

IMPERATIVES **2019**



The year 2019 will bring new leadership to the U.S. House of Representatives and a promised focus on the reduction of U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) spending. Against this backdrop, it is essential for our political leaders to ensure that the national security strategy and budget reflect the diversity of threats facing our nation and our allies.

Recent U.S. national security strategy documents have highlighted the importance of great power competition. And although near-peer rivals such as

Russia and China pose real threats, it is their ability to wield unconventional strategies, tactics, and weapons that present the most likely challenges to global security. Special Operations Forces (SOF) remain the essential tool in combating these types of threats. As a result, a successful U.S. national security strategy will require more from SOF and their partner nation forces—not less. We cannot allow a shift in focus to great power competition translate to a weakening of special operations capabilities.

With the recommended priorities and initiatives listed below, the Global SOF Foundation (GSF) aims to highlight the importance of U.S. and partner SOF as among the most capable and affordable instruments in safeguarding our security in a time when adversaries remain prolific and threats extend past national borders.



STRATEGIC

- Previous NDAA's established a new administrative chain of command that runs from USSOCOM through ASD/SOLIC to the Secretary of Defense, thereby mirroring the relationship between the Secretary of Defense and the Service secretaries. However, to ensure that ASD/SOLIC fully exercises authority, direction, and control of all special operations-peculiar administrative responsibilities, to include the organization, training, and equipping of special operations forces, ASD/SOLIC should be elevated from an ASD position to an Undersecretary of Defense position to ensure SOF has the appropriate level of influence and oversight in DoD.
- While countering violent extremism will remain a persistent mission for SOF, the severity of the threat posed by China, Russia, and other adversarial states across the spectrum of conflict cannot be ignored. Accordingly, the ASD/SOLIC should conduct a baseline assessment of the SOF enterprise as well as produce a strategic vision for the future of the force.
- USSOCOM relies on research and development funding to develop cutting-edge capabilities to ensure U.S. SOF maintain a competitive advantage over our enemies. Currently USSOCOM gets less than 2% of DoD research and development funding, and most of the capabilities derived from this funding eventually proliferate into the conventional forces and to our allies. Congress should increase SOF-peculiar research and development funding to ensure U.S. SOF maintain a competitive advantage over adversaries.

SUPPORT TO OPERATIONS

- There are numerous funding and authorization lines associated with building partner capacity initiatives, but they are limited with respect to: what can be provided, which nations may receive support, and the duration of the support. DoD needs a dedicated, multi-year program of record with appropriate resourcing to build and train partner nation SOF and promote interoperability.
- U.S. SOF is deployed around the world, and Service members are carrying personal and government laptops as well as personal and government smartphones. Many of these devices are being targeted by hackers, and phones are being used to track and compromise identities and locations, as well as sources for espionage for our near-peer competitors such as China and Russia. U.S. SOF needs the authority and funding necessary to develop dedicated, secure communications devices to protect personnel and operations.
- The use of lasers is critical to tactical SOF formations in order to mark targets, determine ranges, and conduct firing at night. But lasers operate on frequencies that are discoverable and could compromise SOF. Congress should require and fund variable frequency lasers.
- SOF relies heavily on Intelligence Surveillance and Reconnaissance (ISR) assets and for the intelligence community to be able to conduct Processing, Exploitation and Dissemination (PED) of the intelligence to U.S. and our allied partners. Years of near constant combat operations has demonstrated an increased need. Congress should fund an upgrade to USSOCOM's organic manned and remotely piloted ISR capabilities and PED in order to increase operational output and help minimize tactical risk.

TRAINING, READINESS, AND SUPPORT TO THE FORCE

- Recent budget pressures have forced DoD to make significant defense cuts. SOF has not been directly cut but was held at 2014 levels with slight increases. By freezing the force structure to 2014 levels, anticipated growth to SOF support personnel never happened. Additionally, the cuts to the Services also had huge impact on all Title X programs that support SOF. Congress needs to end sequestration to avoid additional degradation to SOF.
- USSOCOM is a unique command that has Service-like authorities and combatant command (COCOM) of all U.S. SOF. Under the current authorities, the Services have complete control over the education of SOF. Inside the Service schools, SOF educational requirements are often overlooked and omitted, leaving SOF with a requirement to “self-educate” in order to develop the SOF-unique skills and attributes required for the unique environments in which they operate. In accordance with its Service-like responsibilities, Congress should ensure ASD/SOLIC provides SOF with their own professional military education system, leveraging the existing capabilities in Joint Special Operations University.
- Congress should support ORIEN, a joint program of USSOCOM and the John Murtha Cancer Center at Walter Reed, to track cancer rates among SOF. There should be cancer screening and treatment plans for SOF veterans and retirees who have been exposed to a myriad of toxins.
- In the 2019 budget, Congress unanimously passed H.R. 1162, the “No Hero Left Untreated Act,” which requires the VA to carry out a pilot program to provide access to magnetic EEG/EKG-guided resonance therapy to veterans with certain health care diagnoses. This bill allows for the opportunity to test the technology on no more than 50 patients. Initial results from this treatment have been very encouraging, and Congress should fund its expansion quickly, provided the results of this pilot program are similar.

AVIATION

- The AC-130 is a phenomenal platform, but it only operates in conditions of darkness. Many SOF missions – particularly those with our partners – are conducted during daylight hours. During these daylight hour deployments outside of major theater operations, SOF rarely have dedicated close air support. SOF needs a small footprint, low cost, multi-role aircraft capable of supporting SOF partnered operations in daylight.



MARITIME

- The Geographic Combatant Commanders (GCCs) have operational maritime SOF capability requirements that exceed the quantity of maritime platforms on-hand. Congress should direct operational maritime SOF requirements to be filled at 100%.
- With the proliferation of radars, night vision devices, thermal imaging, and long-range precision munitions, maritime infiltration has become considerably more difficult for surface craft. U.S. SOF has a very small number of stealthy heavy capability and medium capability maritime combatant craft and trained crews. The current surface combatant craft available to U.S. SOF falls significantly short of the requirement of GCCs. Congress should increase the number of heavy and medium stealth maritime combatant craft and crews to ensure the force is capable of meeting GCC mission requirements.
- The current inventory of Combat Service Support (CSS) to SOF is well below that required to provide support to operators deploying. Many of the existing billets are vacant and commanders are deploying units with minimal CSS personnel. Congress should advocate to have all CSS units assigned to SOF manned at 100%.



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