

June 5, 2013

Washington, D.C.

Session 2 Panel Member

Rear Admiral Sean A. Pybus, USN

Commander, U.S. Naval Special Warfare Command

**REAR ADMIRAL SEAN PYBUS:** Thanks Admiral McRaven. Ladies and gentlemen, I will be brief because I have a water polo game with Ambassador Barton in a few minutes. [laughter] I have the privilege of leading Naval Special Warfare. Naval Special Warfare exists to provide a maritime-oriented Special Operations force. Our reason for being is to do special and difficult work in the water, in the hinterlands, around the world.

We've been fighting ashore for the, you know, for a decade, now, with most of the rest of SOF. But I much anticipate a return to engagement work and with a water orientation, which I think is critically important, this engagement work that has been much discussed this morning.

We have many allies and partners with similarly orientated maritime forces, both conventional and special. Some of these partners we've worked with and have a long history with, such as Britain's Special Boat Service, Australian Special Air Service, Chile's Buzos Tacticos, the Kenyan Navy, South Korea's ROK SEALs. But there are many other countries and partners today with which we work.

Today, as I speak, we're in twenty-one different countries, working with forces like these on engagement. And it's absolutely critical and I echo what Admiral Leidig just said. It is critically important that we are part of the strategy of the combatant commander and the objectives of the chief of mission that have to be aligned to make progress, and under direction and guidance from the theatre special operations commanders.

You've heard several examples of what we do for General Kelly and Brigadier General Mulholland in SOUTHCOM as an example. We've long been in Colombia with the military and the police, working their river system, which is their highway, to great success, which gives access, which nourishes business and provides security. It's been mentioned we've been in the Southern Philippines now for twelve years. That is, for all intents and purposes, "mission accomplished" for Admiral Locklear and General Brozenick at SOCPAC.

We're in Cameroon as another important place, working with the First Battalion Rapid Intervention, there again, with our special warfare combatant craft crewmen, doing important maritime work. We remain in Kenya working with their navy, and particularly their border security, as they abut Somalia. So just several examples of where we are.

Our investments that we've made in NATO SOF have paid off hugely. And you can see that in the performance of our allies and partners in Afghanistan in recent years. I can speak for these commanders up here; SOF is not doing any unimportant work today. The demand signal for Special Operations is huge. We can only do a small part of that. And that part has to run through the Defense Department and the nation's security priority filters. So where SOF is, it's because they're part of a combatant commander strategy and aligned with the chief of mission, and again work through, coordinate with, synchronized the TSOC commander. So nothing is occurring in SOF that's not important to somebody's plan or strategy.

So, regarding how we prepare our Naval Special Warfare forces, I ask our force to focus on direct action and surveillance, and reconnaissance trained at that very hard—that's our core. That's our nature and legacy. And, if we train, if we do that properly, we can train others, which is what we do in engagement. They want tactics from a current battlefield. They want to know how to command and control to communicate



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how we run logistics. So all those things that we have learned, after fighting in Iraq and Afghanistan, you know, there are many partners out there in the rest of the world who want that knowledge, so that they can secure their own borders and take care of their own security business.

So these engagement activities, which I see SOF swinging to, are under-valued, in my opinion. And I think that's largely because, to be successful, it takes that alignment at persistent presence, alignment and constant objectives, over five, ten, fifteen, twenty years. This nation is not a patient one, as we all know. But a small investment in SOF, with the right guidance and objectives and alignment from leadership, I think gets us to success more often than not. So I'm a big believer in it. It's a game-changer, quite frankly. It's deterrence. It's conflict prevention. It's shaping the future for success.

And, if you make the investment at a PhD level, on objectives and strategy, and you maintain focus from the combatant commander and the interagency, you will be successful, I am convinced. So, in that light, I ask NSW to become more capable and comfortable working for ambassadors and country teams, to hone our skills, to understand and influence the human domain which has been talked about this morning, and lastly, to exercise patience and have knowledge, with regard to strategic plans and campaigns, and make sure that our tactical leadership and their troops understand why they're in a particular place, doing particular things.

It is vitally important that that young lieutenant or SF captain and his team understand their place in a strategy. It may not be a satisfying six months for them. They may not see much progress. But, if you go heel-to-toe, heel-to-toe for five years, then you're in a much better place. And so, we have to make sure that our special operators understand that. It is a game changer. And, we need to continue to invest in our own interagency relationships. We've made huge gains here. But we need good information, dialogue, intelligence, and context to do the right things and have a good outcome.

Tensions in the maritime today, such as the Persian Gulf, the South China Sea, even the Mediterranean, I think those will only increase. We have ever-growing populations on the coast, and resource pressures. It becomes critical to understand the dynamics of these areas, their human domains, and their physical characteristics. I think NSW is on a road to do that, to provide value-added to these combatant commanders through their theatres, Special Operations commands. And yet, we have to be ready for anything.

So I ask my forces to find that sweet spot between train, advise, and do engagement, and be ready to fight and win, as necessary. I think we'll be busy the remainder of the decade doing these things. Thank you very much.

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## QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

AUDIENCE: For Admiral Girrier, Tony Capaccio with Bloomberg News. And for Admiral Pybus, can you talk a little bit about the capability and threat posed by North Korea's Special Operations forces? We hear it's like sixty thousand or seventy thousand, I think. And we hear that they pose a great asymmetric threat. We hear that in theory. But you deal with them from a planning purpose every day. Can you give us a reality check?

REAR ADMIRAL ROBERT GIRRIER: Tony, thank you. I think the best way to look at that, one of the, again, enduring areas of instability, and certainly has our great focus and attention, is the Peninsula. And North Korea's predilection towards provocations, and going through cycles of provocations for a variety of reasons, to get their way in various agendas, I think one of the tools that they have available to use are their SOF forces. And, not getting into the specifics of how they may or may not use those, it's one of the cards that they choose to brandish in their hand, to cause a provocation along the DMZ, perhaps, or in the Northwest Islands, or any of the areas that are contested.

So again, it's an area, I think, it's one of the forces. You characterized it as asymmetric. I'll concur. But it's one of many methods that the North has used or has brandished, if you will, maintaining instability in that part of the world. And again, using it as a source of provocation for their own political aims.

REAR ADMIRAL SEAN PYBUS: Tony, that's clearly the PACOM commander's business. Eric Wendt is the theater Special Ops commander on the Peninsula. I mentioned that we partner with Republic of Korea (ROK) SEALs. We have for a long time. But, as a provider, we just provide a suite of capability for the theatre commanders to have what they need as per their plans.