

Opening Statement March 9, 2023
U.S. Special Operations Forces Command - Challenges and Resource
Priorities for Fiscal Year 2024
(As Prepared)

I want to thank the Chairman for convening this hearing on “U.S. Special Operations Forces Command - Challenges and Resource Priorities for Fiscal Year 2024.”

I also want to welcome HASC’s newest member, Representative Jennifer McClellan from Virginia’s Fourth District, who was sworn into office yesterday. We are so thrilled to have you here in Congress and working with us on HASC as we work to ensure the safety and security of the American people.

Finally, I want to note that I think this may be the first time that two Michiganders have chaired a HASC hearing, at least in recent memory.

The current global security environment is dynamic to say the least. From Russia’s illegal and unjust war in Ukraine, to the Communist Chinese Party’s (CCP) increasing malign

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influence in the Indo-Pacific and beyond, as well as the threats posed by Iran, North Korea, and that of violent extremist groups.

These threats demand the full attention of the Administration and the Department of Defense, including the unique capabilities of our special forces community, with the ever-important assistance of our partners and allies.

For more than the last 20 years we have asked the special forces community to focus on counter terrorism, counter violent extremist organizations as that is what the mission in Iraq, Afghanistan, and elsewhere required.

As a CIA officer, I worked closely alongside members of the special forces community during three tours in Iraq and know firsthand the importance and danger of the work you continue to do on counterterrorism.

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And while we still need to maintain that capability and not lose sight of those hard-won gains, we must also look to the concerns of today and tomorrow.

In the era of great power competition (GPC) how is the special forces community postured to support this effort?

Do they have the right training, manning, equipping, institutional support, and professional military education system?

Do the lessons of the last twenty plus years carry forward to what we need of our special forces community today and in the future? Or have some of the essential core activities of special forces atrophied.

The 2022 National Defense Security Strategy uses a variation of the word “deter” 56 times when outlining the administration’s vision on how to check Russia aggression,

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out-compete competitors like the PRC, and hold in check
rogue state actors like North Korea/Iran, and non-state actors.
The special forces community will have a key and essential
role in that deterrence.

I look forward to hearing from our witnesses on how they
are prepared to do what is needed of them going forward
while at the same time ensuring that we maintain the
capability to find and eliminate violent extremists that still wish
to do us harm.

Assistant Secretary Maier and General Fenton, I want to
thank you and your teams; the men, women, and families
within the special forces community of today; and those who
came before. Their dedication and sacrifice represent the
very best of who we can be as Americans.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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