NATIONAL SECURITY LEADERS FORUM

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION BY:

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PRESIDENT AND CO-FOUNDER,
CENTER FOR A NEW AMERICAN SECURITY

SPEAKER:
ADMIRAL ERIC T. OLSON,
EIGHTH COMMANDER OF
U.S. SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND

6:00 PM – 7:30 PM
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MS. MICHÈLE FLOURNOY: Good evening, ladies and gentlemen. My name is Michèle Flournoy and on behalf of Kurt Campbell and the staff of the Center for a New American Security, welcome to our series, the National Security Leaders Forum.

Tonight we are very privileged and honored to have with us Admiral Eric T. Olson, who is the eighth commander of U.S. Special Operations Command. As you know, USSOCOM has two – at least two roles – many roles, but one is to provide for the readiness of special operations forces and the other is, as directed, to conduct special operations worldwide.

Admiral Olson, many – is familiar to many of you, but let me just give you a brief bio. He was born in Tacoma, Washington. He was a graduate of the U.S. Naval Academy. I won't give the year, so you – we'll protect your age, Sir.

He has commanded at every level of command from SEAL platoon officer in charge to Naval Special Warfare Force commander. He has participated in several operations worldwide, some of which he can probably tell you about, some of which he probably can't.

He has earned a Master's Degree in national security affairs from the Naval Postgraduate School. He is an Arabic and French speaker and his awards include the Distinguished Service Medal and the Silver Star.

We are very, very privileged and pleased to have Admiral Olson with us tonight to talk about "The Terror Threat: What It Will Take to Deter, Disrupt, and Defeat It."

Tonight's comments are on background, not for attribution. We will, after the admiral speaks, have some time for questions and answers. So please join me in welcoming Admiral Olson.

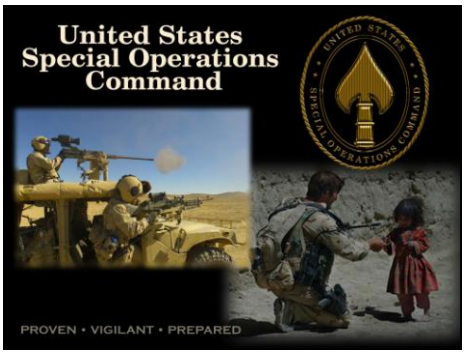
(Applause.)

ADM. OLSON: Thank you, Michèle. Kurt, wherever you are, thank you for having me here. Lots of old friends here and I appreciate the opportunity to be with you.

I would like to especially recognize the Honorable Michael Vickers – where are you? Ah, there you are, Mike – assistant secretary of defense for special operations, low intensity conflict and interdependent capabilities, or as I like to say, special operations and lots of other stuff. (Laughter.) But Mike serves as our policy oversight within the Pentagon. It's a good strong relationship. I very much appreciate the opportunity to work with him.

And Ambassador Dell Dailey is here, Ambassador Generalissimo Dell Dailey, who left from being a three star at Special Operations Command not long ago to be in the counterterrorism section of the Department of State. And so, Dell, it's good to have you here and so many other old friends and teammates here.

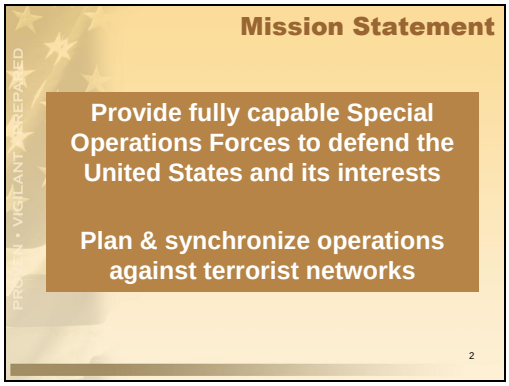
Kevin Green, I see Kevin Green, who – for whom I used to work at one point.



I'm going to talk about Special Operations Command. I'm pleased to have the opportunity to do it. I've got five slides. I don't like giving PowerPoint briefings. I know you don't like getting them, but they will help me just sort of set a stage for whatever else you might want to talk about during the presentation this evening.

Special Operations is an interesting organization. I know all organizations are unique in their own ways. I'll talk about some of ways that Special Operations Command is unique and I'll work into that where we fit into the Department of Defense and into the global war on terror, in which we're so deeply engaged. And please, I mean for this to be a conversation, not a briefing. So interrupt me at any point for clarification, to clear up rumors. Give me advice, recommendations, criticism, however you like.

Slide, please.



Okay. I'll start with the mission because we always do. This is a two-part mission statement and it shows the sort of schizophrenic personality of Special Operations Command. We provide fully capable Special Operations forces to serve operational commanders worldwide. We are a force provider in a large sense, very much like a military service. I'm responsible for organizing, training, equipping, and deploying from the United States Special Operations forces to work globally for operational commanders around the world.

Sometimes, those operational commanders are members of Special Operations. Often, they are not. Usually, when they are members of Special Operations, those commanders work for somebody who's not. So in that sense, I am a provider of a capability to answer global needs. And we plan and synchronize operations against terrorist networks.

That is an authority, a task provided to the commander of Special Operations Command since 2005, codified in the Unified Command Plan signed by the president, and what it says is that "The United States Special Operations Command is the lead combatant command for planning, synchronizing, and as directed, conducting Department of Defense operations against terrorists and terrorist networks globally," not Special Operations, but "Department of Defense Operations against terrorists and terrorist networks." So that's a huge charter to plan and synchronize Department of Defense operations in a global war on terror.

We don't really do that. It's too much for us to do that and it's not right for us to do that. What we really do is we synchronize plans and planning in the global war on terror. We don't synchronize specific operations or activities. It's up to the operational commanders to do that. The operational commander's responsible for executing the plans. But we, at Special Operations Command, receive the plans, review the plans, coordinate the plans, deconflict them, collaborate them, prioritize them, match them against needs around the world, and then make recommendations to the joint staff and the secretary of defense on how resources ought to be allocated around the world to match the demands of the global war on terror.

And in that sense, we synchronize operations through synchronization of the plans, the direct operations. I don't mean to be too much into the nuance there. But there was some sense that – from our headquarters in Tampa, we were in the business of directing specific activities that were really in the area of operations of other commanders, and we really don't do that. What we do is, as I said, prioritize, guide, review, and recommend how resources will be allocated against the terrorist threat that faces us.

So when I say prioritize, we're prioritizing countries of the world on a one-through N list. We track 204 independent nations of the world and we rank them 1 through 204 in terms of their importance in a global war on terror. And a country can be high on the list, either because it is a place from which a significant threat emanates, or it can be high on the list because it has the potential to be powerful as a partner, or it can be high on the list because of both. And there are many countries from which the threat emanates and with which we are partnered. And we prioritize the plans themselves.

We prioritize whether or not operations in the Philippines are more important than operations in Columbia. or more important than operations in the southern cone of South America, or more important than the trans-Sahara, more important than Iraq or Afghanistan or Gulf of Guinea or other areas of the world, so that resources can be

appropriately applied against those threats. And then as I said, we don't direct the allocation of resources, but we recommend them.

Slide, please.

These are my priorities. Every commander's responsible for stating his priorities. I won't linger too long on these, but I tell you that this is one, two, three, A, B, C, mission, people, stuff. The mission is, of course, the reason for the people and the stuff. The people are the primary capability for executing the mission, and the stuff is what we give the people to enable them to do the difficult things that we ask them to do around the world. And A, B, C under each of those priorities, I won't stretch any of them out.

But I'll tell you that this culturally attuned engagement and this interagency cooperation are up in priority one for a very good reason. We understand that the conflict in which we are engaged is not going to be resolved by United States Special Operations Command, no matter what my authority for synchronizing plans in the global war on terror. It's bigger than the Department of Defense. It's bigger than government. It requires a global effort to address this. I can't take responsibility for the global effort, but what I can do is encourage both international and interagency cooperation and collaboration intaking on that threat. And I'll talk more about that on another slide.

This (priority #2) is dear to us. People who come into Special Operations tend to stay for a longer period of time. They grow up in Special Operations. They get to know each other, which is important for speed of response to crises. It's important to understand each other's capabilities and limitations. Those personal relationships that develop over time are very important, and we need to nurture that, sustain these people and their families, so they will continue the service at the high level of intensity that we ask them for a long period of time.

Train and educate the joint warrior / diplomat is train and educate the warrior and train and educate the diplomat. Training and education are different things about skills and knowledge. Warrior is pretty self-explanatory. Diplomat is less so.

When I first created this slide, I didn't know what word to put there because diplomat didn't sound quite right, but I couldn't think of a better word, so I used diplomat and then just started briefing it around. And some people objected to my use of the world diplomat because they considered that to be their responsibility. The more I thought about it, the more I liked it.

We really are diplomats of the world, whether other people want to admit it or not. We are in places where other agencies of government will never go. We meet people they will never meet. We become the lens through which an awful lot of people in the world view the United States – certainly view the United States military. And so I want to remind people everyday that they do serve as diplomats. Probably representative is more accurate, but it's such a lame word and diplomat carries a panache to it.

Sustain and modernize the force. I won't talk about that except that that is an authority that is granted to the commander of Special Operations Command, unlike any other combatant commander of the world. I'm provided an acquisition executive, head of agency authorities for research and development and acquisition. I'm provided my own budget. Major Force Program Eleven is provided by Congress to the commander of Special Operations Command for the purpose of acquiring materials, supplies, services, people, who are specific to the Special Operations requirements. I'm exploring whether or not I'm operating on the edge of those authorities or comfortably within them. My sense is that I'm operating comfortably within them and I'm on a quest this year to determine how close to the edge I can get.

Slide, please.

These are the – depending on how you count them – the nine or 10 core activities. That's the word in the law that created Special Operations Command now almost 21 years ago. We'll be 21 years old, reach full adulthood next month. If there are asterisks, that means that they were tasked to special operations as core activities in the original language that created us back in 1986. The command was stood up in April of '87.

Counterproliferation of weapons of mass destruction was added later. Information operations was added later and I already talked about synchronizing the Department of Defense efforts in the global war on terror.

The rest of these I don't mean to go through line-by-line. If you have any questions about them, I'll answer them, but they are the bread-and-butter activities of Special Operations as they relate to special operations. And those words are included in the law that created us. These are the core activities of Special Operations as they relate to special operations. We don't claim ownership of any of these activity areas. We claim niche responsibilities and niche tasks in all of them, as those tasks relate to Special Operations.

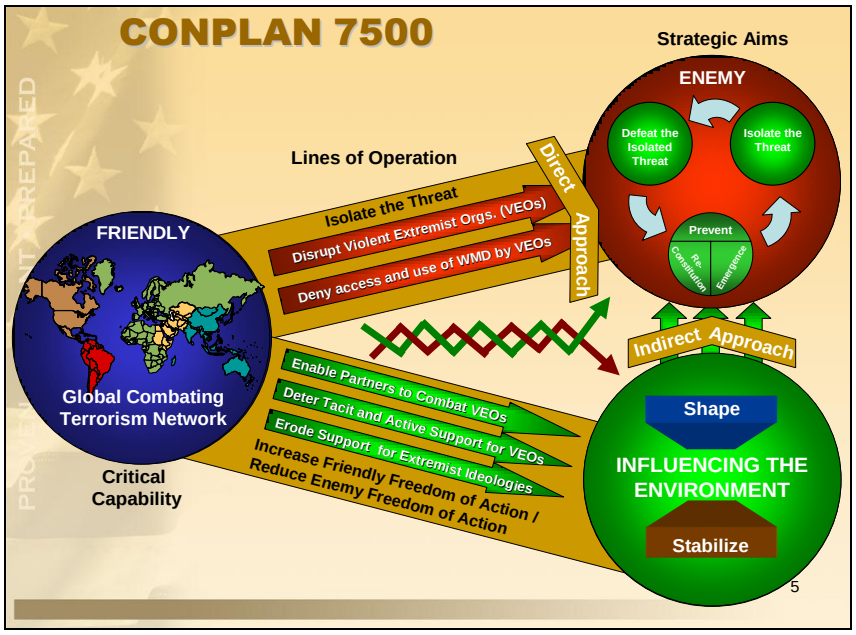
I'll tell you, without camping out on more than a couple, this is a broadly misunderstood term, unconventional warfare. It's not the opposite of conventional warfare. Unconventional warfare is very strictly and doctrinally defined as those operations that are by, with, and through surrogates and paramilitary counterparts, not working with host nation official security forces, but working with guerilla forces, paramilitary forces for purposes of mutual interest.

The campaign in Northern Afghanistan in the opening days of OEF was classic unconventional warfare. There was a mature, but relatively incapable, opposition force to the Taliban, the Northern Alliance. And with the insertion of a relative handful of Special Forces Operational Detachments Alfa -- A teams -- of Green Berets, that paramilitary force became a dominant force in Northern Afghanistan and was key on the march to Kabul.

Another misunderstood term is psychological operations, often misunderstood as some sort of brainwashing effort. I call it truth-telling for a purpose. It is clearly to influence activity and behavior in a way that is beneficial to us and to the audience that we're addressing, but we are prohibited by law and policy from telling untruths in the act of psychological operations. This is generally spreading accurate information to influence some sort of activity.

Any questions or comments about any of the rest of them? I won't go into them if you don't.

Slide please. Okay, I'm going to camp out on this slide.



This is an unclassified slide, which by letting me spend a few minutes on it, will save you 750 pages of reading top-secret material. (Laughter.) This is the Department of Defense campaign plan for a global war on terror laid out in one graphic. And by saying that it's the Department of Defense campaign plan, that says two things. It says that it has authority within the Department of Defense and it has influence beyond the Department of Defense. It is also the Department of Defense supporting plan for the National Implementation Plan, which is meant to draw together the planning efforts of the other agencies of government. So let me talk you through this.

What this says is that in order to get at the enemy, and by getting at the enemy, I mean isolating the threat, defeating that threat, and then preventing reemergence of that threat in that environment, you start with a friendly network. We've called it the Global Combating Terrorism Network. There is not such a thing as a global combating terrorism network. We talk about it as if it exists, but it's really a loosely organized affiliation of people and organizations and capabilities that are generally connected by a common desire to contribute to a global environment that is inhospitable to terrorist activity.

Some of them are very obvious, like military units who are charged with a counterterrorism mission. Some are much less obvious, like global corporations, who depend on stability for economic growth. Some of them are in-between, coalition forces in partnership with us or non-governmental organizations, both sort of on the big end, like United Nations, or the low end, like Save the Children, where a global environment that is inhospitable to terrorist activity is in their interest. So that friendly organization

can get at the enemy through two approaches. We've called them here the direct approach and the indirect approach. I'll talk about the direct approach first.

The direct approach is largely military led. It is largely kinetic, chaotic, violent in nature. The two lines of operation in the direct approach are to disrupt violent extremist organizations. That means capture or kill their leaders, disrupt their infrastructure, interrupt their ability to train and finance their operations, and deny access and use of weapons of mass destruction by violent extremist organizations, which have declared their intent to do that and use those against us. That's the direct approach again, primarily military in nature, largely the responsibility of the Department of Defense in this country. We consider the direct approach to be important, urgent, necessary, but not decisive. It is a holding action that buys time for the indirect approach to have its decisive effect.

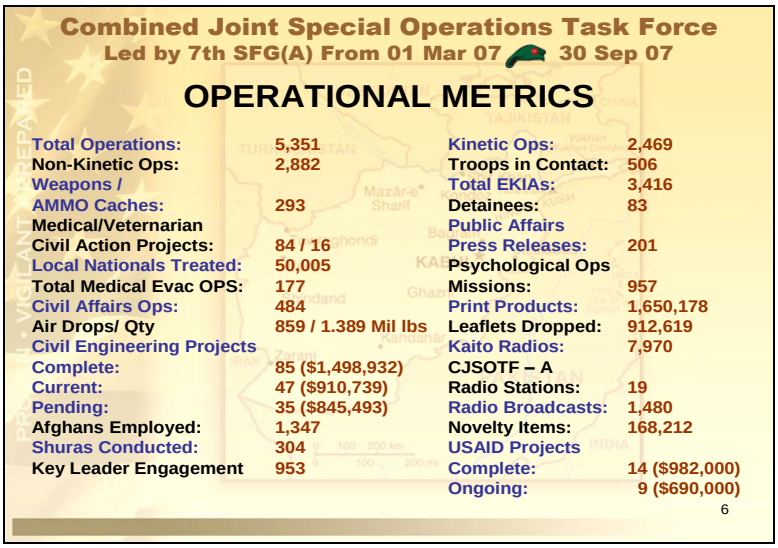
The indirect approach is enabling partners to combat violent extremist organizations, deter tacit and active support for those organizations and those nations that are either less willing or less capable of doing it on their own at this point, and eroding the underlying support for extremist ideologies, attacking the poverty and the intimidation of the extremism that can contribute to the emergence of terrorist activity or create sanctuaries for them. These take a lot longer. In the end, these will create the enduring success. In order to give these ((indirect actions)) time to work, it takes a lot of this ((direct actions)).

Military is in the lead here ((direct action)). The United States military, to a large degree, is leading this from behind here ((indirect action)). It's not our responsibility to lead it. It's our responsibility to support it. But much of the capacity, at least in the United States government, to conduct these kindsof operations, the train and assist kind of operations, the humanitarian assistance kind operation, resides within the Department of Defense. We understand that the balance between the two has to be very, very carefully executed.

I'll tell you that on most days, most activity is right down the middle. What that (the co-mingled lines on the above slide) is meant to represent is an intertwining of the red and the green. It's tempting to try to categorize people or units or capabilities into being either direct in their approach or indirect in their approach. Often it's impossible to tell the difference between the two. The same unit can be doing both approaches, even simultaneously, as we're doing when we train with and then fight with Iraqi and Afghan counterparts, which looks an awful lot like we're attacking targets and disrupting violent extremist organizations, but the end result is enabling our partners to deal with their own problem, so that, ultimately, we can withdraw. This occurs all the time and it is, to a large degree, defining what Special Operations is becoming in this new world in which we live.

The term, though, is evolving. To describe, it is combat foreign internal defense. Combat FID, a variation of a doctrinal term which has to do with training and assisting

our enemies, but in this case we are eating, sleeping, working, training, and fighting alongside them.



And this is an example of how that works in actuality. I call this a seven by seven slide. It's seven months by the Seventh Special Forces Group in Afghanistan. This is a force of about 2,200-2,300 people commanded by an Army colonel. The commander of the 7th Special Forces Group, his name is Ed Reeder. In seven months in Afghanistan, one rotation, 5,351 total operations split between non-kinetic and kinetic that way. Non-kinetic are those for which no violent engagement with the enemy was anticipated; kinetic being those where it was anticipated or experienced. And you can see the balance here.

I won't ask you to read all these lines, but I'll tell you that at the same time they're killing 3,416 enemies, they're treating 50,005 in medical clinics and dental clinics. They're running veterinary clinics and medical clinics, 84 of those, 16 civil actions projects. They hired 1,347 Afghans for a force of 2,300 people, so they became the core of the economy in the regions in which they work. They created 19 radio stations to remote sites in order that people can listen to them. They had to drop almost 8,000 radios into those sites, so that people could pick up the stations.

And I exaggerate just to make a point, but as the Special Forces that go out into these remote sections where nobody else is, and these camps are just remarkable, where you fly in a helicopter over nothing for a long period of time. You settle down inside some barbed wire somewhere. And there's about 15 Americans from Special Forces. There's about 50 to 70 Afghans, for example, from Afghan security forces, and there's a relative handful of other people from other agencies of our government out in those sites.

And they set up – they go out to the villages and they meet 953 times with key leaders in those villages, conduct 304 shuras, which is an organized meeting of local leaders. This is in a seven-month period. And they set up their tables to hand out food and everybody lines up to get special food. And then they set up the next table to provide medical treatment and everybody moves from the food line over to the medical line because they haven't had medical treatment. And then they set up the next table to hand out radios and everybody moves out of the medical line and gets in the radio line because what they're really starving for is information. It's a pretty powerful thing to witness.

MS. FLOURNOY: Is that done with the PRTs (Provincial Reconstruction Teams) or through PRTs?

ADM. OLSON: Usually in coordination with the PRTs, but not in combination with the PRTs. These are generally quite remote. And along the way – I don't want to miss this line – they dropped 1.4 million pounds of stuff in places where it was needed.

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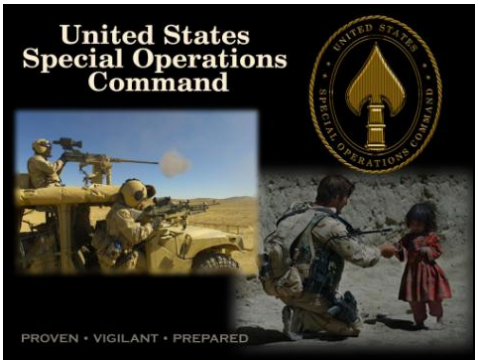

And I close out sort of what I wanted to tell you and now I'd like to hear from you about what it is you'd like to hear from me.

Yes, Ma'am?

Q: I'm glad you finished up on Afghanistan. I was there in 2004 – Pam Keating (sp) from Boeing. I'm retired Army. I was the – (inaudible) – coalition forces in Afghanistan 2004 to 2005. And I wanted to say that General Barno was the commander. Ambassador Khalilzad was the ambassador at the time. And the Special Ops used to participate in a morning briefings with General Barno every morning along with regular operations, political military affairs, economic affairs, public affairs and a few others.

And that is where, for the first time in my 24-year career, I really saw the Special Operations as everyday part of operations. And even though General Barno, I don't think, had a direct command authority, I think this goes back to what you said. A lot of times, they're supporting – they really did work just hand-in-glove. And I think it made all the difference in the world at that point in the campaign.

ADM. OLSON: Yes, my sense is that as we begin to draw down conventional forces -(inaudible)- as we're committed to doing eventually in Afghanistan, it will not lead into a reduction of demand for Special Operations forces. In fact, I think it's going to lead to an increase in demand. As the environment shifts from one of – sort of occupation and combat to one that's more train and assist and stabilize and reconstruct, it turns out that we're in demand on both ends. And I think as brigade combat teams start to pull out, we'll see an increased demand for Special Forces to come in and fill the void that that's creating because we've got to keep our fingers on the pulse of all these places where there's been an American presence.

But I do believe that there's been an appreciation gained by conventional operational commanders over the last few years of the breadth of what Special Operations provides and really at both ends. There's still nobody better at surgical operations to put the habeas grabus on a terrorist in the middle of the night, but there's also nobody better in going out there and working one-on-one with the tribal leaders in order to encourage the kind of activity in the neighborhood that's helpful to them and to us.

Yes, Sir?

Q: (Off mike) – training and advising security forces. Increasingly – (inaudible) – Afghanistan, Special Operations Forces have been having been involved in training and advising – (inaudible) – security forces have taken on the peace role. I wonder, moving forward, what you thought the balance between SOF and general purpose forces were in the train and advise mission?

ADM. OLSON: My sense is that (investment by the services in) this train and assist mission is going to raise the capabilites of conventional forces and enable them all to get out in the world a bit more than they've been able to do in the past. The question then becomes one of where will they be able to go? Where will they have access, at what level? And what is it they'll do when they're there?

Q: (Inaudible).

ADM. OLSON: We'd like to hand off a number of those tasks to the conventional forces as they develop the capability to do it, but the reality is striking me that there are really very few countries in the world where you can put a brigade combat team to do a train and assist mission. In most of the countries of the world, access is gained through low profile operations, keeping it out of the newspapers, working in small unit to small unit level kinds of engagements. We woke up in 58 countries of the world this morning, and only a couple of those where we're engaged in a fight or where a brigade combat team could perform a significant train and assist kind of mission.

In most of the rest of them, the U.S. access is limited to low double digits worth of people. And so I think that the real opportunity to hand off some of these significant

train and assist missions is limited as to those places that will accept a large U.S. presence.

That said, I'd like to see Special Operations get in the business of training Special Operations a little bit more, and in the business of training new recruits how to march in straight lines and shoot on seven meter ranges a little bit less, but I think that the reality is that, given the skills to which Special Operations trains, the global demand will still be mostly for us. Did that get at your question? I can't predict a balance, but I do think that what – I think that demand will – for Special Operations globally will continue to go up for all the reasons.

Yes, Kevin?

Q: Admiral, first of all, thanks for being with us this evening. Your force is in its seventh year now, very demanding – (inaudible) – operations around the world. How do you assess the readiness of your force, particularly on – (inaudible)?

ADM. OLSON: Yes, that's a really good question. The force is in really good shape. The operational commanders of my force are convinced that they're sustaining this very, very well. Recruiting is high. Retention is high. We're not demonstrating the same sort of traumatic effect on our force that some of the other forces are, are demonstrating, I think that much of that has to do with the maturity of our people and the high level of training that they get.

We're also much more in control of the deployments. Our longest deployments for our force are about seven months, whereas most of the rest of the conventional forces is over for 12 or 15 months. That's a huge difference. We're over and back and over and back, but we're over for shorter periods. The Special Forces Groups have the heaviest burden. They're over a sort of seven over, back five. But most of the rest of the force is on shorter rotation.

So we're sustaining that all right, but I – personally, I'm convinced that there's a future fragility that I need to get ahead of, that what's good for five or six or seven years isn't good for 15 or 16 or 17 years of the same kind of pace of operations. So although there're a number of programs in the Department of Defense in each of the services that address trauma once it's been manifested, there are fewer that get in the business of predicting and preventing that kind of trauma from occurring. So we've actually got some pretty good programs just getting underway in Special Operations to deal with that.

I'll tell you, one of the hardest parts of it is collecting the metrics. How do you get in the business of predicting when someone may suffer psychological trauma, so that you can head it off? And it turns out that, although I'm a joint force commander responsible for the readiness of four different service elements of Special Operations, each of those service elements reports using different metrics and different formats to different services, and then I have to go to the services and try to pull that data out and compare it to each other. And that's, frankly, one of the challenges I face.

So a snapshot, today we're in pretty good shape; fast forward, 10 years, I don't know. I'm trying to ahead of it, but thanks for asking.

Sir?

Q: (Inaudible) – I wondering if you could talk a little about your views of how the SEAL community is adapting to sort of – the FID challenge and the tribal engagement and assurors and things that, as you know, is certainly part of the Green Berets SF community?

ADM. OLSON: The question was how is the SEAL community taking on more of a Green Berets-like mission. And the question – I think the evidence is that they're doing it pretty well. These are smart guys and they're motivated. And they want to do whatever the mission demands of them. They're pretty flexible and they're able to do that. So they have grown into that mission very, very well. They're operating independently, just like Special Forces in many of the places that – across Iraq and Afghanistan. And I'll just say they're doing well, a lot to be proud of.

Q: Admiral, thanks for being with us here today. Jim Miller from CNAS. Given your characterization of the security environment as requiring more SOF over time, which I think is probably right, and given the stress on the force today, which you talked a little bit about, and a rather extensive list of missions, none of which are likely to go away, and you suggested that general purpose forces certainly can't take over too much of that burden. What are the limits to growth of SOF? You've got plans to grow now and you've got challenges obviously in retention. What are the limits to growth? Could it go beyond what's currently planned? I'm just trying to get you into a little bit of trouble here.

ADM. OLSON: We were embraced by the QDR as a service-like organization, and we participated in all the discussions, in fact, led a couple of the sort of major muscle movements they called them in the QDR process. And we were well served by the process. We were actually granted overall growth of about 13,000 people through the QDR process. That's on top of a standing force which, at the time, was about 32,000 active and about 15,000-ish reserves. So 13,000 people on top of that is significant. That's over the course of five years and it was – and so it actually averages out to 2,000 or 3,000 a year-ish.

And that frankly, is the rate – about the maximum rate at which we can absorb the growth and that we are learning from this that that's about how much we can grow. We had invested in the schoolhouses. We're going to invest it in some of the infrastructure in advance, but I'm convinced now – when I'm asked, I say that somewhere between 3 percent and 5 percent per year sustained is about the right amount of growth for SOF. We can do that, ensuring that we're not wasting much and getting most of the force where it belongs, and it gives us flexibility to sort of adjust as we go. So that's it. I think

about 2,500-3,000 people a year is about the right sustained growth force, not more than that.

Yes, Ma'am?

Q: Thank you for that presentation. I'm Amy Zalman from SAIC and the EastWest Institute, and I was gratified to see that culturally attuned engagement is actually on the list of SOCOM's mission right now. I wonder if you could say a little bit more about what that means in practice right now and, if you'd like, what's working and where you see challenges.

ADM. OLSON: Yes, it's priority 1B and it's really hard. It's hard for several reasons, one of which is the services don't reward the investment that it takes to really gain cultural depth. It takes several – it takes schooling and several assignments to really create the Lawrence of Arabia or Lawrence of Pakistan or Lawrence of Paraguay or Lawrence of Indonesia or Lawrence of wherever it is that we need true expertise. And by the time a guy does two or three assignments and that, he's sort of fallen off the promotion track because he's outside the normal combat skills that are considered to be of great value to the services. That's one of the reasons it's hard to do it.

Another reason it's hard to do it is because people are so focused on training for the combat mission that they know they're going to face on their next deployment, that it's hard to sort of pull them off focus to study a language, instead of go to the range and shoot. All that said, it is a priority for a reason. We do understand that we've got to be able to communicate without using an interpreter or a machine to do it, that much of this is about relationship building, and you can only build relationships one-on-one.

And so we're – we are trying to – most of the growth that I talked about is not to send more people into Afghanistan and Iraq. It's to get people back out into the rest of the world from which they've been drawn to support the operations in Afghanistan or Iraq. That's going to lead us back into a more regional orientation than we've been able to accommodate here for the last few years.

So we're not there yet. The processes to which I am beholden don't really serve well. Here's one example. We really need for our people to be conversant in another language, but the test they take to earn the pay for language, tests them as listeners only, not as speakers. And so we have people who may be very good at communicating, but they can't get the test to get paid for the language. It's a demotivator. It's just sort of backwards. So the reason I put it up there as a priority is not because I think we're there. It's because I think we need to get there, although we have a long ways to go. The sense that all Special Forces soldiers are fluent in some other language and can operate transparently in some other culture, is a flawed one. We're better than the rest of the service writ large by long shot, but we still have a long ways to go.

Yes, Ma'am?

Q: Sir, my name is Erin Simpson. I'm from the Marine Command and Staff College. And I wanted to follow up on Colin's (sp) question about the relationship between Special Forces and SOCOM and the conventional forces engaged in the advising mission, and the degree to which the folks in Tampa and other elements of Special Forces and Special Operations Forces are interacting with, for example, those Army units at Fort Reilly who are training advising teams for Afghanistan and Iraq, or those units involved with the Marine Corps training and advising group who're doing everything but Afghanistan and Iraq. If you could explain a bit more how you interact with those units, it would be great.

ADM. OLSON: Yes, not too much. How frank do you want me to be? I think that we – what we are witnessing across the Department of Defense are random acts of pursuit of irregular warfare excellence. (Laughter.) They are largely uncoordinated, unmonitored, undisciplined. Anybody who wants to stand up some new capability is free to do it as long as they attach the term irregular warfare to it. And so the Army has stood up capability and Marines have – all the services have stood up. We've stood up our own irregular warfare branch within my headquarters. Nobody cared. (Laughter.) And so this is – we're not in deep dialogue – (laughter) – with anybody about this.

Q: (Off mike.)

ADM. OLSON: Well, I think so, yes, absolutely. No, this should all be carefully coordinated, deconflicted, collaborated. There should be a roles and missions effort to determine who ought to do what and how much and where they ought to go, but there's no referee for this at this point. Nobody's got a whistle to say, stop doing that. You over there, you get off the field. So this is a lot of investment. I'm sure the Marines aren't talking to the Army much. I said, we're not talking much to either. And so that's just the way it is. I'm looking for some effort that would establish some sort of an authority, or at least a recommender for that kind of coordination.

Q: I'm sorry. I preempted the prerogative of the chair up there to save you. I just – one question. I think it's been fantastic, the effort that SOCOM has made to bring in the interagency, particularly bringing people down to Tampa, getting involved in planning lots of other – and I think that it seems like, when I talk to folks across the interagency, that that's getting some traction.

But when you talk about fostering interagency collaboration and cooperation, it struck me that on your 7th Group slide back there, one thing that became rather stark was the capacity gap. The fact is that the humanitarian assistance of the Special Forces on that slide was three times what the USAID amount was down in the corner of that slide, approximately. And when the Special Forces groups withdraw, when the military leaves, there is no reason to think that that USAID portion is going to somehow go up by four-fold to meet that. There's going to be a cliff and there's a level of capacity that the military – (audio break).

ADM. OLSON: – by this kind of effort that USAID can. I'm a great fan of increasing State Department's budget to do this kind of thing because I think the military is doing some things in some places that ought to be the lead of other agencies. We'd be very happy to be in support, but that's not the way the money's flowing now. So we're happy to work with them. We're happy to contribute three-quarters of the funds and demonstrate that kind of partnership. And that's kind of where we are now. I think that Congress is wrestling with that now, about how to sort of balance all that out and create more capability within State to go out and do that sort of thing, but we're not there yet.

As you mentioned interagency, let me tell you that we wake up every day in Tampa with about 120 representatives of other agencies of the government that come to work in our headquarters. About 70 members of the United States Special Operations Command are coming to work inside the beltway in other agencies of our government. This is really powerful. They're working together now here. They're working together in Tampa and they're working together overseas. And what we're starting to see is what I'm calling second and third generation contact, where two people who worked together in an embassy someplace find themselves working together in an embassy someplace else. So they met each other on the battlefield and now they're working inside the national capital region, and the effect of that is powerful.

We are still treating this like it's a new phenomenon, but it won't be too many more years before it's just the way it's always been. And that's really, really powerful. The further you get away from Washington and Tampa, the better it works, and the more people are focused on accomplishing something that day, the more likely it is to be accomplished. The further you get away from policy and into actuality, then the more these relationships – the more this bonding takes place.

And I'll tell you, there's this rising phenomena called the joint interagency taskforce, where the members of those have been empowered by their agencies to actually represent the agency and make decisions on their behalf, and that accelerates the speed of action forward to a great degree. And I want to credit Ambassador Dell Dailey with much of that. It was during his tenure down as the director of our Center for Special Operations that much of this interagency stuff sort of came to fruition.

MS. FLOURNOY: Actually, we have such a single mind at CNAS that Vick had asked my question. (Laughter.) So are there any more remaining questions?

Q: Sir, John Byrne (ph) from the National War College. I was wondering if you could close out with – you mentioned 58 countries that SOF wakes up, and could you talk a little bit more about those other 56? What are the issues, post-9/11 in particular? What's worked well? What are the remaining challenges in those different operating environments? I realize it's a big scope, but authorities, dynamics, host nation issues, anything like that that you can talk about.

ADM. OLSON: Wow, yes, it runs the full range and you know this. In some of those countries, there is one person there for language immersion training and in some of

those countries, we're there for advise and assist missions. Some, we're doing counterpart training. Some we're simply operating out of attaché or security assistance officer spaces to get a feel for the country, to get our sort of pulse on the operational environment there.

The activity that we're doing around the world in most countries, on most days, has to do with training with counterpart forces. Much of our success in that, again, depends on keeping it small and tight and personal in the way that it works.

We find that we send sort of the A-Team or the SEAL platoon of the day to go work in most of these countries, and what we find we're running into are a dozen handpicked counterparts who are going through the most prestigious training that that country's going to experience during that – whatever period, and so the effect of these really is powerful.

It depends on good access. Access is granted by both the host nation and by our own government, and so we've got to earn our way in. And then you've got to continue to earn your stay and show that this is goodness for the host nation and it's goodness for the United States in the eyes of State and CIA and everybody else who cares – USAID, everybody else who cares. So it's very – as you know, it's very carefully done and I'm not sure I got to the core of your question, but –

Q: Any challenges outside, any unique challenges that you don't necessarily – we're not necessarily seeing in a JTF environment like – (inaudible).

ADM. OLSON: Yes, I think the biggest challenge is sort of realizing that we've transitioned over the last several years from having the American presence held up as a badge of honor for that country, to sort of being suppressed as something that they understand they need, but don't necessarily want to advertise they're having. And so we are in many countries of the world, where they will not – they prefer that we stay off the front pages of the newspaper. And in some places, it's a pretty restrictive environment, but our guys understand the importance of that; the host country understands the importance of that. And to a sense, that even builds a more powerful relationship because there is a bonding that occurs in that situation that's different than a much more public form.

So now have I gotten at the heart of your question, John? Yes, good, thanks.

MS. FLOURNOY: Sir, I just wanted to say that the National Security Leaders Forum was created to create opportunities for people like you, leaders like you, to come have candid and collegial and informative conversations with folks in Washington. And we really appreciate your candor, the degree to which you address the challenges you face and also the opportunities for the future. And we want to present this to you as a token of our thanks –

ADM. OLSON: Oh, great. Thank you very much.

MS. FLOURNOY: – as well as this collector's item, your very own CNAS coin – (laughter) – as a thank you very much for joining us.

Please join me in thanking the admiral.