



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

PRESS RELEASE

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*Terrorism, Unconventional Threats and Capabilities Subcommittee Holds
Hearing on Missions and Responsibilities of U.S. Special Operations
Command*

Washington, D.C. – Today the House Armed Services Subcommittee on Terrorism, Unconventional Threats and Capabilities met to assess United States Special Operations Command’s (SOCOM) missions and roles. Members of the subcommittee received testimony from a panel of independent experts from the Council on Foreign Relations and the Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments as well as from a former SOCOM commander.

“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,” said Rep. Jim Saxton (R-NJ), chairman of the Terrorism, Unconventional Threats and Capabilities Subcommittee.

“As a committee, we must remain focused on the strategic 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,” continued Saxton.

Retired General Wayne Downing, former commander of SOCOM who currently chairs the Combating Terrorism Center at West Point and regularly advises senior Department of Defense officials, opened the testimony by stating the military can lose the war on terrorism but it cannot win it, and highlighted that we need to attack the political, economic, and social causes in conjunction with the military efforts. Drawing on his extensive special operations background, he explained that more engagement with foreign Special Operations units was one of the best assets in a counterinsurgency fight.

Gen. Downing responded to questions from members about the transition and expansion of SOCOM personnel with the implementation of the 2006 QDR. Gen. Downing described the change as “necessarily gradual.” He underscored the positive aspects and potential drawbacks of the reorganization of SOCOM, specifically mentioning that “Rangers, or entry-level soldiers, are trained to become the prime source of candidates for the Army Special Forces and the Delta Force.” Gen. Downing commented that, in previous meetings, the Secretary of Defense had concurred with the retired general’s recommendation to elevate the commander of the Joint Special Operations

Command to a three star billet but that his recommendation to have JSOC report directly to the Secretary of Defense was ultimately turned down.

Michael Vickers, Director of Strategic Studies at the Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments, discussed the effects of the 2006 Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR) on the Special Operations Command. The creation and training of a Marine Special Operations Command (MARSOC), according to Mr. Vickers' written remarks, "will add capacity to SOCOM in the foreign internal defense (FID) mission area, through its Foreign Military Training Unit (FMTU) and in direct action/special reconnaissance mission area, through its two special operations battalions."

Mr. Vickers highlighted SOCOM's increasing intelligence capability and capacity as it develops a multi-service concept for irregular warfare focused on unconventional warfare, counterterrorism and foreign internal defense missions. He emphasized SOCOM's integral role in the Global War on Terror that requires a different strategy for countering the enemy than was required in previous wars. He additionally drew attention to the importance of expanding SOCOM's interagency activities such as through the flexible detailing of personnel to the CIA.

Max Boot, a Senior Fellow for National Security Studies at the Council on Foreign Relations, stressed the need for cultural education in addition to traditional military preparation for war. In both his opening statement and in response to members' questions, Mr. Boot recommended recruiting bilingual non-U.S. citizens from countries in which SOCOM conducts operations, as was done previously under the Lodge Act to recruit Eastern Europeans, to gain the advantages of understanding indigenous customs and being able to engage with local populations.

Mr. Boot's most thought provoking testimony regarded the resurrection of the Office of Strategic Services, formed during World War II and the birthplace of Special Forces and the CIA. He suggested the best way to leverage unconventional warfare capability to successfully fight the war on terror may be to consolidate Special Forces, civil affairs, psychological operations units along with portions of the CIA into a new, separate organization.

Chairman Saxton concluded the hearing with a recollection of an experience he had when visiting an Iraqi school during a previous trip through the region. After speaking with the teacher, he was struck by how people in other countries have a different way of thinking than Americans do. Keeping such cultural differences in mind and stressing the witnesses' testimony about the importance of unconventional warfare, he said strategies to win the GWOT have to go beyond foreign language training; they must reach toward understanding different ways of thinking because engaging with "indigenous forces is absolutely vital to our mission."

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