

# Review and Assessment of United States Special Operations Forces and United States Special Operations Command

Submitted in compliance with section 1086 of the  
National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2014



The estimated cost of this report or study for the Department of Defense is approximately \$38,000 for the 2014 Fiscal Year. This includes \$250 in expenses and \$37,000 in DoD labor.

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This report responds to section 1086 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2014, Public Law 113-66, which states:

*(a) In General – The Secretary of Defense shall conduct a review of the United States Special Operations Forces organization, capabilities, structure, and oversight.*

*(b) Report – Not later than 90 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Defense shall submit to the congressional defense committees a report on the review conducted under subsection (a). Such report shall include an analysis and, where appropriate, an assessment of the adequacy of each of the following:*

*(1) The organizational structure of the United States Special Operations Command and each subordinate component, as in effect as of the date of the enactment of this Act.*

The Department of Defense (DoD) assesses that the current organizational structure of the U.S. Special Operations Command (USSOCOM) and each subordinate component is adequate to meet current assigned roles and responsibilities.

During the DoD Fiscal Year 2015 Program and Budget Review (FY2015 PBR), the Department conducted a comprehensive assessment of special operations forces (SOF) force structure, operational requirements, and capabilities at various resourcing levels. The focus for SOF during the FY2015 PBR was to ensure that DoD retained sufficient special operations (SO) capabilities to meet current and future operational needs while prioritizing DoD resources within the Budget Control Act available funding levels.

As a result of FY2015 PBR and other past analyses done as part of extensive force sufficiency, structure adequacy, and organizational effectiveness assessments, the Department has made several SOF-related force structure modifications including: increasing SOF end-strength levels by more than 80 percent since September 2001 in order to meet GCC operational requirements; enhancing Theater Special Operations Commands (TSOC) within each Geographic Combatant Command (GCC) to increase capability and capacity; expanding the network of liaison officers to strengthen our relationship with allies, partner nations, and interagency partners; aligning Continental United States (CONUS)-based SOF units with a GCC in order to increase unit readiness through regionally-focused training, cultural awareness, language proficiency, operational planning, and habitual relationships; and resizing and reshaping SOF operational units, elements and platforms in order to meet future operational requirements.

Recent changes in USSOCOM's component commands reflect continuing analysis of SO requirements and have added much needed capabilities or capacity. These changes reflect the Department's efforts to rebalance SO capabilities and capacities to meet the evolving security environment requirements beyond the current emphasis on CT and building partner capacity (BPC) through the conduct of security force assistance (SFA). This rebalance and investment in SO capabilities and capacities, allows USSOCOM to provide SOF capable of conducting a full spectrum of SO missions. Highlights of a few of these changes are:



- U.S. Army Special Operations Command (USASOC) – provisional establishment of the Office of Special Warfare (OSW) to address the full range of SO missions; provisional establishment of the Military Information Support Operations Command (MISOC) to provide improved MISO support to GCCs; establishment of a Civil Affairs (CA) brigade and expanded civil affairs CA capacity.
- Air Force Special Operations Command (AFSOC) – consolidation of the numbers of different type air platforms to improve logistics and maintenance support; emphasis in capability to provide low-visibility Non-Standard Aviation (NSAV) and intelligence, reconnaissance, and surveillance (ISR) to meet GCC requirements; continued fielding of CV-22s to provide rapid and long distance vertical lift capabilities.
- Naval Special Warfare Command (NSWC) – investment in improved maritime surface platforms; continued analysis and research to develop appropriate maritime sub-surface platforms; reorganizations of headquarters elements for a Group level command that provides training and oversight to meet preparation of the environment (PE) operational preparation of environment (OPE) requirements.
- Marine Corps Special Operations Command (MARSOC) – investment in improved intelligence fusion and exploitation capability.
- Theater Special Operations Commands (TSOCs) – assigned under the combatant command of USSOCOM in 2013; expanded force structure and continuing analysis of resource requirements.
- Joint Special Operations Command (JSOC) – leads USSOCOM efforts to develop innovative ISR solutions for SO support to meet GCC requirements.

DoD will continue to analyze and assess USSOCOM's organizational structure, including forward-posturing SOF assets, to meet assigned responsibilities within resource constraints.

*(2) The policy and civilian oversight structures for Special Operations Forces within the Department of Defense, as in effect as of the date of the enactment of this Act, including the statutory structures and responsibilities of the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations and Low Intensity Conflict within the Department and the alignment of resources, including human capital, with regard to such responsibilities within the Department.*

DoD assesses that the current policy and civilian organizational structure of the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD) meet statutory and other assigned oversight responsibilities for SO and SOF. The Department is dedicated to the continuous review and improvement of areas, when necessary, where our SO policies and processes may need to evolve with the changing security environment and roles and missions for SOF. The Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations and Low Intensity Conflict (ASD(SO/LIC))-led SO oversight council described below is an example of such an improvement.



By statute and practice, DoD provides SO oversight through several functional-based offices. The ASD(SO/LIC) provides policy oversight of USSOCOM's mission planning and Geographic Combatant Commanders' employment of SOF to ensure compliance with the law as well as DoD policies priorities. ASD(SO/LIC) coordinates SOF deployment authorities and SO plans within DoD and with interagency partners as required. ASD(SO/LIC) provides policy oversight for the preparation and justification of the SO program and budget. ASD(SO/LIC) ensures that the USSOCOM, Service, and DoD Component Program Objective Memorandums (POM) are aligned with SO requirements to meet national defense strategy. ASD(SO/LIC) attends the USSOCOM Commanders' Roundtable - the USSOCOM resource decision forum - to help ensure the POM is aligned to the Department's guidance. During program reviews and execution, and with the Under Secretary of Defense (Comptroller) when necessary, the ASD(SO/LIC) works closely with the Deputy Secretary of Defense and the Director, Cost Assessment and Program Evaluation (CAPE), to resolve issues across the Department including the resolution of disputes between USSOCOM and the Military Services. As the lead OSD official for SO acquisition matters, the ASD(SO/LIC) represents SO acquisition interests within DoD and before Congress. The responsibilities and relationships between the ASD(SO/LIC) and the Commander, USSOCOM are defined and prescribed in a Memorandum of Agreement between the ASD(SO/LIC) and the Commander, USSOCOM. The ASD(SO/LIC) directs and provides policy oversight to technology development programs that address priority mission areas to meet other Departmental, interagency, and international capability needs.

Beyond the principal oversight office (ASD(SO/LIC)), other DoD civilian officials who exercise oversight related to SO include: the Under Secretary of Defense for Intelligence (USD(I)) for intelligence policy guidance; the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition, Technology, and Logistics (USD(AT&L)) for acquisition issues; the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel & Readiness (USD(P&R)) for personnel policies such as SOF-unique incentives and readiness issues; the Under Secretary of Defense for Comptroller (USD(C)) for SO budgetary and fiscal matters; the Military Department Secretaries for SOF manpower and general purpose force (GPF) enabler issues; and the Director, CAPE for SO program development issues.

In supporting the growth and evolution of the SO budget, end-strength, employment and posture, ASD(SO/LIC) provides broad oversight and leverages the expertise and management processes of DoD functional offices. For example, in this era of fiscal constraints, program budget reviews and acquisition processes led by CAPE, Comptroller and AT&L often focus on SO issues in order to optimize Department resources fully toward critical SO operational requirements; when issues arise between the USSOCOM and the Services, ASD(SO/LIC) leads a collaborative effort with the appropriate stakeholders to find an appropriate resolution. Likewise, USD(P&R) analysis not only addresses SO personnel and equipment readiness, but also the corresponding effect that GPF readiness has on special operations missions.

Looking ahead to the challenges of the evolving security environment, and recognizing the need for increased oversight of USSOCOM, the ASD(SO/LIC) will establish and lead a special operations oversight council. The purpose of this oversight council is to: (1) create a mechanism to provide policy oversight and guidance to USSOCOM and a venue to coordinate SO related matters across OSD; (2)



fulfill ASD(SO/LIC)'s role as the "Service-like Secretary"; and (3) institutionalize ASD(SO/LIC)'s responsibilities as outlined in Department of Defense Directive 5111.10. The objectives for the council are to provide SO policy guidance, focus the Department's efforts on major USSOCOM and SO initiatives, coordinate SO related matters across OSD and Service Secretaries' staffs, and to synchronize SO related external issues (Interagency, Congress, international engagements, and public affairs). Initially, the council will address key issues in the areas of special operations policies and operational priorities, budget execution, force employment, legislative changes, and required capabilities. The dramatic growth in the scale and scope of USSOCOM and SOF activities, and the continuing integration of GPF and SOF, has led to increased staff interaction between USSOCOM and OSD Staff (USD(I), USD(C), USD(AT&L), USD(P&R), and Director, CAPE). This ASD(SO/LIC)-led council will formalize a collaborative process for strengthening ASD(SO/LIC) oversight, and provide the Secretary of Defense, the Deputy Secretary of Defense, the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy, and other appropriate DoD civilian officials' advice on and oversight of special operations.

The Department of Defense will continue to analyze and assess the adequacy of policy and civilian oversight structures and make any additional adjustments necessary, within resource constraints, to ensure that DoD meets all statutory responsibilities for SOF.

***(3) The roles and responsibilities of United States Special Operations Command and Special Operations Forces under section 167 of title 10, United States Code.***

DoD assesses that sections 167 and 164 of title 10, United States Code, provide sufficient statutory authority for USSOCOM and SOF to develop strategy; train forces; ensure combat readiness; and organize, employ, and direct forces to execute assigned missions in the current security environment. In addition, the Unified Command Plan (UCP), which is the President's guidance to the Combatant Commanders, further directs USSOCOM to synchronize planning of global special operations against violent extremists and other threat networks. The Department continues to improve the manner in which USSOCOM discharges these roles and responsibilities as reflected in the 2013 Forces for Unified Commands memorandum signed by the Secretary of Defense that assigned Combatant Command (COCOM) of all SOF to USSOCOM while operational control (OPCON) was retained by the GCCs. This change in the command relationship between USSOCOM provides more effective SO support to the GCCs through the TSOCs that are resourced to exercise command and control (C2) of forward postured special forces.

In addition to command relationship changes, DoD continues to invest in SOF capabilities and capacities to meet the full range of SO missions prescribed in section 167. Although there is current emphasis and necessary priority given to CT and BPC, the challenges of the future security environment will require USSOCOM-assigned SOF in sufficient numbers and expanded capabilities to perform all SO missions. In addition to counterterrorism, SOF is trained to conduct other operations, including unconventional warfare, direct action, special reconnaissance, foreign internal defense, civil affairs, military information support operations, security force assistance, and counter-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, in areas under enemy control or in politically sensitive environments. SOF continues to prove their ability to act with speed, agility, and precision, making them an invaluable asset for national strategic missions of an extremely sensitive nature.



OSD, in coordination with the Joint Staff, will continue to analyze and assess whether existing U.S. law is sufficient to meet the evolving security environment, and will develop and propose through the prescribed legislative process any legislative proposals as may be required for consideration by Congress.

***(4) Current and future special operations peculiar requirements of the commanders of the geographic combatant commands and Theater Special Operations Commands.***

As of our most recent reviews through the development of the FY 2015 President's Budget, DoD assesses that current and future special operations-peculiar requirements can be met with current and programmed SO capability and capacity.

As the Department draws down forces in Afghanistan, SOF assets will become more available to meet existing SO-focused requirements of GCCs globally. SO activities will shift from addressing combat-related requirements such as direct action and counterinsurgency missions towards a greater emphasis on partner capability/capacity building, foreign internal defense, and security force assistance. SOF capacity will support these important shaping activities, while continuing to maintain and employ decisive CT and countering weapons of mass destruction (CWMD) capability. USSOCOM employs its global SOF network of connected people and resources to support the regional commanders' plans and goals to reduce violent extremism, build partner capacity, and protect the United States against terrorism and other threats with a low-cost, small-footprint, culturally trained, highly educated formation of SOF operators.

Trained particularly to work by, with, and through local partners, SOF continues to conduct numerous indirect and unconventional U.S. military missions, such as training and advising foreign militaries or providing support to civilian authorities abroad. The critical need for these SO core capabilities has increased exponentially during the past decade, and SOF will continue to provide SO-peculiar support to meet GCC requirements.

In order to support the GCC SO-peculiar requirements, the TSOCs establish and employ multiple joint special operations task forces (SOJTF) and special operations command-forward (SOC-FWD) elements to control SOF assets and accommodate mission requirements. Support for these forward forces depends on a combination of logistical and enabler support provided by both USSOCOM and the Services. In particular, the Service-provided core logistic and enabler functions are essential for successful SOF employment of SO-peculiar capabilities.

In the fall of 2013, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff requested USSOCOM to write a Global Campaign Plan for Special Operations (GCP-SO) to operationalize and responsively resource GCC requirements for SOF. The purposes of the plan to support the GCCs are to: synchronize a continuous, level of effort of steady-state SOF operations, actions and activities to detect, deter, prevent, and, when necessary, defeat threats to the United States while strengthening security globally; establish a relationship between force providers of SOF and supported GCCs; focus those collective efforts on opportunities and challenges; and provide a process to enable USSOCOM to perform its global planning synchronization role more effectively and optimize support to the GCC steady-state SO requirements



that include both direct and indirect SO activities. The GCP-SO is currently under review, analysis, and refinement before being considered for approval by the Secretary of Defense.

Although the Department's existing framework to continually update and review continually SO-peculiar requirements for the geographic combatant commanders and theater special operations commands is sufficient, it will become increasingly important to monitor future SO peculiar requirements given budget uncertainty. SOF relies heavily on Service-provided capabilities to conduct pre-deployment training and to sustain global operations. Reductions in force capacity across the Services could yield unintentional and undesirable consequences for SOF and the Department's SO capabilities. The Department will leverage ongoing processes to forecast and adjust SO peculiar requirements as necessary as the Department continues to manage within an era of fiscal austerity and constraint.

The Department will continue to capture, validate, and prioritize SOF-peculiar requirements through future program and budget reviews and through established methodologies managed by the Joint Staff and Combatant Commands. Additionally, USSOCOM has several effective procedures and methodologies for identifying GCC requirements for SO through close coordination with the TSOC of the supported GCC.

***(5) Command relationships between United States Special Operations Command, its subordinate component commands, and the geographic combatant commands.***

DoD assesses that the command relationships among USSOCOM, the USSOCOM Service component commands, the TSOCs, and the GCCs are adequate to meet the requirements of the current security environment. The Secretary of Defense recently changed these relationships in the 2013 Forces for Unified Commands Memorandum that assigned combatant command (COCOM) of all SOF to USSOCOM. This change provides a more direct command relationship between USSOCOM and the TSOCs, but does not reduce the direct special operations support to the GCCs that retained operational control (OPCON) of their supporting SOF. The TSOC is the primary theater SOF organization capable of performing continuous missions uniquely suited to SOF, and serves as both the GCC's C2 mechanism for special operations within the GCC AOR, as well as USSOCOM's coordination point for SOF-peculiar guidance, strategic direction, and resourcing support. This new command relationship arrangement better supports the responsibilities of USSOCOM to all SOF and meets the challenges of the evolving security environment. USSOCOM has made great strides in strengthening its command relationships with each TSOC by fully integrating them into the Strategic Planning Process, hosting key enterprise-wide video-teleconferences, and improving oversight and understanding of unique SOF requirements in each area of responsibility. DoD will continue to evaluate all command relationships to ensure that USSOCOM, subordinate components, and GCCs exercise appropriate C2 of SOF.

***(6) The funding authorities, uses, acquisition processes, and civilian oversight mechanisms of Major Force Program-11.***

DoD assesses that the current Major Force Program-11 (MFP-11) and its governance mechanisms are adequate and compliant with all statutory requirements. DoD assesses that the budget developed



consistent with 10 U.S. Code, Section 167 and Service-common support funded under other Major Force Programs pursuant to the Memoranda of Agreement between USSOCOM and each Military Department, generally meet USSOCOM requirements. Where there are disputes between the USSOCOM and Services on the resourcing of SO requirements, there are mechanisms in place, including an ASD(SOLIC)-led adjudication process, to ensure the Commander, USSOCOM, has the ability to fund items and services that are critically urgent for the immediate accomplishment of a special operations mission. SOF-related funding authorities are continually assessed during annual program and budget reviews, and in Department-wide readiness assessments. A review of baseline and overseas contingency operations (OCO) requirements are also assessed during annual program and budget reviews. DoD uses USSOCOM-specific funding to address requirements that are unique to special operations, with the Services being responsible for funding those items that are common among all Services. SO-peculiar funds support a range of activities, including steady-state and garrison, OCO, and combat. DoD Directives 5100.01 and 5100.03 also provide guidance for the functions and responsibilities of support to SOF. DoD assesses that the SO-specific acquisition process is adequate to acquire and /or develop, including through the conduct of research, special operations-peculiar equipment, and other special operations-peculiar (SO-Peculiar) material, supplies, and /or services. The special operations acquisition process adheres to the same DoD policies, regulations, and instructions that govern all acquisition activities. USSOCOM coordinates all OSD-level acquisition activities with USD(AT&L) and ASD (SO/LIC), and hosts semi-annual Acquisition Summits to ensure full coordination and transparency of acquisition activities within the Department.

OSD and the Joint Staff will continue to analyze, evaluate, and assess the MFP-11 governance mechanisms and update DoD directives or propose legislative remedies to Congress, as necessary.

***(7) Changes to structure, authorities, oversight mechanisms, Major Force Program-11 funding, roles, and responsibilities assumed in the 2014 Quadrennial Defense Review.***

The Department of Defense 2014 Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR) provided strategic guidance to USSOCOM and the Department for conducting SO. Although the 2014 QDR did not change USSOCOM's roles and responsibilities, it did provide mission emphasis (CT and building partner capacity), threat focus (al Qaeda and other terrorist organizations), and regional priorities (Middle East and Africa). However, although the 2014 QDR places continued emphasis on USSOCOM's capability and capacity to conduct CT, the future security environment also requires continued investment in the full range of SO capabilities.

The 2014 QDR also broadly describes the structural means with which USSOCOM should plan to execute the strategy. During the most recent program and budget review, the Department also deliberately "leveled off" SOF growth to sustain SO capability over capacity and prioritized readiness and high-priority assets such as ISR and regionally aligned SOF. Sustaining SOF at the revised programmed levels provides the adequate force structure, platforms, and capabilities to support GCC requirements. USSOCOM continues to optimize SOF force structure and balance capabilities to provide sustained persistent, networked, distributed operations, while preserving the Nation's direct action capability. Although current structure, authorities, MFP-11 funding, roles, and responsibilities are



adequate to meet QDR guidance received, the ASD(SOL/IC)-led special operations oversight council will provide an additional oversight mechanism that did not previously exist.

*(8) Any other matters the Secretary of Defense determines are appropriate to ensure a comprehensive review and assessment.*

Two additional SOF readiness issues should be addressed in order to complete the assessment: Suicide Prevention, Health, and Readiness; and Professionalization. Both issues are important to SOF's ability to build and sustain a force that is capable of fully supporting the future requirements and challenges articulated in the 2014 QDR.

**Suicide Prevention, Health, and Readiness.** Taking care of our special operations forces and their families is a readiness issue for DoD. USSOCOM, in coordination with DoD Health Affairs, has added behavioral health professionals and has made great efforts to demystify and destigmatize behavioral healthcare within the ranks. USSOCOM has experienced an increase in suicides over the past few years, exceeding that of the conventional forces. In addition to behavioral health professionals, non-medical counseling resources have helped to provide a full range of pastoral care. Suicide prevention efforts, like other related health and readiness programs, start with the Services and are augmented as required by USSOCOM as gaps are identified. USSOCOM will continue to avoid duplication of capability where programs are already provided through the Services and the Health Affairs Defense Health Program.

USSOCOM is pursuing a number of other initiatives in coordination with OSD to fulfill this SOF readiness responsibility. More than just rehabilitating our combat wounded, a human performance program invests in the physical conditioning and psychological performance required to ensure the resiliency of SOF operators who have come under unprecedented strain in the years since September 11, 2001, and to return them to a mission ready status as soon as possible.

Resiliency training is currently being conducted through USSOCOM Service component programs. The USSOCOM initiatives enhances these existing programs by synchronizing resources, leveraging best practices, and bringing in experts from multiple disciplines to fill the SOF readiness requirements above what the Services provide.

The Nation's extensive investment in the training and education of SOF demands an equal investment in their physical and mental conditioning for the duration of their career. Evidence shows that participation in a program based on applied science helps operators attain optimal physical conditioning while reducing injuries and accelerating post-injury rehabilitation. Since the Department cannot readily replace injured operators through recruiting, injury prevention and increased speed of recovery are imperative to maintain a ready, trained force for engagements and employment.

SOF requires physical readiness, conditioning, and post-injury rehabilitation above the baseline support provided by the Services. SOF is routinely deployed to austere, remote, and high-risk locations with minimal supporting infrastructure and support. The physical and psychological demands of these missions require resources and programs to prepare SOF that exceed Service requirements.



DoD believes that there is an inseparable link between family resilience and unit readiness. Although the Commander of USSOCOM has a statutory responsibility to ensure the readiness of SOF, the promotion of family readiness is not explicitly included in that authority. DoD continues to assess the potential need for expanding related authorities to enable the Commander of USSOCOM to support family readiness programming in a manner comparable to that of commanders of conventional forces. The provision of family readiness professionals fills a critical capability gap in Service and family readiness support.

Professionalization. SOF will be increasingly relied upon to deploy in small numbers into politically sensitive and highly challenging operating environments, most often working side by side with senior interagency colleagues. In many instances, a single SOF operator may be relied upon by a U.S. Ambassador or senior foreign partner to provide military advice and assistance in a complex operational setting. It is an operational imperative that we prepare these SOF operators to work in that increasingly complex environment with specialized education, ethics, and leadership programs. Education programs that augment Service-provided career development programs and that are specifically tailored to support SOF core activities are essential to DoD's ability to field a force ready to meet the evolving threats of the current strategic environment. USSOCOM is developing an education program that specifically targets regional expertise and areas of study not found in Service curriculums. The program is being developed in close coordination with the Services in order to avoid duplication.

USSOCOM conducted a formal assessment to capture SOF advanced education requirements and identify shortfalls. The assessment not only identified the skills and abilities required to perform SOF missions successfully, but also the knowledge necessary to practice the profession through a generational struggle. When these requirements were compared to the education received through current programs, seven shortfalls were noted: understanding the operational environment; political awareness; intercultural communications; interagency, joint, combined, and multinational operations; technology management; civil-military operations; and application of concepts in joint operations.

The SOF-specific program developed by USSOCOM provides personnel with a strong background in strategic analysis, SOF operational design and organizational theory, and advanced analytical methods for solving complex problems, focusing on root causes of terrorism and insurgency. The program also accommodates the unique career progression of SOF operators, which require education experience to be obtained earlier in the career. USSOCOM has also developed a talent development program that provides targeted SOF personnel with competency-based training for specific SOF positions. This training and education are provided both through government agencies such as the Office of Personnel Management and through academic institutions offering non-degree courses linked to position-specific competencies.