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

STATEMENT OF

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REGARDING

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

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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.