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CLOSING THE GAP: ADDRESSING CRITICAL ROTARY WING SHORTFALLS FOR U.S. SPECIAL OPERATIONS FORCES IN FISCAL YEAR 2011 AND BEYOND

HEARING

BEFORE THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON TERRORISM, UNCONVENTIONAL THREATS AND CAPABILITIES

OF THE

COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

ONE HUNDRED ELEVENTH CONGRESS

SECOND SESSION

HEARING HELD
APRIL 27, 2010

U.S. GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE
58–310 WASHINGTON : 2010

For sale by the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office
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TUESDAY, APRIL 27, 2010

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CLOSING THE GAP: ADDRESSING CRITICAL ROTARY WING SHORTFALLS FOR U.S. SPECIAL OPERATIONS FORCES IN FISCAL YEAR 2011 AND BEYOND

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES,
SUBCOMMITTEE ON TERRORISM, UNCONVENTIONAL THREATS AND CAPABILITIES,
Washington, DC, Tuesday, April 27, 2010.

The subcommittee met, pursuant to call, at 2:33 p.m., in room 210, Capitol Visitor Center, Hon. Loretta Sanchez (chairwoman of the subcommittee) presiding.

OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. LORETTA SANCHEZ, A REPRESENTATIVE FROM CALIFORNIA, CHAIRWOMAN, SUBCOMMITTEE ON TERRORISM, UNCONVENTIONAL THREATS AND CAPABILITIES

Ms. SANCHEZ. The Subcommittee on Terrorism, Unconventional Threats and Capabilities will come to order.

Good afternoon. I would like to welcome all of you and thank you for joining us today to discuss current rotary wing requirements of the U.S. Special Operations Forces [SOF] and to in particular address any capability shortfalls. This hearing also will provide additional details on the expansion of the rotary wing capabilities as requested by SOCOM [Special Operations Command] for fiscal year 2011.

Let us just say that this hearing is probably a good news/bad news type of hearing in the sense that the Department and SOCOM all recognize that rotary wing shortfalls are critical for our Special Operations Forces. And the bad news, of course, is how far behind are we; what do we really need; and how are we going to get this done and implemented in the years to come.

So currently our Special Operations Forces operate in more than 75 countries each and every day, countering terrorism, building partnership capacity in key areas, and improving security and stability for some of our key partnering nations.

In fact, I just had the opportunity to be out in Asia and see some of our forces out there and take a look at the type of work that they are doing. They are often in remote locations with limited infrastructure and reinforcements. And air assets provide that vital operational link and emergency link actually to make sure that mission success is there for our Special Operations Forces. Rotary wing assets in particular are key. They enable us to do special operations and they are critical for counterterrorism, counterinsurgency, operations in Afghanistan, Iraq, and elsewhere where the

terrain obviously is not really accessible unless we do have that type of capability.

So the helicopters and the tilt wing aircraft provide fire support, surveillance, insertion, extraction and other combat support functions. And, most critically, they serve as the logistical backbone for our Special Operating Forces and our other forces. We work together in moving critical supplies over rugged terrain to those remote areas.

My top priority as chairwoman of the House Armed Services Subcommittee on Terrorism, Unconventional Threats and Capabilities is to ensure that we understand the types of resources that are needed by our Special Operations Forces and to figure out how we are going to get them in place so that we can deter terrorist threats. And this includes our rotary wing assets which, of course, if you can imagine, are in high demand and everybody wants them. Where are we going to get them?

It is important to note that the U.S. Special Operations Command cannot buy aircraft, but is actually only authorized to pay for Special Operations Forces' unique equipment for aircraft. And that means that SOCOM must coordinate very closely with the services.

So I look forward to discussing this process to make sure that, in fact, coordination is going on and to hear how the service's larger acquisition program actually does support our Special Forces. And I hope that today's hearing will provide the necessary details on the expansion of rotary wing capabilities for fiscal year 2011 and also for them to discuss future-year requirements and solutions to address this issue of everybody wants it, but we don't have that much of it.

So today we have two witnesses before us. First we have Mr. Garry Reid, who is the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations and Combating Terrorism, representing the Office of the Secretary of Defense [OSD]. And we have United States Army Colonel Vincent Reap, the Director of Rotary Lift Assessments at U.S. Special Operations Command.

Once again, I would like to thank all of our witnesses for being here today and I look forward to hearing your testimonies. And I will remind those here that we have this testimony in writing. It has already been provided. Hopefully those of us here have read it, and we will ask the gentlemen to lead off in a moment.

But I would like to indicate over here to Mr. Kline, who is stepping in for Mr. Miller of Florida—and, Mr. Kline, do you have any comments to make?

[The prepared statement of Ms. Sanchez can be found in the Appendix on page 23.]

STATEMENT OF HON. JOHN KLINE, A REPRESENTATIVE FROM MINNESOTA, SUBCOMMITTEE ON TERRORISM, UNCONVENTIONAL THREATS AND CAPABILITIES

Mr. KLINE. Thank you, Madam Chair. I want to add my welcome to our witnesses and ask unanimous consent that Mr. Miller's opening statement be entered into the record.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Miller can be found in the Appendix on page 26.]

Mr. KLINE. And I would just say to our witnesses—of course, I spent a whole lifetime in rotary wing. My son is spending another lifetime in rotary wing. So it is obviously very near and dear to my heart, and I wanted to express certainly my sadness at the loss of AFSOC's [Air Force Special Operations Command] V–22. We have pinned so much hopes on that tilt rotor technology; the Marine Corps, certainly. And it is an absolutely fantastic asset, so I am eager to see the results of that investigation.

And we are probably going to talk about 47s and H–60s and things like that here today. But that was a tough loss. So I am looking forward to the testimony, and I yield back.

Ms. SANCHEZ. Great. Thank you, Mr. Kline.

And so we will lead off—I will remind our witnesses that your testimony will be inserted into the record and ask you to summarize in 5 minutes or less.

Ms. SANCHEZ. We will begin with Mr. Reid. How is that?

STATEMENT OF GARRY REID, DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE FOR SPECIAL OPERATIONS AND COMBATING TERRORISM, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

Mr. REID. Thank you, Chairwoman Sanchez and Mr. Kline and other members of the committee, for this opportunity to testify today on critical rotary wing shortfalls for the U.S. Special Operations Command and our Special Operations Forces. Like you, I share a keen interest in this not only by virtue of my current job in Special Operations Oversight, but also in my military career. I spent 28 years as a Special Forces operator both in our theater forces and in our classified forces. And I lived this problem as a ground operator for my whole adult life. So I am very keen to be a part of it now and make these recommendations and provide the oversight that I think we need to get this right, and getting better all the time.

It is my pleasure to join Colonel Vincent Reap here today from USSOCOM to discuss our programs, our plans and our policies to support current and future Special Operations Forces rotary wing requirements.

As you mentioned, Madam Chairwoman, I have provided written testimony, and I will ask that it be entered into the record.

And to follow on your point about providing just some key highlights here for a couple of minutes, with your permission, I would like to say that this issue of rotary wing aviation, whether provided by helicopters or their 21st century tilt rotor fixed wing cousins, the Osprey's, has been the hallmark of U.S. military operations fully since the days of the Vietnam War, if not before.

The extreme climate and high mountainous terrain in Afghanistan poses a significant challenge to the use of rotary wing aviation and has generated significant interest by this committee, by our defense planners, and as well as those in the aviation industry, academia and in our think tanks. The Department of Defense [DOD] has been actively engaged in addressing these challenges since the onset of the war in Afghanistan, and most recently in our 2010 Quadrennial Defense Review [QDR], which we provided to this Congress in February of this year. We continue to adapt our forces

and capabilities in this area to ensure we have the right assets and the right locations to meet the demands across the force.

As we noted in the QDR, the sustained deployment of Special Operations task forces in Afghanistan, Iraq, the Trans-Sahel, Colombia, and the Philippines has outpaced SOCOM's current rotary wing assigned organic capacity. The QDR looked across the Department to develop solutions within USSOCOM and in our General Purpose Forces that would provide near- and long-term relief to these shortages.

As a result of the QDR process and as otherwise reflected in the President's 2011 budget request, we are taking several steps to address this. We are expanding the number of MH–60 and MH–47 rotary wing lift platforms that are assigned to USSOCOM. We are continuing to field the CV–22s. We are adding two additional combat aviation brigades to the U.S. Army and developing direct support agreements between Army and SOCOM to solidify what we call GPF, General Purpose Force, and SOF integration. And this is the theme, by the way, that exists not only in aviation, but across the body of enabling direct support-type assets.

ISR [Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance] is another good example—intelligence, resources in general—where the criticality of these enabling capabilities is such that we are improving and sharing across SOF and GPF more so than ever.

We are also, as reflected in the QDR, dedicating two Navy helicopter squadrons to provide direct support to Navy Special Warfare. This is again a sign of the times, so to speak, a new construct, a new way to take what we have and make it more available to SOF in this case. And it is something that was happening less formally and we are strengthening through these agreements as part of this sort of year-long process in the QDR to look at ways to get at this in the near term while we build new platforms for the long term. And then, similarly, extending the service life of those platforms that we have that we can do that with. And Colonel Reap will talk more about that.

Increasing our number of pilots is another area. Where we have platforms, we need more pilots to get more out of the platforms we have.

So these are the types of things that you see in the QDR and these are the things we are doing to address this most currently. All of these measures will, over the 2011 to 2015 period, help close the gap that currently exists in SOF rotary wing aviation. Broadly, our goal is to ensure that SOF, fighting today's counterinsurgency and counterterrorism operations, have the vertical lift they need to succeed, and improving, as I said, improving SOF and GPF integration is critical to this goal.

In addition to ensuring that we have sufficient rotary wing capacity for our own force planning, we also in this discussion must consider the current and future demand to train and equip foreign forces as part of our long-term strategy to strengthen the security force capabilities of key partners.

And if you look within the National Defense Strategy, national military strategy particular to this transnational terrorism fight, denying safe havens and increasing security capacities of key partners is essential to achieving that goal.

In that vein, aviation forms a key component of that. The QDR highlighted the priority of building partner-nation security capacity as a mission for U.S. forces. Within SOF, this manifests itself most presently in the expansion of the Air Force, U.S. AFSOC 6 Special Operations Squadron, which is still the only U.S. military unit specifically organized, trained, and equipped to train and advise foreign militaries on the operation and employment of air assets.

Additionally, however, within our General Purpose Forces, both the Army and the Air Force are formalizing and expanding organizations in each service that also provide training to pilots, in the Army's case, at Fort Rucker. The Air Force has expeditionary wings in Afghanistan that they are through this process adding to, expanding, and providing a basis for going forward. So all of this is related to this in one way or the other.

The challenges related to medium and heavy vertical lift and hostile direct and austere environments are among the most pressing the Department of Defense faces today. The Army, the Air Force and the U.S. Special Operations Command are moving in the right directions to mitigate these challenges.

I thank you again for inviting me here today to address this. I look forward to your questions today. And most importantly, we do appreciate the continued interest and support by this committee for the Department of Defense for our special operators. And as we go through and review the budget request going forward, we appreciate the support the committee has provided in the past and we hope to continue in the future. So thank you very much.

Ms. SANCHEZ. Thank you, Mr. Reid.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Reid can be found in the Appendix on page 29.]

Ms. SANCHEZ. Now we will hear from you, Colonel, for 5 minutes or less.

STATEMENT OF COL. VINCENT M. REAP, USA, DIRECTOR, MARITIME AND ROTARY WING ASSESSMENT, U.S. SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND

Colonel REAP. Thank you very much, Madam Chairwoman. Good afternoon, distinguished members of the committee. Thank you for the invitation to appear before you today to highlight the United States Special Operations Forces rotary wing programs.

As the Director of Rotary Wing and Maritime Assessments for the United States Special Operations Command, it really is an honor to be here before you today to offer this testimony.

By way of a brief introduction, please allow me to tell you that I have spent 24 years in Army aviation, to include 2 years on an exchange with the United States Marine Corps at MAWTS–1 [Marine Aviation Weapons and Tactics Squadron] in MCAS [Marine Corps Air Station] Yuma, Arizona. I have been an Army Special Operations aviator since my selection in 1993. I have served or commanded at every echelon in the 160th, from platoon leader, culminating in my service as aviation task force commander, and combat both in Iraq and Afghanistan, as well as service as the executive officer and regimental deputy commander. I have executed more than 1,000 hours in night vision goggles. And I have operated

each of the 160th airframes. So I am pretty familiar with the regiment and its capabilities.

Presently I do serve as the Assessment Director to the Commander of the United States Special Operations Command on rotary wing and maritime platforms, which were in my portfolio. Along with several other joint officers, we provide capability assessment and program evaluation that provides the best mix of joint capability for the command. We offer those recommendations to the commander as he makes his decisions to allocate resources in accordance with the strategy.

We will offer thanks to the foresight, advocacy, and strong support of this committee. We are indeed positioned to meet the nation's expectations of its Special Operations Forces.

I thank you for taking my statement for the record and admitting it as such. The United States Special Operations Command's unique responsibilities include providing Special Operations Forces with specialized equipment to perform their worldwide missions. Essential equipment to the command includes its vertical lift aircraft, assets which are capable of operating at extended ranges under adverse weather conditions to in-fill and ex-fill, resupply and reinforce SOF.

Owing to the realities of the multiple conflicts and exceptionally challenging environments, the value of vertical lift in support of SOF cannot be emphasized enough. Helicopters and tilt rotor aircraft provide a unique and potent military capability, one which certainly spans all the services within the Department.

Despite their prominence and necessity, deployable SOF rotary wing assets remain limited. The improved survivability equipment, advanced training, and extended ranges, however, the Special Mission Aviation Fleet empower missions unattainable by any other.

SOF force structure growth remains rapid and unprecedented. The time, however, required to manufacture and modify Special Operations aviation airframes, as well as train the Special Ops pilots who will operate them, have created a bit of an imbalance in required lift for SOF.

The fiscal year 2011 Defense budget request on the heels of the QDR, as mentioned by Mr. Reid, begin to address the reality; and they do request continued support for a program aimed at achieving the required capacity, certainly by the end of the future year's Defense plan.

In tandem, Special Operations Command works closely with the services to mitigate rotary wing lift shortfalls. The General Purpose Forces aviation and increased service support of helicopter operations in support of SOF combine to provide critical enabling capability to our deployed soldiers, sailors, marines and airmen. Like the services, SOCOM does not normally exercise operational control over its deployed units. Employment and allocation of in-theater assets remain as directed by the geographic combatant commander.

I would like to highlight that the SOCOM 2011 budget request includes three key aviation funding items: approximately $80 million for rotary wing upgrades and sustainment; $108 million for the service-life extension of the MH–47; and $179 million for the MH–60 Black Hawk modernization program.

Additionally, replacements of aircraft lost in combat and training accidents are contained within the fiscal year 2010 overseas contingency operations supplemental request. The funding paves the way for ongoing survivability, reliability, maintainability and sustainment costs for the fielded rotary wing aircraft and subsystems. It does include procurement of 16 helicopters, of MH–60, and the advanced procurement of 8 additional MH–47Gs.

In closing, the budget request exists as a turning point for a longer-term upturn in the numbers of these valuable assets. Targeted upgrades will bring us the capability and capacity gains for both SOF and the geographic combatant commanders that they serve. These are crucial stepping stones in reversing a capacity and capability gap toward one of increasing outcomes for our Special Operations aviators or special operators.

On behalf of the United States Special Operations Command, I thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today. I look forward to answering your questions.

[The prepared statement of Colonel Reap can be found in the Appendix on page 35.]

Ms. SANCHEZ. Thank you, Colonel. I appreciate your testimony.

And I am going to begin by asking some questions, mostly because, as you know, I am new to this subcommittee and new as its chairwoman. So I am sort of trying to get my feet wet here in understanding. I have gone through your testimony, have sat in on the QDR issues.

So my first basic question, it is my understanding that some assets are within SOF and—but most assets are from conventional forces that are plussed-up to SOF standards and then used to operate for SOF; is that correct? Explain to me sort of what the lay of the land is with these assets.

Colonel REAP. I would be pleased to do that for you ma'am.

Madam Chairwoman, SOCOM has an organic vertical lift capability. It is composed of a helicopter inventory and a tilt rotor aircraft inventory. Within the helicopter inventory, there are a number of organic H–6, MH–60 and MH–47 helicopters; and on the tilt rotor side, the CV–22, which are organic to SOCOM. They reside in the United States Army Special Operations Command and the United States Air Force Special Operations Command respectively. That inventory is the rotary wing SOF inventory.

When our SOF operators are deployed into the geographic combatant commander's area of responsibility—so, for example, into Afghanistan, within that theater—assets are allocated to them. The geographic combatant commander requests those of the force providers. They are introduced into theater. And then he marries and allocates air in support of the SOF operations within his area of responsibility into the theater commanders.

In the case of SOF operators in Afghanistan, for example, where he has SOF operations on the ground, they may require not only Special Operations aviation support—and so he would put his MH–60s or 47s against those requirements—but they may also require just a more general rotary wing in support of those SOF operations. So he has the ability to array support or command relationships of other General Purpose Force; so more traditional CH–47 perhaps, or UH–60, in support of those SOF operations.

Ms. SANCHEZ. Good. Gotcha.

Mr. Reid, when you talked about your opening statement, we know that there are shortfalls, especially for the future. And those have been well documented, I think, before I came on as chairwoman a month or two ago. There had been, I think last March, a whole hearing on a review conducted by Joint Staff and RAND and the Center for Strategic and International Studies, all substantiating the shortfalls that would come before us with respect to rotary wing capacity for Special Operations Forces. And I know that Assistant Secretary Vickers has recently commented that rotary wing lift is still one of the biggest hardware needs for SOF.

So, from the Office of the Secretary of Defense, can you tell us where you think the bottleneck is? Is it lack of money appropriated to it? Is it lack of manufacturing capacity? Is it that some of that necessity was the 22, and we had some ongoing problems with reliability with that aircraft? What are the shortfalls and what is the root cause of that? And what can we as a Congress do to alleviate that?

Mr. REID. Thank you for the question, Madam Chairwoman. And to get right to it, I think everything you mentioned bears on the problem in one way or another. I think there are some other factors, I guess you would say, that got us into this situation. I would say the single greatest factor that got us where we are into a shortage is the general unpredictability of the security environment.

Just to take that back to, say, a 2003–2004 time frame and what we know now that has occurred over those 7 years between now and then, what you run into is a period from 2007 into this year where the demands in Iraq stayed high, went higher than anticipated, and before that demand came down, we started raising demand and increasing supply into Afghanistan. And that point is about where we are right now.

And I would say to this whole subject, in our view, we are on the way back up, but we recognize that we have been in this trough, so to speak.

So I think in the first instance, hindsight being everything, the dual demand of both theaters of operation at a higher level than anticipated is probably a significant factor. The delay in fielding of the 22 certainly bears on the problem. The delays in getting the modifications and these things in place bears on the problem.

The other thing that bears on the problem—I am not sure if you mentioned it or not, but we recognize—is that we have added ground capability within SOF. And within this QDR in particular we focused much harder on the enabling capabilities than we did on so-called operator capability, to try to bring those back to level.

And as you look across the budget request in the QDR, I think you see that, reflected in just about every part of the Special Operations Force, the emphasis is on enablers. There is some rounding out of operator growth, but not as significant as there was in 2005–2006. And so we are matching now these two together.

At the same time this is all happening, we are continuing to adapt our methodologies in the field. And, in some instances, the way our forces are arrayed or the demands on those forces or the missions, or the enemy, for that matter, affects the demand in certain ways. And a good example of that is the growing IED [Impro-

vised Explosive Device] threat in Afghanistan and the driver that that creates for an increased demand on aviation.

Now, to meet this again, what you have, you can't go down and just buy some helicopters. So the simple mechanics of it all necessitate about a 4-year lead-in. So where we have looked hard and where the chairman looked hard in our review of helicopter assets, our ROHA review of 2009, which identified how all 5,317 helicopters in the Defense Department are being deployed, and narrow that down to where can we get helicopters that we can use in Afghanistan, which starts with the 47s—and then if you are in the south, the 60s and the 22s and how are we best—how can we best manage those. And this is where you see bringing in additional combat aviation brigades and laying those on top.

Even before the troop increase, we were bringing in additional caps to address this. Integrating the SOF requirements into, as Colonel Reap said, into the combatant commanders' aviation demand-supply planning matrix is a relatively new thing for us in SOF. In the past, SOF would have managed SOF. So these are being done not only because they make good resource sense, but because this is the only place to generate more capacity in the near term. So that is where I would leave that.

I think the environment, the enemy certainly has a vote in this. The delay of getting new platforms fielded once you get to this situation, and then the sort of fielding aspects that did create some delays there with the CV–22.

Ms. SANCHEZ. Colonel, would you have anything to add to that? I am guessing that we are going to more remote areas. We are in 75 different countries with our SOFs. And operationally, do you see any changes that require more of this rather than less?

Colonel REAP. Madam Chairwoman, thank you for the opportunity to add to Mr. Reid's comments. I certainly agree with Mr. Reid. The situation, specifically with regard to the environment in which we find ourselves currently engaged, the challenges that are present in Afghanistan accentuate the capacity gap, if you will, that there are few airframes in the DOD's inventory, and then in the SOF inventory, that can effectively operate at the extreme high altitudes and temperatures that are associated with operations in Afghanistan. It narrows the pool on what can get out there and get after, and get a meaningful payload into the right location at the right time to accomplish the mission.

That said, beyond Afghanistan, as we look at what else is out there, what will we get after in the future, recognizing enduring requirements in those theaters for SOF and SOF rotary wing, it is a matter of building capacity, as we have a program to do, and a prioritization and allocation effort that is done in coordination with the geographic combatant commanders and coordinated by SOCOM through the Global Sync Conference; I would add that.

Thank you, Madam Chairwoman.

Ms. SANCHEZ. I see my time has expired. I will ask Mr. Kline if he has any questions and give him 5 minutes for those.

Mr. KLINE. Thank you, Madam Chair. I will gleefully take my 5 minutes.

Colonel Reap, I have always thought that the 160th probably had the finest rotary wing aviators in the world, and that was always

tough for me to swallow being a Marine aviator. But now that I see that you spent 2 years with MAWTS, I am sure you absolutely are one of the best in the world.

The whole issue that we have got here is a shortfall. That is what we are talking about. You are looking for 16 more H–60s and 8 more 47s; is that right? And I am leaving out the V–22. I am just talking about SOAR [Special Operations Aviation Regiment] right now. I am actually surprised you don't need more of the Chinooks, considering the altitude requirements in Afghanistan. So we are looking for more helicopters, and we need money for that. And then you have got a request for about 100 million more, I think this year, in budget request in rotary wing for H–47 service-life extension, H–60 SOF modifications and just general upgrades. And you have got money from the supplemental, which is going to go away pretty quickly.

So I have got a couple of questions. Do you see the money now in the budget that you need to add the aircraft and to replace aircraft and the money for the modifications? And is all of that—you are going to be able to take care of that as you go forward and put it in the baseline budget. So we will talk dollars first. And if we have enough time, I am going to talk people. Colonel Reap.

Colonel REAP. Thank you, Congressman Kline.

You had mentioned the number of 47s in the inventory and whether or not that target that we had with adding the eight that you saw in the fiscal year 2011 budget request, those eight—that request, sir, reflects the long lead items that are to get to the eight.

I would offer at present, sir, this year we are continuing delivery of the MH–47G in its modernization and growth effort. So, while today there are 54, that number ascends to 61 at the end of this year; and it then continues a trend based on the QDR report, or work with the services, the fiscal year 2011 budget request that adds 8, you know, through that long lead item purchase and then deliveries across the FYDP [Future Years Defense Program].

As to the supplemental funding, sir, we are working with the Secretary of Defense. SOCOM has articulated what we see in the near and through the program future as to the demands of SOF by the geographic combatant commanders. We don't see the requirement diminishing for SOF. So we are working with the Secretary of Defense as to how we continue to be resourced in order to provide that capability that is being asked of SOCOM.

Mr. KLINE. Right. Of course you are. But everybody does that. I mean, the question is, when the supplemental money goes away, and you are just working in the budget, have you already accounted for that in the sort of FYDP going forward? You have the money reflected in there for what you need to modify and maintain all of these rotary wing aircraft that we just talked about inside the base budget?

Colonel REAP. That requirement is identified by OSD, and I would defer to Mr. Reid to answer exactly how that would be resourced back to SOCOM.

Mr. REID. If I could just add, the Secretary did make—and I don't have the number off the top of my head. I can get it for you—but a sup to base increase for SOCOM just this year carried forward in the program.

Mr. KLINE. That is——

Mr. REID. You are saying about getting off the supplemental?

Mr. KLINE. Well, that is a general concern we have for everybody. You are a SOF sitting in front of us. But we could have the same conversation about all the services as we figure out how to wean from that supplemental and make sure that what we are going to require is actually in the base budget.

And then, very quickly, because my time is winding down rapidly——

Ms. SANCHEZ. Rapidly.

Mr. KLINE. Rapidly, yes; 17 seconds left, unless the chairwoman was going to yield me some of her 5 extra minutes.

Ms. SANCHEZ. Go ahead.

Mr. KLINE. The force structure to support all of this, do you have the force structure? And are you manning at a high enough level now, or do you see any difficulties going forward to have the people that you need for the additional aircraft?

Colonel REAP. Thank you, Congressman Kline. And to get at your question as rapidly as possible and provide you some——

Mr. KLINE. Take as much time as you want now. I am done.

Colonel REAP. Sir, today the regiment is able to man its operational fleet completely with trained and ready crews and execute. In very close coordination with the services, specifically with the Army, is working to continue to grow the number of Special Operations aviators that are necessary to fill and man all of the aircraft with trained and ready air crew, and to do so at about a 1.5 crew ratio on our larger aircraft, the 60s and 47s. That challenge, sir, you recognize from years of experience. I know that you can appreciate it personally.

I offer to you that there are some great initiatives that the Army has come back with in supporting SOCOM as we look to continue to grow that force and take it from where we are today, to continue to grow it through 2011 and 2012 as our inventory increases, to make sure we are meeting our numbers. So we have got a challenge to make sure that our institutional training base is manned appropriately and has the capacity to generate the throughput that is required, and, at the same time, have the right number of operational air crew to take those operational airframes and support SOF downrange.

It is a challenge I know that you can recognize, but one in which we have a plan to achieve. And that our rate of growth, sir—that was an earlier comment that I failed to address and I regret that. But if you would, I will let you know that we are pretty much working at the upper bound, if you will, of what Admiral Olson has been on record with this committee in talking about that 3 to 5 percent growth rate for SOCOM. And we are at the upper bound as we understand the importance and the demand for addressing this gap in capacity for SOF rotary wing.

Mr. KLINE. You will—I know I am over my time. You will be having an impact on general purpose Army as well, because you are taking the most experienced, sort of the best of the best in many cases, and that is coming from the rest of the Army. So I am concerned at both ends of it.

Colonel REAP. There is absolutely an impact there, sir.

Ms. SANCHEZ. Mr. Bright for 5 minutes.

Mr. BRIGHT. Yes, ma'am. Thank you, Madam Chairman. I appreciate you holding this hearing and I look forward to working with you on Special Operations Forces moving forward. I am especially pleased to participate today because, as you know, I am very interested in rotary wing issues due in large part to the fact that Fort Rucker, the home of Army Aviation, is located in my district in southeast Alabama; Ozark, Alabama.

In Alabama, we love the sound of helicopters flying overhead, because as my constituents often say, that is the sound of freedom that we hear, not helicopters. Considering the important role these aircraft play in this Special Forces world, this hearing is very timely.

And I am also here to ask a couple of questions to the witnesses and want to thank you for coming today and testifying, and you have already been very enlightening for me.

Mr. Reid, my first question would be to you. And I heard you answering the chairlady's question but I am not sure I grasp the opinion or your answer firm enough. And I am just going to kind of ask it in a different way. Based on the shortfalls that we are having right now in the rotary wing lift forces out there, do I hear that it is having an effect on the ability for us or our country to deter, disrupt, or defeat terrorism throughout our global efforts out there? Did I hear you comment or give an opinion based on our shortfalls?

Mr. REID. No, sir, not that I recall saying that.

Mr. BRIGHT. Would you have an opinion?

Mr. REID. Yes, sir. Absolutely. Thank you.

I would say no. And the chairwoman mentioned our trip out to the Philippines and what she saw out there is contract aviation. My point is, outside Iraq and Afghanistan, our employment model, our engagement model, and our options for deployment of Special Operations Forces in the counterterrorism fight context is largely dependent upon what the political security environment will bear. And in most cases, that will not bear an overt MH–47, MH–60 presence.

This links back to my comment earlier about our aviation training for partners and, what we call in the Department, our nonstandard rotary wing capability and suite of capabilities; for example, where we train partners in a foreign-manufactured aircraft.

We have, coincidentally, just relocated an Army regiment to Fort Rucker and we will be expanding this at Fort Rucker. It was previously at Fort Bliss, specifically for the purpose of training U.S. pilots, military and some DEA [Drug Enforcement Administration] in there as well, for foreign aircraft. Those aircraft become our way of working in some of these other countries where we cannot deploy a U.S. military aircraft. So that is part of this equation.

Of course globally, if we are looking at force projection, force entry-type operations, certainly we have the capacity and we have enough assets to conduct a mission in another country should it be warranted. But I don't want to say that that is happening. It is a capability we reserve.

If you look at our engagement in this global counterterrorism fight in other countries, it is largely through and with partners,

and, in most cases, through and with their capabilities as well. So this particular shortage we are referring to that is most manifested in Afghanistan does not export into shortages in these other areas necessarily.

Mr. BRIGHT. Okay. Good. Thank you very much.

Colonel Reap, do you have anything to add to that?

Colonel REAP. Nothing substantively there, sir. I certainly agree with Mr. Reid's assessment of that. The U.S.-type aircraft in some countries and their overt presence may or may not send the right message. So I haven't that—other capability as he addressed in building partnership capacity——

Mr. BRIGHT. All right. I have very limited time, but let me ask this. We have retired the MH–53. And in your opinion, Colonel—I will start it with you—what effect, if anything, in retiring the MH–53 will it have on our rotary lift shortfall, if anything at all?

Colonel REAP. There was certainly an impact, sir, qualitatively and quantitatively, assuredly drawing down the vertical lift inventory. However, it was faced with obsolescence and the cost of maintaining.

Mr. BRIGHT. Did the Osprey fill the void?

Colonel REAP. We saw that the 47 and the Osprey together would fill that void. And we are seeing that upturn as time and resources continue. We certainly would expect that, as a result of the fiscal year 2011 and through the FYDP, that we more than make up for the loss of the 53.

Mr. BRIGHT. Okay. Madam Chairman, my time has expired. I will yield back to you.

Ms. SANCHEZ. I thank the gentleman from Alabama. And we will do a second series of questions so you will have another opportunity to ask. And I will go ahead and ask the question.

Admiral Olson has suggested that about 80 percent of our Special Operations Forces are in Central Command's area of responsibility right now. Is that also true about our aviation assets? Does the ratio pretty much follow that? Either one of you.

Colonel REAP. Madam Chairwoman, thank you. Probably greater—of the deployed SOF rotary wing asset, it's probably a greater percentage that is engaged in Afghanistan and Iraq. I can tell you that since 9/11, about 30 percent of the SOF rotary wing inventory has been deployed and another 10 percent on top of that has been on an alert posture with a very finite window for it to be recalled. So essentially committed out of the aggregate inventory on any one day.

Ms. SANCHEZ. Thank you.

Mr. REID. If I could just add, all of the 47s, SOF MH–47s that are deployed are in CENTCOM [Central Command].

Ms. SANCHEZ. Thank you for that. You mentioned in your opening testimony, and the 2010 QDR review highlighted, the Navy recently converted two squadrons to support requirements for Navy SEALs [Sea, Air and Land]. I think that is a step in the right direction, using existing squadrons to help support the SOF and help close the gap that we are witnessing.

Are there similar proposals being considered by the Department? For example, Air National Guard units or Marine Corps aviation

assets dedicated to support MARSOC [Marine Corps Special Operations] or something, for example? Either one of you or both of you.

Mr. REID. Just so I didn't mislead—or to be more precise about the Navy asset. This is a support arrangement. It is not a physical conversion of a platform. It is a formalization of a relationship that Navy—Special Warfare already had with Navy to essentially borrow the 60s, whatever—it is not an MH. It is the maritime version. So it wasn't a conversion per se.

The Army, as I mentioned, two additional combat aviation brigades in the QDR, which results in about 24 or 25 MH–47s or CH–47s. It depends on—they tailor these for particular missions—but about that many 47s. Again, not converted for SOF, but through this process of formalizing these SOF–GPF support relationships that will increase their availability.

So, happening there in the Army. Not happening as actively in the Marine Corps, although the MAGTF [Marine Air-Ground Task Force] and the MEU [Marine Expeditionary Unit]—for instance, last year the MEU went out to Helmand Province, out to Garmsir, did a great job out there to form MEU. And those assets when they were deployed were made available for other forces as well.

But there is no deliberate support relationship piece being developed comparable to what we talked about with the other forces right now. The MARSOC, as you know, has adopted a one task force presence in Afghanistan with the Special Operations Task Force in RC West. They receive their airlift support from the Special Operations Task Force there. So they are integrated. Their requirements are built into that.

Ms. SANCHEZ. So what do you see as any challenges when you have that relationship, that you have in fact reiterated, that you are formalizing more? Are there challenges or things that need to be changed when we sort of usurped a little to do a particular mission?

Mr. REID. I think it is something we get better at every time we do it. I don't think there is a particularly hard challenge. The forces—again, from my days in Special Forces that weren't that long ago—but the SOF–GPF interaction on the battlefield is unlike it has ever been. There are not the strong walls between the forces, so they are very accustomed to working with one another.

And you see in General McChrystal's Afghanistan strategy, in his—the things he is doing out there with the command and control relationships which have—some folks are so sure. But what is good about this is the battle space owners, the maneuver brigade, the GPF and their integration with the SOF operating in their area is tighter than it has ever been. So it builds on this mutual reinforcing, mutually supporting relationship theme that pays dividends across the operation and across the force. So I don't think there is a particular hard challenge to it other than just learning how to operate in a way that maybe some folks have not operated in the past.

Ms. SANCHEZ. Colonel, do you want to weigh in on that, or shall we move on to the next question?

Colonel REAP. Subject to your—if you have an additional question that you would prefer that I——

Ms. SANCHEZ. If you have something to add to what Mr. Reid just said.

Colonel REAP. I certainly would be able to cite several examples to assure you that what Mr. Reid has told you is borne out in the realities of the support in the theaters, as well as specifically Iraq and Afghanistan, as well as to SOF at large. It is not uncommon where the General Purpose Force provides rotary wing support to SOF. This is consistent with the history, the relationship between SOF and the General Purpose Forces.

I had an opportunity in command of a general support battalion in Honduras to support SOF while I was down there. It was my air crews that flew missions in support of SOF. There are plenty of my peers, contemporaries, who have commanded in Iraq who provided, with their assault or general support aviation battalions out of the General Purpose Forces, support of SOF in combat.

One other thing that I would add with respect to the two H–60 squadrons out of the Navy, it builds upon a relationship where Navy helicopters, HSC [Helicopter Sea Combat], have been and continue to provide support to SOF in Iraq. Again, a GPF support, to rotary wing SOF.

So the QDR report and the intent of the language codifies that in having that naval GPF helicopter force to continue to support SOF and, by proximity, focus on Naval Special Warfare Command.

Ms. SANCHEZ. Thank you, Colonel.

I will now recognize Mr. Kline, if he should have some further questions, for 5 minutes.

Mr. KLINE. Thank you, Madam Chair. A comment picking up on what the chairwoman was asking about, the General Purpose Forces support. I understand very well that that is a sort of longstanding proposition, as Colonel Reap mentioned.

I am a little bit concerned about a couple of aspects of that. One, as Colonel Reap knows, the General Purpose Forces aren't trained to the same level as 160, nor is their equipment the same as 160. And I have a great deal of confidence that in the theater, they are working that out so we are not tasking the general purpose Black Hawk battalion, for example, to do the same thing as an MH–60 aircraft and crew would do. But that tradeoff between support for the General Purpose Forces and providing the sort of best of the best for the SOF mission, in some cases where you have a very heavy tasking of your rotary wing forces in general, could be a little bit problematic.

And I think it is important that SOF have the force structure and the equipment that they need. I mean, I know we just don't have everything right now. But I am a little bit sensitive to that; that the impact that it has on the General Purpose Forces itself and making sure that SOF missions, some of which are pretty demanding, have got the best crews. Unfortunately, the general purpose Black Hawks, for example, aren't the same as M–60s. They simply don't have the same stuff.

Let me talk for just a minute about the V–22. I was looking in here and I saw the number—and I have to admit I cannot find it—about what the programmed number of V–22s is right now for AFSOC. Do you know, Mr. Reid, how many, at the end of the day here, they are supposed to end up with? CV–22s.

Mr. REID. Fifty, sir, is what I am told. It is in here.

Mr. KLINE. Whoever might know. I don't know. Maybe, Colonel Reap, do you know? Is it 50, at the end of the day?

Colonel REAP. Fifty is the number, sir.

Mr. KLINE. How fast are we supposed to be getting that?

Colonel REAP. The rate is about five per year, sir. We have already received delivery of some 11 airframes. In fact, the 12th—however, we just lost one. So we have 11 on hand at present.

Mr. KLINE. Okay. And so that is pretty much the delivery schedule you have been anticipating all along. We haven't slipped behind or sped it up that you know of? In the last 2 years, has there been an adjustment in that delivery schedule that you know of?

Colonel REAP. It is my recollection that we have pulled forward that delivery rate to the best of the ability of the manufacturer and in accordance with the Department's priorities. And I defer back to Mr. Reid.

Mr. KLINE. How many of the payloads, how many of the 53s were there that these were fundamentally replacing? Do you remember that number?

Colonel REAP. I don't.

Mr. KLINE. Are we going to have——

Colonel REAP. Take that one for the record?

Mr. KLINE. Please do. I can look it up, but I cannot find it here in the paper.

[The information referred to can be found in the Appendix on page 45.]

Mr. KLINE. What I am trying to get at, are we going to end up—obviously, the V–22 has much greater range and speed and so forth. What is our capability going to be like at the end of this process compared to what it was under the old 53 program? And I guess without the numbers I cannot really tell. I know they are a different lift capacity and so forth. But in terms of air crew and size of AFSOC?

Colonel REAP. Sir, if the question is specifically 53 to CV–22 comparison—or are you open to the kind of at large, what the aggregate——

Mr. KLINE. I am looking at AFSOC more than the total Special Operations Command, but the Air Force piece of this.

Colonel REAP. I think we would have to accept that question for the record for you, sir; to make sure that we give you the specific number on the 53 inventory and allow you to draw that kind of a better comparison of what it was versus what will be.

Mr. KLINE. That will be fine. If we could just have that for the record. I yield back.

[The information referred to can be found in the Appendix on page 45.]

Ms. SANCHEZ. Thank you, Mr. Kline. We will now ask Mr. Bright if he has any questions.

Mr. BRIGHT. Sure. Hopefully I can clarify that. In the material that we were given today, it appears that 59 CV–22s have been ordered. Could that be correct?

Mr. REID. The total—no. Fifty will be the total. We have 11.

Mr. BRIGHT. Maybe I interpreted the data wrong. Just a couple of questions, if you would.

I believe, Mr. Reid, as you know, the Air Force is looking at acquiring a small aircraft to support counterinsurgency-like operations. I know that most of these discussions are centered around fixed wing aircraft, but are OSD [Office of Secretary of Defense] and SOCOM involved in these discussions? And would such an aircraft help SOF peacetime and wartime missions, in your opinion?

Mr. REID. Yes, and yes. Are involved. Would help, won't replace; you can't do with a light fixed wing what you can do with an MH–47 for a night high-mountain in-fill, but where we can use other assets to take strain off the higher demand platforms. We certainly do that now, and we would be more able to do it if there were more to choose from.

Mr. BRIGHT. Do you ever see in the near future a place for or a role for unmanned rotary wing aircraft in the near future for the operations here?

Mr. REID. Yes, I do. I do see application for that. And I think there is testing that proves that that capability is viable for certain types of operations.

Mr. BRIGHT. Okay. Madam Chairman, I will yield back. That is my questions.

Ms. SANCHEZ. Great. Well, seeing no other members arrive—and I am sorry it is a very, very busy time in Congress. But we are interested in the subject and, obviously, the capabilities of our Special Operating Forces. We probably have some more questions for you and we will be submitting them for the record. And we would ask that—yes.

Mr. BRIGHT. Madam Chairman, I have one follow-up question that really stems from a conversation I had with my colleague who was here a few minutes ago.

Ms. SANCHEZ. Absolutely. Go right ahead.

Mr. BRIGHT. And this probably goes to Colonel Reap. He was visiting Walter Reed the other day and had a discussion with a wounded soldier there. And the soldier had some feedback. And I would like to get your expert opinion on what, if anything, we need to do with this problem. He was indicating that, of course, the CV–22 is a very valuable tool in our efforts out there, but there was a problem rapelling out of the aircraft.

And that it had such a strong propeller wind, for a lack of a better description, that it took three soldiers to tether the Osprey, and that seemed to be a very big concern of his. I know it is a soldier out there that has a concern who is wounded, but is there a problem with that? If you have got three soldiers tethering the Osprey, that pretty much opens them up for exposure and possibly fire without defense. Has there been a noted problem with that?

Colonel REAP. Mr. Bright, I appreciate the opportunity to answer that question for you. I am not privy to a specific fast-rope insertion or rappel-insertion issue to the CV–22. Of course, I do understand that the downwash velocity is significantly higher than a comparable helicopter, if you will; you know, same type weight, you know, max gross weight. And so, having that downwash may, you know, have some aerodynamic issues with the stability of the fast rope or the rappel rope, but I am not privy to a specific instance that said that it would require a tethering process.

Mr. BRIGHT. Would there be a way that you could look into that and see if that is problem or if there have been problems in the past and let us know?

Colonel REAP. Absolutely, sir. We will accept that for the record.

[The information referred to can be found in the Appendix on page 45.]

Mr. BRIGHT. Madam Chairman, I yield back.

Ms. SANCHEZ. Thank you, Mr. Bright.

And I was privy to that information also from our colleague who said that the soldier basically said, I would prefer a slower aircraft rather than to have to sit there dangling, with three people at the bottom of the line to secure me down. So we might look and see if that is happening more than once.

Mr. REID. If I may, I heard the same. I have not witnessed this. It seems very logical to me that the downwash—and this is really, I think, a fast roping. I don't know that we are even rappelling, a little bit different. But the way that we are rigging these to drop the rope out, with the wash that is created, it pushes the rope out to the side and, you know, you are supposed to slide down like a fire pole.

But I would say that this is a problem that I am sure if we decide we need to continue fast-roping out of CV–22s, we will figure out, much like we figured out how to do things out of 53s and 47s. It is new. It wasn't a cornerstone of the fielding of the 22 that we would use it for a rope platform, but you don't have to have a piece of gear around a SOF guy very long before someone is trying something different.

So I think in the innovation and adaptation realm, we will find a way around this if we choose to keep doing it. It is unfortunate that the gentleman had a bad experience. But I would imagine it is something that someone is out there figuring out a better way to do it, and we will overcome this. I think it is just a newness factor more than anything else.

Ms. SANCHEZ. Great. We will plot that as one of the correlation points to see if it is a problem.

Mr. Kline, do you have any further comments.

Mr. KLINE. No, Madam Chairman. Just thanks again to the witnesses.

Ms. SANCHEZ. Then I thank the witnesses for being before us. As you know, we will have some questions, probably in written form, coming forward from the rest of the members and maybe from the current members before you. We would ask that you answer them quickly.

And with that, the subcommittee hearing is over, and we are adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 3:33 p.m., the subcommittee was adjourned.]

A P P E N D I X

April 27, 2010

PREPARED STATEMENTS SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD

April 27, 2010

The Honorable Loretta Sanchez
Committee on Armed Services
Subcommittee on Terrorism and Unconventional Threats and Capabilities
"Closing the Gap: Addressing Rotary Wing Shortfalls for U.S. Special Operations Forces in Fiscal Year 2011 and Beyond"
April 27, 2010

Opening Statement

Good Afternoon,

I would like to welcome you all and thank you for joining us today to discuss current rotary-wing requirements for U.S. Special Operations Forces and address capability shortfalls.

This hearing will also provide additional details on the expansion of rotary wing capabilities as requested by SOCOM for fiscal year 2011.

This hearing represents a "good news, bad news" story.

The good news is that the committee, the Department, and SOCOM all recognize that rotary-wing shortfalls are a critical issue for our Special Operations Forces.

The bad news is that much work remains to be done, and the proposed solutions may take years to implement.

Currently, our Special Operations Forces operate in more than 75 countries each and every day— countering terrorism, building partnership capacity in key areas, and improving security and stability for key partner nations.

Often working in remote locations with limited infrastructure and reinforcements, air assets provide a vital operational link to ensure mission success for SOF.

Rotary-wing assets in particular are key enablers for our special operators, and critical for counterterrorism and counterinsurgency operations in Afghanistan, Iraq, and elsewhere.

These helicopters and tilt-wing aircraft provide fire-support, surveillance, insertion/extraction, and other combat support functions.

Most critically, they serve as a logistical backbone for SOF and other forces, moving critical supplies over rugged terrain to remote locations in minimal time.

My top priority as chairwoman of the House Armed Services Subcommittee on Terrorism, Unconventional Threats, and Capabilities is to provide all the necessary resources to our military in order to protect our country from terrorist threats.

And this includes rotary-wing assets which are high demand, low density resources.

It is important to note that U.S. Special Operations Command cannot buy aircraft but is only authorized to pay for SOF-unique equipment for aircraft.

This means that SOCOM must coordinate very closely with the Services.

I look forward to discussing this process with each of the witnesses, and hearing how the Services' larger acquisition programs align with and support SOCOM priorities.

I hope today's hearing will provide the necessary details on the expansion of rotary wing capabilities as requested by SOCOM for FY 2011, and a forum to discuss future year requirements and solutions needed to address rotary-wing support for Special Operations Forces.

Today, we have two witnesses before us:

First, we have:

- Mr. Garry Reid, the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations and Combating Terrorism, representing the Office of the Secretary of Defense.

- And U.S. Army Colonel Vincent Reap, the Director of Rotary Lift Assessments at U.S. Special Operations Command, representing SOCOM.

Once again I would like to thank all of our witnesses for being here today and I look forward to hearing your testimonies.

I will now yield to the Ranking Member from Florida, Mr. Miller for his opening statement. Thank you

Talking Points of Ranking Member Jeff Miller
Subcommittee on Terrorism, Unconventional Threats and Capabilities

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Subcommittee Hearing on Closing the Gap: Addressing Critical Rotary Wing Shortfalls for U.S. Special Operations Forces in Fiscal Year 2011 and Beyond

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April 27, 2010

Special operations forces are engaged worldwide –building partner nation capacity, conducting foreign internal defense, countering terrorist activity, and aiding countries and people in need. Ensuring these forces have adequate rotary wing capacity is critical to sustaining their effectiveness not only during combat missions in Afghanistan but also while providing humanitarian aid in disaster-struck countries like Haiti.

We have seen the important role that rotary wing assets have played in Iraq and, especially, in Afghanistan. Helicopters and other vertical lift platforms allow for the rapid movement and resupply of troops over long distances. Given the mountainous terrain in Afghanistan, a movement can be completed in a matter of hours by air, whereas the same movement may take days by road. Moving by air, our special operators also avoid one of the major threats they face when traveling by road – improvised explosive devices. The IED threat is heightened for our special operations forces

whose operating bases are often located in remote, less-traveled areas making the targeting of vehicular movement for IED attack or ambush all the more likely. At the objective, rotary wing assets quickly deliver our troops on top of their target, reducing the enemy's reaction time and leveraging surprise, speed of action, and initiative for our troops' benefit.

Given the importance of these assets, I have always been concerned that Special Operations Command's (SOCOM) organic capability has been inadequate for the operational needs of its forces. With the retirement of the MH-53 from Air Force Special Operations Command (AFSOC), special operations lost a workhorse that brought great capability to the force. Now, the MH-47 Chinook representing the only heavy-lift helicopter at SOCOM's disposal. AFSOC's CV-22 offers vertical take-off and landing capability but is a complimentary capability, not a direct replacement for heavy lift helicopters.

The Department of Defense recognized the critical role of rotary wing assets in the 2010 Quadrennial Defense Review and the Fiscal Year 2011 budget for SOCOM. However, the operational tempo and need for these assets indicate a need that is much greater than both current capability and the proposed future capability. Because special operations forces rely on unique equipment, modified for its specialized missions, each helicopter is

all the more important to SOCOM's operational capability, making the loss of one of these platforms even more devastating.

With those concerns in mind, I look forward to today's hearing. We need to ensure our special operations forces have the equipment and support they need to conduct their missions. I am very interested in our witnesses' assessment of SOCOM's need for rotary wing capability and how each of SOCOM's existing platforms meets the operational requirements of the command. I would also be interested in hearing about efforts to build capacity within NATO special operations, as these forces often must rely on U.S. rotary wing platforms in Afghanistan to conduct their missions and as NATO SOF represent a potential force multiplier to our global efforts to combat terrorism and promote peace and stability.

Thank you for joining us today, and I look forward to your testimony.

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THE HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE
TERRORISM, UNCONVENTIONAL THREATS AND CAPABILITIES SUBCOMMITTEE

STATEMENT OF

MR. GARRY REID
DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE FOR
SPECIAL OPERATIONS & COMBATING TERRORISM

REGARDING

CRITICAL ROTARY WING SHORTFALLS FOR U.S. SPECIAL OPERATIONS
FORCES IN FISCAL YEAR 2011 AND BEYOND

27 APRIL 2010

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THE HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE
TERRORISM, UNCONVENTIONAL THREATS AND CAPABILITIES SUBCOMMITTEE

Madame Chairwoman, Mr. Miller, and distinguished members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify on critical rotary wing shortfalls for U.S. Special Operations Force (SOF). It is a pleasure to join COL Vincent Reap in discussing programs, plans, and policies to support current and future SOF rotary wing requirements.

Vertical lift capacity is a strategic issue that has been the focus of substantial study within the DoD over the past 18 months.

- In February, Congress received the report of the Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR), which highlighted the importance of rotary wing assets to current operations in Afghanistan, Iraq, and elsewhere. The QDR also emphasized the importance of training and advising partners to strengthen and expand their aviation forces.
- In March, Congress received a report on non-standard rotary wing requirements and programs from the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations/Low Intensity Conflict and Interdependent Capabilities. This report examined the current and anticipated demand for the Mi-17 helicopter by the United States, Afghanistan, Iraq, and Pakistan.
- In 2009, the Joint Staff completed a Review of Helicopter Assets (ROHA) and a U.S. Army-sponsored RAND study corroborated a rotary-wing lift capacity shortfall. This analysis drove significant adjustments in our force management of rotary wing platforms that led to increased availability for SOF in Afghanistan.

The growth in SOF missions, which currently include sustained deployments of Special Operations Task Forces in Afghanistan, Iraq, the Trans-Sahel, Colombia, and the Philippines, and commensurate expansion of SOF since 2005, has outpaced the rotary wing capacity organic to USSOCOM. Demand for rotary wing lift across the Services remains high for forces conducting operations in Afghanistan, Iraq, and elsewhere. These shortfalls have led the Department to address solutions in force structure, training, and General Purpose Force (GPF) enablers. The QDR addressed many of the rotary-wing shortfalls, and drove decisions in the FY11 Budget Review to enhance organic capacity in USSOCOM, as well as increase capacity in the GPF.

- The U.S. Army and the U.S. Special Operations Command (USSOCOM) will add a company of upgraded cargo helicopters (MH-47G) to the Army's 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment. These 8 aircraft will be transferred from the Army inventory to USSOCOM and refurbished to SOF standards, reaching full operational capability by the end of FY15.
- The U.S. Army will expand pilot training at Ft. Rucker to make vertical lift assets more readily accessible to forces in theater. In expanding the pipeline to add pilots, we can increase the operational availability of the aircraft we have deployed.
- The U.S. Army will also add two active-duty combat aviation brigades (CAB) by restructuring current assets to form the 12th CAB and by creating the 13th CAB to help meet global demand for these assets.
- The U.S. Navy will dedicate two helicopter squadrons for direct support to naval special warfare units.

Special Operations Aviation Force Structure

The U.S. Army and the U.S. Air Force both provide capabilities that address the medium/heavy vertical lift issue. As a result of the QDR process, the DoD is expanding the rotary wing capability organic to USSOCOM. Acquiring more platforms, extending the life of those already in the inventory, and expanding our base of qualified pilots are tightly integrated factors in expanding our future Special Operations rotary wing capacity.

As a result of the several studies previously noted that indicated shortfalls in our rotary wing capability, the QDR authorized an increase in the Special Operations rotary-wing force structure. By adding eight MH-47G helicopters to USSOCOM, we will expand the current inventory from 61 to 69 aircraft by the end of FY15. The 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment is also modernizing its MH-60 Blackhawk fleet, and will phase out the MH-60K/L fleet as the more modern MH-60M is built. Currently, there are 28 platforms in modification and testing, with another 16 due to be inducted in FY11. Once the MH-60M modification and testing program is complete, USSOCOM will have 72 platforms in its inventory.

The Air Force Special Operations Command's (AFSOC) tilt-rotor CV-22 is also a significant contributor to USSOCOM's vertical lift capabilities. AFSOC currently has 11 CV-22s in the inventory. In FY11 we will procure 5, with an eventual growth to 50 CV-22s by FY16. The CV-22 will remain an important pillar for the future of our SOF-unique medium/heavy lift capabilities.

Aviation Training

A key impediment for expanding vertical lift capacity is the shortfall in qualified rotary-wing pilots and maintenance crews. USSOCOM is taking steps to expand pilot training to ensure we have fully trained crews and pilots on hand when the new force structure comes on-line. It currently takes seven months to produce a qualified Army Special Operations Forces Aviator. The pipeline currently produces 56 pilots per year for the MH-47G and MH-60 platforms. USSOCOM is expanding this pipeline to produce 76 pilots per year by the end of FY10.

While increasing Special Operations pilot training is an important step being taken by USSOCOM, the U.S. Army began taking tangible steps to improve its GPF support to SOF in FY09 by expanding its current pilot training pipeline from 1,050 pilots per year in FY09 to 1,375 per year in FY10.

Aviation Enablers

The fifth "truth" of special operations is that most special operations require non-SOF support. This is borne out in the support the U.S. Army GPF is providing to USSOCOM rotary wing capability. The U.S. Army is taking tangible steps to support USSOCOM by expanding GPF enablers to SOF missions. Beginning in FY11, and reaching full operational capacity in FY12, the U.S. Army will realign existing resources to stand up the 12th CAB. Additionally, a 13th CAB will be established beginning in FY11. The U.S. Army has requested $305M in FY11 to resource the 13th CAB.

Broadly, our goal is to ensure that SOF fighting today's counterinsurgency and counterterrorism operations have the vertical lift they need to succeed. Improving the U.S. Army's rotary wing support to SOF is critical to this goal.

Aviation Foreign Internal Defense

Current demand for non-standard rotary wing capability is driven by requirements for CONUS-based training for U.S. Government and partner-nation personnel, and the aviation foreign internal defense (FID) mission. The 2010 QDR, and the Secretary's recent *Foreign Affairs* article, highlighted the high priority of building partner security capacity as a mission for U.S. forces. The QDR indicates that "Today the Department meets only half of the current demand for training partner aviation forces. In order to address this persistent shortfall, starting in FY2012, DoD will double its current capacity to provide such training." According to QDR analysis, "Providing training to partner aviation forces is an area that...will continue to grow." The QDR also directs the Air Force's 6th Special Operations Squadron (the only U.S. military unit specifically organized, trained, and equipped to train and advise foreign militaries on the operation and employment of air assets) to procure two non-US helicopters to support the unit's activities.

Conclusion

The challenges related to medium and heavy vertical lift in hostile, denied, and austere environments are among the most pressing the Department of Defense faces today. The U.S. Army, U.S. Air Force, and the U.S. Special Operations Command are moving in the right direction to mitigate these challenges.

Thank you again for inviting me today to address these important issues, and I look forward to your questions.

Garry Reid
Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense
Special Operations & Combating Terrorism

A veteran with 28 years of military service in Special Operations, Garry Reid serves as the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations and Combating Terrorism, under the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations, Low Intensity Conflict, and Interdependent Capabilities (SO/LIC&IC).

Mr. Reid is the principal advisor to the ASD (SOLIC/IC) for DoD policies, plans, authorities, and resources related to special operations and irregular warfare, with special emphasis on counterterrorism, counterinsurgency, unconventional warfare, sensitive special operations, and other activities as specified by the Secretary of Defense. He represents the Secretary of Defense on various working groups in the interagency arena and maintains an active liaison with those agencies that have responsibility for national security policy as it relates to special operations and combating terrorism. Mr. Reid is also the principal crisis manager supporting the ASD (SOLIC/IC) in response to international and/or domestic activities related to special operations and combating terrorism.

Throughout his military service, Mr. Reid planned, conducted, and led a wide range of military operations, including Foreign Internal Defense, Special Reconnaissance, Advance Force Operations, Counterterrorism, Counternarcotics, Humanitarian Assistance, and Disaster Relief.

Mr. Reid joined the Office of the Secretary of Defense in January 2007. He has served as the Director for Special Operations Policy, the Director for Counterterrorism Policy, and the Principal Director for Special Operations Capabilities.

STATEMENT OF COL VINCENT M. REAP
TO
THE HOUSE ARMED SERVICES SUBCOMMITTEE ON TERRORISM, UNCONVENTIONAL THREATS AND CAPABILITIES
'CLOSING THE GAP: ADDRESSING CRITICAL ROTARY WING SHORTFALLS FOR U.S. SPECIAL OPERATIONS IN FISCAL YEAR 2011 AND BEYOND'
27 APRIL 2010

Good afternoon, Madam Chairwoman, Congressman Miller, and distinguished Members of the Committee. Thank you for the invitation to appear before you to highlight US Special Operations Forces' (USSOF) rotary wing aviation program. Thanks to the foresight, advocacy and strong support of this body, we remain well positioned to meet the Nation's expectations of its Special Operations Forces.

US Special Operations Command's (USSOCOM) unique responsibilities include providing SOF with specialized equipment to perform their worldwide missions. An essential portion of this equipment are the Command's vertical lift aircraft, assets capable of operating at extended ranges and under adverse weather conditions to infiltrate, resupply, reinforce, and extract SOF. For example, our rotary wing aircraft – MH-47, MH-60, and A/MH-6 - and tilt rotor aircraft CV-22 provide organic special operations aviation support for worldwide contingency operations and full spectrum conflict.

Due to the realities of fighting multiple conflicts in exceptionally challenging environments, the value of vertical lift aircraft in support of Special Operations Forces cannot be emphasized enough. Helicopters and tilt-rotor aircraft provide a unique and potent military capability, one which spans all Services within the Department of Defense (DoD).

Despite their prominence and necessity, deployable rotary wing assets remain limited. Several DoD-wide studies over the past 18 months – most notably the Joint Staff's Review of Helicopter Assets (ROHA) and a Department of the Army sponsored RAND Study - substantiated this rotary-wing lift capacity shortfall. The Operational Availability Study 08 (OA 08), the Joint Staff Global Force Management Persistent Shortfall study and COCOM Integrated Priority Lists (IPLs) all corroborated the need for additional rotary wing lift capacity.

Shortages aside, the Command's inventory mix of MH-47, MH-60, A/MH-6, and CV-22s continue to provide the right capabilities that SOF sorely need: fire support, long range, night-vision and targeting, over the horizon communications, force protection, and precision navigation. Simply put, the improved survivability equipment, advanced training, and extended ranges of Special Operations aviation empower mission profiles unattainable by any other fleet.

An elite fleet continues as such only through proper nurture. USSOCOM's modernization efforts first began with the MH-47G, and extended to transformations of both legacy MH-60L and MH-60K aircraft to an upgraded MH-60M. This current transformation incorporates improved engines and avionics, producing increased performance in high altitude and high temperature environments. The results are aircraft capable of supporting SOF and Geographic Combatant Commanders for years to come.

As a global force provider, this support is paramount to USSOCOM's strategy for its aviation fleet. The Command continuously evaluates its aviation capacity, carefully tailoring each to Geographic Combatant Commanders' prioritized needs. The result is

an ideal mix of capabilities for troop and cargo movement, aerial refueling, and surveillance or penetration of and/or into denied areas.

SOF force structure growth remains rapid and unprecedented. But the time required to manufacture and modify Special Operations Aviation airframes plus train the special operations pilots who will operate them created an imbalance of required lift for SOF. This capacity imbalance grew larger with the obsolescence and retirement of the MH-53, fielding of the CV-22, and finally the overall modernization effort and growth in inventories of MH-47 and MH-60 aircraft. All occurred with units engaged in continuous combat operations. The FY 2011 budget request attempts to address these realities, requesting continued support for a program aimed at achieving required capacity by the end of the Future Years Defense Plan.

In tandem, USSOCOM is working closely with the Services to mitigate rotary wing lift shortfalls. Partnering with General Purpose Forces aviation and increased Service support of helicopter operations of deployed SOF combine to provide a critical enabling capability to our deployed Soldiers, Sailors, Marines and Airmen.

For instance, the Navy is coordinating with USSOCOM to align two Navy helicopter squadrons with SOF support as their primary focus. Related, the Army dedicated resources to increase production of Army helicopter pilots, assets used to increase the helicopter pilot training cadre at Fort Rucker while improving its corresponding training support. The Army is simultaneously consolidating aircraft into an additional Combat Aviation Brigade, and will eventually add a 13th Combat Aviation Brigade to its Force Structure. The downstream effect of this combined Army growth will be an increase in the manning of Army SOF rotary wing units, plus expanded

conventional force capacity to support SOF. As always, and like the Services, USSOCOM does not normally exercise operational control over its deployed units; employment and allocation of in-theater supporting assets remain directed by the Geographic Combatant Commanders.

It takes time, however, to glean the benefit of programmed growth. With DoD acting on the recent Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR)'s recommended addition of eight MH47 helicopters over a five-year period, USSOF will see an increase in Chinook inventory from the 61 by end of this year to 69 MH47s once the Service Life Extension Program is complete. The Command's Blackhawk fleet will grow in unison, with 10 more of this aircraft to be added to inventory by the completion of the modernization program.

A key hurdle to expansion of SOF capacity and accompanying capabilities is the training and professional development of personnel. As relayed by Admiral Olson before this committee, the Command's growth rate is carefully managed at three to five percent annually to maximize production while keeping the highest standards expected of SOF. Sound stewardship, however, results in an accompanying tradeoff in the number of key units and capabilities within SOF organizational structures and training pipelines. The rotary wing program is no stranger to this tradeoff, with programmed expansion of this capacity at the upper boundary of the Command's maximum supportable growth rate. This capacity, of course, must also be weighed against other critical needs.

The USSOCOM FY 2011 budget request includes three key aviation funding items: $79.8 million for rotary wing upgrades and sustainment, $108 million for the

Service Life Extension of the MH-47 helicopters, and $179 million for MH-60 modifications. Replacements of aircraft lost in combat and training accidents round out requests in the FY 2010 Overseas Contingency Operations (OCO) request.

Desired outputs from this funding are substantial. To begin, this funding offers ongoing survivability, reliability, maintainability, and operational upgrades as well as sustainment costs for fielded rotary wing aircraft and subsystems. Second, it includes procurement of 16 additional MH-60 helicopters plus the advance procurement of long-lead items for an additional eight MH-47G helicopters. Last, supporting plans and programs yield the resources necessary to support growth in airframe numbers and the pilot training pipeline required to man them.

With sustainable growth and peculiar force requirements, commanders consider many variables when making decisions on how to allocate aviation assets, respecting the finite amount of personnel and equipment from which to draw. In the short-term, USSOCOM will continue to evaluate competing regional requirements, make prioritized recommendations on the allocation of limited rotary wing resources, and investigate initiatives to mitigate shortfalls.

The FY 2011 budget request exists as a good starting point for a longer term look at this valuable asset. In doing so, it proposes a transition from shortfall to upward momentum in the SOF rotary wing and tilt rotor aircraft programs. Targeted upgrades include substantial capability and capacity gains for both SOF and the Geographic Combatant Commanders they serve, crucial stepping stones in reversing a capacity and capability gap toward one of increased outcomes for our special operators. Controlled growth, proper stewardship and highly trained operators are the SOF tenets we extend

to rotary wing and tilt rotor aircraft. All are made possible through the continued support of this Committee. Speaking on behalf of U.S. Special Operations Command, I thank you for the opportunity to address you today. I look forward to answering any of your questions.

COLONEL VINCENT REAP, US ARMY

Colonel Vincent M. Reap currently serves as Director, Maritime and Rotary Wing Assessments, US Special Operations Command, where he has oversight on special Operations Forces rotary wing aviation programs and maritime mobility platforms.

Colonel Reap was born in Mount Pocono, Pennsylvania, November 2, 1964. He is a Distinguished Military Graduate of The Pennsylvania State University with a Bachelor of Science degree in Aerospace Engineering. He was commissioned a Regular Army Second Lieutenant, Aviation Branch on May 16, 1986.

Colonel Reap's previous assignments include attack helicopter platoon leader, assistant battalion operations officer, and battalion adjutant of the 2d Battalion (Attack), 3d Aviation Regiment, 3rd Infantry Division, Giebelstadt, West Germany. He served in battalion staff positions with the 1st Battalion (Attack) 123rd Aviation Regiment, 7th Infantry Division (Light), and Commanded C Troop, 2d Squadron, 9th U.S. Cavalry, Fort Ord, CA. In July 1993, he began duties as the Adjutant of 1st Battalion, 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment (Airborne), thereafter, served as the platoon leader of the DAP Platoon, D Co., TF1-160 SOAR (A).

Following his assignment at Fort Campbell, he served an exchange tour with the United States Marine Corps, with duty in Marine Aviation Weapons and Tactic Squadron - One, (MAWTS-1), Marine Corps Air Station Yuma, Arizona. He commanded D Company, 228th AVN, Enrique Soto Cano, Honduras and then commanded A Company, 3rd Battalion, 160 SOAR (A) Savannah, Georgia. He also served as the S3 and subsequently Executive Officer of 3rd Battalion, 160th SOAR (A).

Following Battalion Command of 1-228th AVN, Enrique Soto Cano, Honduras, he returned to Ft Campbell, KY and served as the Regiment Executive Officer and Regiment Deputy Commander of the 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment (Airborne). He has served multiple combat tours including command of special operations aviation task forces in Operations Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom.

His military education includes the Aviation Officer Basic Course, Aviation Officer Advanced Course, Cavalry Leaders Course, High Risk Survival Evasion, Resistance, and Escape Instructors course, the Combined Arms Services Staff School and the Command and General Staff College.

Colonel Reap's permanent awards and decorations include, the Bronze Star, the Defense Meritorious Service Medal, Meritorious Service Medals, Air Medal, Army Commendation Medals, Army Achievement Medals, Afghanistan Campaign Medals, Iraq Campaign Medal, Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal, the Global War on Terrorism Expeditionary Medal, Global War on Terrorism Service Medal, the Humanitarian Service Medal, the Joint Meritorious Unit Award, the Valorous Unit Award, the Master Aviator Badge, Parachutist Badge, and British Para Wings. He has flown over 3050 hours including more than 1100 hours under night vision goggles and is rated in seven different helicopter types with time in each of the variants employed by the 160th,

Colonel Reap is married to the former Stephanie Lee Winkler of Rittman, Ohio and has two sons, Benjamin and Steven.

WITNESS RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS ASKED DURING THE HEARING

April 27, 2010

RESPONSE TO QUESTION SUBMITTED BY MR. BRIGHT

Colonel REAP. The tilt-rotor design of the CV–22 creates prop-rotor downwash that is different and greater than that of a helicopter of comparable size and weight. This difference is most notable during initial deployment of the fast rope when the rope does not hang completely vertical. This condition exists until the first person descends the rope under the supervision of the Flight Engineer when the weight of the individual causes the rope to straighten out just like a fast rope from a helicopter. Most teams use the technique of having each person hold the rope until the next in line has descended ⅔ of the distance to the ground. This technique adds only a few seconds for a practiced team. The HQ AFSOC Evaluator Flight Engineer has conducted in excess of 100 fast rope iterations in the CV–22. His experience consistently demonstrates that after initial deployment the rope remains vertical and stable as long as the rope supports the weight of at least one person. [See page 18.]

RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY MR. KLINE

Colonel REAP. I think payload was actually "PaveLow."

In FY2000, USSOCOM had a total of 43 MH–53J/M "PaveLow" aircraft in its inventory. Of those 43 aircraft, 30 were mission aircraft, the remainder were for institutional training and back up aircraft inventory. [See page 16.]

Colonel REAP. In FY2000, USSOCOM had a total of 43 MH–53J/M aircraft in its inventory. Of those 43 aircraft, 30 of them were mission aircraft, the 30 mission aircraft were crewed by approximately 46 aircrews organized in three operational squadrons. There was a fourth squadron that formed the institutional training base, located at Kirtland, NM; its 5 aircrews operated the training aircraft in AFSOC's inventory of MH–53J/Ms. In FY2000, there were approximately 1,658 airmen in the MH–53J/M organizations.

At present time, USSOCOM has some 13 CV22 aircraft in its inventory. They are organized into two operational squadrons and one training squadron including 26 aircrew total. Of the 13 CV22, 5 are located at Kirtland, NM; 5 aircrews there operate these training aircraft, training new CV22 pilots for AFSOC. At present there are approximately 533 airmen in the CV22 organizations.

At the end of the FYDP, the USSOCOM CV22 program will include 50 CV22 in its inventory. They will be organized into 4 operational squadrons and one training squadron with 86 aircrew total. Of the 50 CV22, 6 will be located at Kirtland, NM; 6 aircrews there operate the 6 training aircraft, training new CV22 pilots for AFSOC. The CV22 program will have approximately 1,692 airmen when it is fully fielded at end of the FYDP. [See page 16.]

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY MEMBERS POST HEARING

April 27, 2010

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY MS. SANCHEZ

Ms. SANCHEZ. From SOCOM and OSD's vantage point, once supplemental funding goes away (by fiscal year 2012 and beyond, for example) are the services going to be able to absorb SOCOM rotary-wing requirements? What are SOCOM and SO/LIC doing now to address the issue and to ensure that requirements are met?

Mr. REID. OSD is working closely with USSOCOM to address the challenge of transitioning those enduring rotary-wing activities, which are currently funded through supplemental appropriations, into the baseline budget. The full extent to which USSOCOM will be able to absorb these activities is still undetermined. We do not anticipate any reduction in USSOCOM requirements. Service enablers will continue to play an important role in USSOCOM operations.

Ms. SANCHEZ. The 2010 QDR clearly envisions a greater role for Special Operations Forces in peacetime partnership operations, security force assistance, and foreign internal defense. Given that, how will you carry out these expanded missions with the current fleet of aircraft? What other platforms do you require?

Mr. REID. There is already a planned expansion of the 6th Special Operations Squadron, Air Force Special Operations Command's Aviation Foreign Internal Defense (AvFID) unit, as it adds an additional six pilots for rotary-wing AvFID. Specific to rotary-wing aviation, the expansion of this unit will require adding two Mi-17s to the unit's current inventory of four leased Mi-17 aircraft. Further expansion of DoD's rotary-wing security force assistance (SFA) ability is being examined through the Non-Standard Rotary-Wing (NSRW) study, and initial indications are that the Mi-17, light utility aircraft like the Huey II, and aircraft already used by DoD make up the predominant aircraft DoD needs to operate in order to be effective for these types of missions in the future. Peacetime partnership operations, SFA, and AvFID missions are important part of U.S. engagement with partner nations; however, these missions are not unique to SOF aviation and can be also conducted by our general purpose forces (GPF) where appropriate.

Ms. SANCHEZ. Please describe in detail the specific changes that have been made to maintenance, training, and force structure since 2008 to improve availability of rotary-wing aircraft in support of Special Operations Forces in OIF/OEF.

Mr. REID. There have been increases in authorized aircrew manning for USSOCOM in the range of 5 percent to support additional manpower structure and airframes. In the training base, there has been a 12 percent increase in airframes as well as increases in training of pilots including 20 additional Army SOF aviators and more than 300 Army aviators through the basic training pipeline for 2010.

Continued fielding of the MH–47G has also allowed for the expansion of the number of MH–47Gs continuously deployed while we are also drawing benefit from the continued addition of modified MH–60 aircraft. The addition of AFSOC's new CV–22 aircraft also provides some SOF-unique medium/heavy-lift rotary-wing capability to the theater. This capability will continue to increase as we procure five more CV–22s with the FY11 budget, which brings us closer to our goal of 50 total CV–22s by FY16.

Efforts to build two additional conventional Combat Aviation Brigades and ensure three are present in theater will result in substantially more airlift for both SOF and GPF forces. The Naval Special Warfare Unit will also see an increase in support with the addition of two Navy H–60 units.

Ms. SANCHEZ. Are there any outstanding or unfulfilled Requests for Forces (RFFs) for rotary-wing and vertical lift capabilities in support of SOF in the CENTCOM AOR? Are there other outstanding or unfulfilled RFFs for rotary-wing and vertical lift capabilities for SOF outside of CENTCOM?

Mr. REID. Any outstanding or unfulfilled RFFs in support of SOF would need to be provided to you through classified means. I will work with the Joint Staff and USSOCOM to provide those to you through the proper channels.

Ms. SANCHEZ. Please provide the Review of Helicopter Assets (ROHA), as referenced in official testimony, to the committee. Please provide to the committee the anticipated timeline until the current ROHA is updated.

Mr. REID. I understand that the Review of Helicopter Assets (ROHA) was completed by the Joint Staff and an update could be coordinated through the Joint Staff.

Ms. SANCHEZ. A recent U.S. European Command press release highlighted a Special Operations program to train the Croatian Air Force and improve their rotary wing capabilities. In addition to Croatia, are there similar initiatives underway to work with other allied nations? Please provide an overview of similar initiatives.

Mr. REID. There are numerous countries within NATO like Croatia that are capable of contributing to ISAF with rotary-wing aircraft. Many of the countries willing to contribute, however, fly Mi-17 aircraft, which need upgrades and improvements to make them effective enough to support the ISAF mission. I understand previous exercises have focused on night-vision goggle (NVG) training for Croatian and Hungarian pilots, and next year there are tentative plans to work with Croatia, Hungary, and the Czech Republic. Special operations personnel are also working with Yemen and Pakistan to expand their rotary-wing capabilities. These activities to enhance partner nation rotary-wing capabilities are important. Any measures to encourage partner nation participation in the ISAF mission or other U.S. efforts can be extremely valuable.

Ms. SANCHEZ. When you consider the shortfalls in Afghanistan that have been discussed, do you see this as a theater-specific issue or are there larger force structure problems that SOCOM and OSD are working to address? What is the current percentage of unfulfilled rotary-wing requests by CJSOTF–A and other SOF elements in Afghanistan? Has this improved over the last 12 months and how are you measuring progress? Please outline and provide to the committee metrics on unsourced demand for rotary-wing and vertical lift assets in Afghanistan.

Mr. REID. The unique nature of the environment and the threat in Afghanistan expand the need for rotary-wing lift within that country well beyond what we would encounter in most countries, the current percentage of unfulfilled rotary-wing requests by CJSOTF–A and other SOF elements would need to be provided to you through classified channels. I can coordinate with USSOCOM and the Joint Staff to provide that information to your staff. I understand that the influx of rotary-wing assets into the theater has substantially decreased the percentage of unfilled requests.

Ms. SANCHEZ. From OSD's standpoint, looking out through the future year defense plan and into fiscal year 2015, what are some of the largest challenges with this issue? How are we coordinating with the Services and making sure that SOCOM has the platforms needed?

Mr. REID. The largest challenge is building the force structure of pilots and crew members in concert with the acquisition strategy for the aircraft required for missions. The ability to produce appropriately trained and experienced SOF aviators is constrained by time, and this must be considered when adding additional aircraft. This process is coordinated between USSOCOM and the Military Departments during the budget process as USSOCOM builds its budget plan.

Ms. SANCHEZ. A 2007 report from the Center for Strategic and International Studies entitled *Special Operations Forces Aviation at a Crossroads* recommended that the Secretary of Defense and Congress create an independent commission to provide recommendations for expanding SOF aviation to meet the needs of a bigger SOF force, and to provide solutions regarding force structure. Would such a commission help and provided needed solutions and a roadmap?

Mr. REID. It would be difficult for me to know if a potential outside look at SOF aviation through an independent commission would provide worthwhile solutions or recommendations with regard to the Department's SOF aviation force structure. As you are aware, SO/LIC&IC within OSD Policy provides the oversight function for USSOCOM. We work hard to ensure that we independently examine all appropriate force structure options available to USSOCOM and the Military Departments within reasonable force and resource constraints. The current projection to continue USSOCOM growth at approximately 3–5 percent per year is a reasonable, sustainable goal. The projection is appropriately matched with planned added resources while at the same time developing a special operations-trained force to man these platforms. It is important that we adhere to our SOF truths, including "Humans are more important than hardware" and "SOF cannot be mass produced," when considering whether and how to develop a bigger SOF aviation force.

Ms. SANCHEZ. Mr. Robert Martinage appeared before TUTC in 2009 while he was with the Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments (CSBA) and recommended to the committee that SOF create at least two additional SOF rotary-wing battalions over the next five years to address shortfalls. What is SO/LICs current assessment of required growth over the next five years, and do we need an additional two SOF rotary-wing battalions over the next five years as was discussed last year?

Mr. REID. I appreciate Mr. Martinage's assessment in March 2009 while he was a Senior Fellow at CSBA. I understand that USSOCOM examined his recommendations and considered them as it began to expand the MH–47G fleet and looked to add additional capability such as the direct support relationship with two Navy H–60 units. In his testimony, Mr. Martinage highlighted the challenges of recruiting and training an appropriate special operations aviation regiment (SOAR) force, and these considerations should not be lost when discussing appropriately expanding any SOF aviation capabilities.

The Army's establishment of two more conventional Combat Aviation Brigades will support the GPF and SOF units in theater. From 2008 to 2010, there has been a sizeable increase in the rotary-wing lift capabilities provided to SOF. As operations in Iraq begin to scale back, aviations units are properly reset, and planned procurements are complete, there will be more lift available to meet worldwide requirements. The current planned increases in SOF aviation coupled with these increases in SOF enablers make it unnecessary to build two additional SOF battalions over the next five years.

USSOCOM's force structure is balanced to meet the diverse requirements across the command, and it could not absorb an additional growth of two battalions within five years.

Ms. SANCHEZ. Please describe the recommendations outlined within the Review of Helicopter Assets (ROHA). Please outline any courses of action (COA) that may have been recommended, and any COAs taken by the Department.

Mr. REID. I understand the Review of Helicopter Assets (ROHA) was completed by the Joint Staff, and it would be best to coordinate an update through the Joint Staff. The ROHA was a Joint Staff internal assessment of rotary-wing inventory and utilization. It was not a decision brief that recommended courses of action.

Ms. SANCHEZ. What options exist regarding the conversion of National Guard or Reserve Component assets to help fill rotary-wing and vertical lift requirements? Have these options been studied? What (if any) conclusions were drawn or courses of action outlined?

Mr. REID. The Joint Staff conducts Annual Force Sufficiency Assessments to determine Force Structure shortfalls, active component/reserve component balance, and Programmatic Requirements. Current planned growth in Army Combat Aviation Brigades is sufficient to meet foreseeable requirements.

Ms. SANCHEZ. Are there any options that exist to increase current production or acquisition timelines to improve vertical lift capabilities?

Mr. REID. I am not aware of options that exist to increase current production or acquisition timelines to improve vertical lift capabilities in the near term. If there were such cases, however, they would need to be closely tied to our ability to produce the appropriately trained and experienced aircrews for those platforms. The current timelines USSOCOM has developed for acquisition are coordinated with the Army's ability to train new pilots and crewmembers and USSOCOM's ability to ensure it has properly trained and experienced SOF aviators available to employ the aircraft.

Ms. SANCHEZ. Are there any contract options that exist to support rotary-wing and vertical lift requirements for OEF/OIF, or other areas?

Mr. REID. I am aware that there are some contract options that exist to support lift requirements for OEF/OIF, though USSOCOM does not have any contracts for rotary-wing support in OEF/OIF. In some cases, these are fixed-wing aircraft, which can conduct some movement missions, but do not replace the need for rotary-wing aircraft. At times and when appropriate, these contracts can help in offsetting the demand placed on conventional rotary-wing aircraft. Contracted rotary-wing/vertical lift or even Short Takeoff and Landing (STOL) fixed-wing support is a feasible answer to many of the routine logistics and transportation requirements in theater, but contracted support is not viable for SOF mission support. In most cases, contract rotary-wing support options are not suitable for operational use in Iraq or Afghanistan. However, contractor support and coalition-contributing nation support for security force assistance training in aircraft like the Mi-17 are viable options.

Ms. SANCHEZ. From SOCOM and OSD's vantage point, once supplemental funding goes away (by fiscal year 2012 and beyond, for example) are the services going to be able to absorb SOCOM rotary-wing requirements? What are SOCOM and SO/LIC doing now to address the issue and to ensure that requirements are met?

Colonel REAP. USSOCOM does not anticipate reduction in the Geographic Combatant Command requirements for Special Operations Forces (SOF), including deployment to Iraq and Afghanistan, even though wartime supplemental funding may no longer exist beyond present level of Iraq and Afghanistan operations. We are working closely with the Department to address these fiscal challenges in FY 2012 and beyond. The Department fully recognizes and supports this need and has initi-

ated actions to address the shortfall. Work and coordination with the services will continue for the SOF enabling capabilities to include general purpose force rotary wing support of deployed SOF. Requirements for those levels of support are unclear at this point as the planning process is ongoing and many variables remain undefined.

Ms. SANCHEZ. The 2010 QDR clearly envisions a greater role for Special Operations Forces in peacetime partnership operations, security force assistance, and foreign internal defense. Given that, how will you carry out these expanded missions with the current fleet of aircraft? What other platforms do you require?

Colonel REAP. Special Operations Forces has historically worked with partner nations to support training events and operations. The fleet of Rotary Wing aircraft we have programmed provides us with the capabilities we need, but we are always looking for ways to improve and meet the emergent requirements of the nation. We are planning to expand the 6 Special Operations Squadron, the only unit dedicated to aviation Security Forces Assistance, and purchase an additional 2 medium lift helicopters to augment the 4 Mi-17's we currently lease. These aircraft will provide us with the ability to train at home on aircraft we anticipate flying overseas while we build partner capacity of partner nations.

Ms. SANCHEZ. Please describe in detail the specific changes that have been made to maintenance, training, and force structure since 2008 to improve availability of rotary-wing aircraft in support of Special Operations Forces in OIF/OEF.

Colonel REAP. USSOCOM has been aggressively pursuing a number of initiatives to improve Special Operations Aviation availability for SOF. We have realized a 5% increase in authorized aircrew and realigned airframes to provide a 12% increase of aircraft in the training base.

In coordination with the Army, there were a number of personnel initiatives to attack the recruiting and retention challenges for our specially trained aircrews. The Army has increased the number of recruiters and provided policy changes that provide increased recruiting opportunities and a greater pool of potential applicants. We added a bonus for candidates that complete special operations aviation qualification training. Working with the Army in an effort to decrease attrition through retirement, we also expanded a bonus program designed to retain our most experienced pilots.

The training company was expanded to a Special Operations Aviation Training Battalion to provide greater control over the numerous programs of instruction. These programs of instruction have been formalized with the US Army's Training and Doctrine Command and personnel management systems. Continued fielding of MH–47G has increased the number of continuously deployed aircraft from 6 to 12 MH–47Gs in OEF and we perform the major scheduled maintenance on the deployed aircraft in the US, ensuring that the aircraft we can deploy are available for greater periods of time.

Ms. SANCHEZ. Are there any outstanding or unfulfilled Requests for Forces (RFFs) for rotary-wing and vertical lift capabilities in support of SOF in the CENTCOM AOR? Are there other outstanding or unfulfilled RFFs for rotary-wing and vertical lift capabilities for SOF outside of CENTCOM?

Colonel REAP. Yes to first question; no to second question. Details to further address this question can be provided via separate correspondence that is classified SECRET with caveat.

Ms. SANCHEZ. Please provide the Review of Helicopter Assets (ROHA), as referenced in official testimony, to the committee. Please provide to the committee the anticipated timeline until the current ROHA is updated.

Colonel REAP. ROHA was completed by the Joint Staff and provided a brief of the updated version of ROHA to HASC TUTC Staff members.

Ms. SANCHEZ. A recent U.S. European Command press release highlighted a Special Operations program to train the Croatian Air Force and improve their rotary wing capabilities. In addition to Croatia, are there similar initiatives underway to work with other allied nations? Please provide an overview of similar initiatives.

Colonel REAP. The example cited is a Special Operations Command Europe (SOCEUR) initiative exclusive to this theater's attempt to build partnership rotary wing capacity in support of International Security Assistance Force. SOCEUR is very active in investigating willing and capable nations to support International Security Assistance Force rotary wing capacity. Other locations that have received assessment and differing levels of support include; Hungry, Czech Republic, and the Netherlands. The 6 Special Operations Squadron remains a priority for USSOCOM and works with friendly nations around the world, such as Pakistan, to advise and train their rotary wing and fixed wing programs. Lastly, at a higher level, USSOCOM has taken the lead in assisting Poland in the standup of a POL SOCOM.

Ms. SANCHEZ. I understand that SOCOM does not purchase airframes and platforms, but rather funds the SOF-peculiar upgrades for the aircraft to support SOF missions. That said, and since you are therefore very dependent on the Services to purchase the actual platforms, are the Services meeting your requirements and are their larger acquisition programs aligned with your priorities? How do you coordinate requirements with the Services?

Colonel REAP. USSOCOM is inexorably linked with the services in the procurement of the majority of our airframes and platforms. USSOCOM achieves close coordination with each of the respective services, conducted through senior leader discussions held between each of the services and SOCOM. As well, SOCOM engages with the services through respective programming planning budgeting and execution process. A recent highlight of this ongoing process is the procurement of eight additional MH–47G helicopters. We continue close coordination with the Army as they resource the base platform and SOCOM resources the Special Operations Forces peculiar modifications and sustainment of its operation. USSOCOM and components use Joint Capabilities Integration Development System (JCIDS). Where the Services' existing or developing material solution is one that we can use or adapt to meet our requirements or capability gap, we use that solution and or modify the equipment to meet SOF peculiar requirements.

Ms. SANCHEZ. If budget were no barrier, what additional resources would you need to execute your **global** mission properly?

Colonel REAP. USSOCOM is meeting the most critical operational requirements for vertical lift within our capability. Owing in part to the threats, terrain, and geography of Afghanistan, the demand for vertical lift platforms continues to grow. As we expand capacity, we have to do it in a methodical and controlled manner to ensure we have the right mix of capabilities to support the requirements of the geographic combatant commanders and that we can continue to maintain the high standards that form the hallmark of Special Operations Forces. Rotary wing platforms are just one of the low-density, high-demand capabilities forces operating around the world need and every decision to increase in one area may mean accepting tradeoff in another. USSOCOM's Strategic Planning process takes into account the force as a whole, optimizing growth and operational capacity. With continued support of the committee, USSOCOM will continue to meet its global requirements.

Ms. SANCHEZ. Can you outline your required force structure for rotary-wing requirements—and compare that to your programmed force structure? In other words, are you getting everything you need?

Colonel REAP. Through the generous support of this committee, we continue to receive the resources necessary to conduct our global mission and increase capacity where warranted, while closing capability gaps identified through continuing analysis. Our programmed rotary wing force structure reflects our required rotary wing capability. Growing the capacity of our rotary wing lift and the force structure is on pace to grow at a maximum rate factored to preserve the quality and level of expertise, with skill sets necessary for special operations aviation missions and support of our special operations land and maritime forces.

Ms. SANCHEZ. On average, how many aircraft are lost each year because of training accidents or battle damage? Does program growth take these losses into consideration? How do you re-coop these losses? Is this funded through overseas contingency operations (OCO) funding?

Colonel REAP. Since 2001, the average is about two rotary wing aircraft lost per year. Program growth in rotary-wing portfolios does not include replacement of projected losses. USSOCOM utilizes supplemental requests or Congressional unfunded requests to address resourcing effort required to restore lost aircraft inventory.

Ms. SANCHEZ. Admiral Olson has testified that more than 80 percent of deployed Special Operations Forces (SOF) are within U.S. Central Command's area of responsibility. Is that statistic the same for SOF rotary-wing assets? Are 80 percent of those deployed assets also within U.S. Central Command, and if so, how are we managing the growing global requirements for SOF in the Horn of Africa, for example?

Colonel REAP. Since 9/11, about 30 percent of the entire SOF rotary wing inventory has been continuously deployed to the CENTCOM AOR, and another 10 percent on top of that has been on an alert posture with a very finite window for it to be recalled. That constitutes more than 90% of the deployed SOF rotary wing force being deployed to CENTCOM. However, with continued execution of programmed growth of SOF RW, modernization of the SOF Rotary Wing fleet, and through prioritization processes like Global SOF Management Conference, we are able to deploy SOF Rotary Wing forces out to other theaters based consistent with Department's priorities. An example was last year's FLINTLOCK exercise in AFRICOM, where the CV22 made its first operational deployment. With SOF Ro-

tary Wing, we also support exercises in SOUTHCOM and PACOM each year and supported a EUCOM exercise this year.

Ms. SANCHEZ. In a general sense, and in terms of **where** SOF will be operating in the future, how are you planning out through 2015? I know that by that point operations in Iraq and Afghanistan will have decreased considerably, and perhaps operations in Africa will have increased considerably, for example. How are you planning for that? How do you ensure your numbers are accurate but also that the **type** of aircraft will meet the need?

Colonel REAP. USSOCOM has a robust and mature Strategic Planning Process that includes a long-term mission assessment and analysis of future requirements. Strategic guidance forms the framework for our process. In coordination with the Department, tools we employ include the Defense Planning Scenarios, where we model and program for capabilities we will need in the future. Senior military judgment takes into account the force as a whole, optimizing growth and operational capacity to meet the Department's objectives.

Ms. SANCHEZ. The fiscal year 2011 budget request for SOCOM rotary-wing capabilities is approximately $365 million, which is nearly **$100 million more** than was appropriated in fiscal year 2010. Yet—while the overall request increases—the amount of funding put into the "rotary wing upgrades and sustainment programs" line actually **decreases from $91 million in FY2010 to $80 million** in FY2011. Why this **decrease** of nearly $11 million for rotary wing upgrades and sustainment programs?

Colonel REAP. Simply stated, the ongoing procurement and delivery of new aviation platforms in the form of the MH–47G and the MH–60M cause the overall capability cost to increase although the new aircraft preclude the need for near term significant upgrades or sustainment actions. This, coupled with the recent fielding of major upgrades such as the Suite of Radio Frequency Counter Measures (SIRFC) that will be transferred to the new aircraft, also lowers upgrade requirements.

Ms. SANCHEZ. As you expand your rotary-wing aircraft numbers, are there anticipated MILCON requirements to go along with this? Can you talk about that and some of the other second and third order effects on the budget in the coming years?

Colonel REAP. As we program for aviation growth, we include MILCON requirements in the program/budget, whether it be ramp and hanger space, simulators or barracks. Second order effects on the budget of expanding SOF rotary wing aviation include impacts on the limited ready space to expand on three bases where SOF Rotary Wing is stationed (Campbell, Lewis, and Hunter). As ramp space needed and facilities spaces increase, security and safety zones may require additional land to allow the fielding. The cost of sustaining and operating additional aircraft is the actual cost driver when considering growth over time and is a significant percentage of the SOCOM budget.

Ms. SANCHEZ. Please describe SOF aviation recruitment and retention efforts since 2008. What recruitment and retention bonuses and options is SOCOM considering to improve SOF aviation manning?

Colonel REAP. We have worked hard with the Army and, with their support, have identified a number of fixes that will help us meet our growth and required Special Operations Forces Rotary Wing aircrew manning. Through the Army, we have in place retention incentives and bonuses for SOF rotary wing aviators at critical points in their career. As well, more senior and experienced aviators are being extended in order to reduce the rate of attrition to a maximum of six percent. Recruiting efforts are focused on increasing the number of aviation warrant officer applicants and assessments. Army has directed its efforts through commanders of Forces Command, US Army Europe, and US Forces–Korea, as well publishing military personnel message to facilitate recruiting in deployed combat aviation brigades, National Guard and Army Reserve. Furthermore, the recruiting guidance aligns Army Force Generation cycle and assessment process and encourages select lieutenant and warrant officer graduates of Initial Entry Rotary Wing training (flight school). The overall recruiting and retention efforts to increase the manning of the 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment extend into growth and training capacity of the Special Operations Aviation Training Battalion at Fort Campbell, KY.

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