

# Opening Statement (As Prepared) Ranking Member Ruben Gallego

ISO Subcommittee Hearing:

*“The Role of Special Operations Forces in Great Power Competition”*

February 8, 2023

I want to thank the Chairman for convening this first hearing. It’s hard to think of a more appropriate topic as we continue our oversight responsibilities at the beginning of the 118<sup>th</sup> Congress.

As I said during last year’s SOCOM posture hearing; “Special Operations Forces are at an inflection point.” The 2022 National Defense Strategy focuses on strategic competition to counter China’s growing multi-domain challenges and Russia’s persistent aggression, including its ongoing war in Ukraine. SOF have a significant role to play and, in this volatile security environment, should be prioritized.

But I want to return to the inflection point I mentioned at that earlier hearing. How are SOF postured to support a whole of government approach to Great Power Competition? What is their role in concert with other departments and agencies so that we are using the right instrument of national power for its best purpose?

The “Summary of the Irregular Warfare Annex to the National Defense Strategy” published in 2020 tells us that Irregular Warfare is “the struggle among state and non-state actors to influence populations and affect legitimacy.” This needs to be prioritized as a competency within the Joint Force and the Special Operations community.

Some of the core activities that are important to Irregular Warfare are ones like; foreign internal defense and Military Information Support Operations, which are essential if we are to be successful in confronting our competitors in the “gray zone” or below the threshold of armed conflict.

My question is where does the Special Forces community stand in the core activities needed for Irregular Warfare? Has the focus on Counter Terrorism and Counter Violent Extremist Organizations – which had been so needed over the last 20 years – caused other aspects of SOCOM’s core activities to atrophy?

I would argue that the lessons over the last 20 years, as is, don’t directly translate to the needs of today or tomorrow. We need to ensure SOCOM has the right training, institutional education, and authorities to continue to be the best at what this nation asks them to do.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And I also want to thank the witnesses for their time today. I look forward to hearing their views.