of the world. There are obvious benefits from this practice in terms of language focus and regional familiarization. Today however, with approximately seventy-five percent of our operational deployments going to Iraq and Afghanistan, the Army Special Operations Command has found it prudent to sustain that force by utilizing other Special Forces Groups, to include our two excellent National Guard units, in the USCENTCOM AOR. The

trade off for relinquishing the traditional area orientation has been the accumulation of vast operational experience for the designated units, as well as the requisite opportunity to recuperate the 5<sup>th</sup> SFG(A) normally assigned to this region.

Another way we have mitigated the stress on the force has been to ensure we have the right mix of active and reserve forces. With the Reserve Component comprising one third of the total special operations force, you can imagine how much we count on them in the global war on terrorism, particularly our Civil Affairs and PSYOP units that are predominately comprised of Reserve or National Guard personnel. This heavy dependence comes at a cost, and the Command is currently coordinating with the Services on several initiatives to address the issues associated with their deployment.

One incentive being considered by the Services is designed to maximize volunteerism by making Reserve Component volunteer benefits and entitlements commensurate with their counterparts on Active Duty.

Another initiative is to redirect a portion of what have traditionally been Reserve Component missions to the Active Duty units, an example being the AFSOC air refueling mission.

Yet another important mitigating factor is that the total number of deployed SOF, after substantial increases in FY02 and FY03, is beginning to come down. By focusing our deployments in light of the global war on terrorism, the Command has decreased the percentage of deployed personnel by approximately 13% over the last year.

Finally, USSOCOM is working closely with the Services to add a limited number of active duty units to the SOF inventory to supplement our most stressed specialties, to include the Civil Affairs and PSYOPs units I mentioned earlier, several of our aviation units, and our special operations schoolhouses. The current plan is to add about 2,700 personnel to the force over the next five or six years.

Additional force structure authorizations are not necessarily a stand alone solution. As it is, we are only filling about 85% of our authorized billets. Instead, we are putting a great deal of focus on our recruiting and retention issues. The gentlemen

with me at the table will be able to give you additional detail on this, but suffice to say that the challenge today is to recruit the right kind of soldier, sailor and airman who best fits the profile of a special operator, and to subsequently retain these individuals once they become what we believe is the most valuable asset the country has today in the global war on terrorism.

At this time, Mr. Chairman, I would again thank you for the opportunity to be here this morning and look forward to your questions.