



**HOUSE ARMED SERVICES SUBCOMMITTEE ON TERRORISM AND
UNCONVENTIONAL THREATS
JIM SAXTON, NEW JERSEY
CHAIRMAN**

PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release:
June 29, 2006

Contact: Josh Holly (HASC), 202-225-2539 or
Greg Keeley (SAXTON), 202-225-4765

OPENING STATEMENT OF JIM SAXTON

Hearing on Missions & Responsibilities of the U.S. Special Operations Command

Washington, D.C. – The Subcommittee on Terrorism, Unconventional Threats and Capabilities meets today to assess United States Special Operations Command’s (SOCOM) missions and roles. As SOCOM plays a central role in the Global War on Terror (GWOT), ensuring SOCOM is successful is one of our highest priorities.

SOCOM was created in 1987 to address a shortcoming in the military’s ability to conduct joint, special operations – a shortcoming that was tragically evident in the failed attempt in 1980 to rescue American hostages held in Iran. Since its activation, SOCOM has consistently proven its ability to successfully conduct a wide range of special operations, from foreign internal defense missions during times of peace to counterterrorist direct action missions during times of conflict.

The attacks on September 11th marked the beginning of the GWOT and demonstrated that we face a new threat, one of asymmetrical attacks conducted by dispersed networks of violent extremists. The current threat has global reach and could result in not only devastating attacks but also catastrophic destruction should these extremists successfully achieve their goal of obtaining weapons of mass destruction. For almost five years now, SOCOM has been leading the way in the war on terrorism: defeating the Taliban and eliminating a terrorist safe haven in Afghanistan; removing a truly vicious Iraqi dictator and combating the terrorists who seek to destabilize the new, democratic Iraq; working with partner nations such as Jordan and the Philippines to improve their national security and enhance their counterterrorism operations; and assisting nations throughout the world to ensure that terrorists cannot find hospitable environments for their networks and activities.

The war against terrorism, however, is a long war and is truly a “global” war on terrorism, one that is not limited to Iraq and Afghanistan. The Department of Defense and SOCOM have recognized this new threat and the type of warfare it requires and are taking measures to adapt to this new environment, such as the transformational decisions discussed in the Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR) released in February. As a committee, we must remain focused on the strategic

-more-

objectives in this war and must ensure that SOCOM is properly positioned to achieve strategic success against an agile and adaptive foe, and to safeguard our nation and our allies from the threat of terrorists and violent extremism.

The subcommittee's goal today is to get a fresh perspective on SOCOM from a panel of outside, objective experts. To better meet the demands of the GWOT, SOCOM has steadily been adapting through personnel growth, the activation of the Marine Special Operations Command, the enhancement of organic intelligence capabilities, the realignment of Civil Affairs and Psychological Operations forces, and its designation as lead combatant command in the war on terrorism. In light of these ongoing changes, we must consider whether the QDR recommendations are achievable, whether SOCOM's organizational changes are appropriate, whether SOCOM's enhanced intelligence capability is sufficient, and whether SOCOM has focused too much on direct action capability at the expense of unconventional warfare capability that could prove more decisive in achieving strategic success in the GWOT.

###

<http://armedservices.house.gov/>