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USAWC Fellow**

Logistical Support in
Unconventional Warfare Operations

by

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Abstract

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Unconventional Warfare (UW) was the first mission assigned to United States Army Special Forces when they were formed in 1952. The Unconventional Warfare mission assumes that SOF forces will work with guerrillas in another country and possibly with other allies. A critical weakness or seam in United States war fighting doctrine and capability has been in the area of Unconventional Warfare logistics support. This research project will look at the logistics support of unconventional warfare and the planner's ability to understand the types, sequence, and scale of likely support requirements and how they apply to UW operational logistical planning. UW is distinctive for the challenge it presents to the logistical planner and support personnel, in being able to provide low visibility logistics support on a potentially large scale. UW logistics is differentiated from conventional logistics primarily by the diversity and complexity of both the risks and constraints faced. The scale and diversity of potential support requirements, the complexity of operational risks, and the need to operate in non-permissive environments impose constraints on UW networks well beyond those faced in conventional or standard DOD logistics enterprise systems.

Logistical Support in Unconventional Warfare Operations

Outline

- I. Key Terms
- II. Unconventional Warfare (UW)
- III. Training
- IV. Equipping
- V. Manning
- VI. Conclusion
- VII. Endnotes
- VIII. Bibliography

I. **Key Terms:**

AO	Area of Operations
ARSOF	Army Special Operations Command
CF	Conventional Forces
CS	Combat Support
CSS	Combat Service Support
C2	Command and Control
CT	Counter Terrorism
DA	Direct Action
DOD	Department of Defense
DOS	Department of State
FBC	Former Battalion Commander
FID	Foreign Internal Defense
FOE	Future Operating Environment
GCC	Geographic Combatant Command
GSB	Group Support Battalion
HN	Host Nation
NCO	Non-Commissioned Officer
TSOC	Theater Special Operations Command
USASFC	United States Army Special Forces Command
USASOC	United States Army Special Operations Command
USSOCOM	United States Special Operations Command
UW	Unconventional Warfare

II. Unconventional Warfare

"UW is the core mission and organizing principle for Army Special Forces. It is the only military organization specifically trained and organized to wage UW. Nonetheless, it is apparent to me that we have not invested adequate training and resources in developing and maintaining sufficient advanced capability to conduct UW or UW-related operations in sensitive environments or conditions. My own assessment, based on my experience as a TSOC commander trying to expand and develop a theater-wide capability to prosecute sensitive operations specifically in support of the theater commander, is that the critical point in time where military UW skills are crucially relevant to decision makers is "left of the beginning" of a policy decision contemplated by the United States Government regarding sensitive operations. The assessment phases of relevant resistance or surrogate potential — by definition normally very sensitive requiring a healthy toolkit of operational skills — are the ones where our informed, UW military skills are most needed, and where all-too-often we are not participating."

— Lt. Gen. John Mulholland, Commanding General, U.S. Army Special Operations Command " Unconventional Warfare Evolution," USASOC leadership briefing, Aug. 23, 2010

The United States Special Operations Command (SOCOM), in its guiding doctrine for future operations (SOCOM 2020) forecasts that the Future Operating Environment (FOE) will continue to be a complex and ever changing environment with many state and non-state actors forging terrorist operations. Future security threats will lack the bipolar clarity of the Cold War or even the relative simplicity of states acting with or against other states. SOCOM 2020 predicts that most future threats against the security of the United States will involve both state and non-state actors, and upon that prediction it provides a roadmap for developing Special Forces capabilities and aligning SOF forces for the next six to ten years. Although SOCOM 2020 provides the context and basic outlines for future SOF operations, it does not address the logistical problems presented with supporting Unconventional Warfare.¹

This paper will address logistical support structure, manning, equipping, logistical training and how it applies directly to Unconventional Warfare operations. In early 2012,

SOCOM assumed management and control of the Theater Special Operation Commands (TSOCs). The Theater Special Operations Commands are joint command headquarters that are manned and aligned per the Geographic Combatant Commander (GCC) special operations forces strategic objectives. To achieve the objectives outlined in SOCOM 2020, SOF must create and develop a joint talent management, training and equipping program that is specific to Unconventional Warfare and managed by SOCOM human resources personnel (J1), but has the Service Component Commanders managing their respective services. SOCOM already has four Component Commanders representing the services; United States Army Special Operations Command, United States Air Force Special Operations Command, Naval Special Warfare Command, and Marine Corps Forces Special Operations Command.

Special Operations forces in the next six to ten years will increasingly operate in austere and complicated environments in both urban and rural regions to conduct Unconventional Warfare per SOCOM 2020 and ARSOF 2022. ARSOF 2022, is the United States Army Special Operations Command roadmap for developing SOF capabilities and force alignment through the next six to ten years and in direct support of SOCOM 2020. The austere and challenging environments predicted in both SOCOM 2020 and ARSOF 2022, act to complicate the security situation and challenge the Special Forces operative in operational planning and mission control of Unconventional Warfare.²

As defined by the, Department of Defense (DOD) Unconventional Warfare is “a broad spectrum of military and paramilitary operations conducted in enemy-held, enemy controlled or politically sensitive territory. Unconventional warfare includes, but is not

limited to, the interrelated fields of guerrilla warfare, evasion and escape, subversion, sabotage, and other operations of a low visibility, covert or clandestine nature. These interrelated aspects of unconventional warfare may be prosecuted singularly or collectively by predominantly indigenous personnel, usually supported and directed in varying degrees by (an) external source(s) during all conditions of war or peace.”³

Many of the terms have been coined in an effort to describe the spectrum of military operations that cannot be labeled as Conventional Warfare or missions conducted by Conventional Forces (CF). Unconventional Warfare was the first mission assigned to United States Army Special Forces in 1952, but since their founding Special Forces has received nine additional missions under United States Title X authorities; Direct Action (DA), Strategic Reconnaissance (SR), Foreign Internal Defense (FID), Civil Affairs Operations (CA), Counterterrorism (CT), Military Information Support Operations (MISO), Humanitarian Assistance (HA), Theater Search and Rescue (CSAR), and Activities Specified by the President or Secretary of Defense (SECDEF). Some of these new “missions” might also be included under the UW umbrella but listing them separately clarifies the many activities now carried about by SOF forces around the world. The unconventional warfare mission assumes that special operations forces will work with guerrillas to overthrow an oppressive or terrorist supporting regime. Their mission profile can be from weapons and reconnaissance training to leading a guerrilla force in combat operations.⁴

Despite this proliferation of missions for SOF, DOD doctrine has not kept pace in the area of combat service support (CSS) and combat support (CS) in direct support of Unconventional Warfare operations. The issue of Unconventional Warfare has been

described in numerous ways from each of the services and also many departments within the United States Government, but all Unconventional Warfare commanders and leaders must clearly understand the strategic role of Unconventional Warfare and how it impacts and affects United States Foreign Policy in that region or specific target country. Logistical support to Unconventional Warfare is unlike conventional logistical support in that most if not all life support requirements will be locally purchased in the operational area. During most Unconventional Warfare operations, SOF logisticians confront undeveloped operational theaters, and thus have minimal support from the usual Army / Department of Defense support structures.⁵ The major challenge to UW Logistics is the nature of the operational environment, defined both by geography and politics, ranging from permissive to, semi-permissive to non-permissive.

III. Training:

The United States Special Forces Command, doctrine manual, (FM 3-05.201) defines six critical functions of unconventional warfare logistics: transportation, infrastructure, communications, supply, medical, and financial. Currently the Special Operations logistician at the Group Support Battalion (GSB) or Special Forces Group Logistics Officer (S4) is the only direct support to SOF personnel conducting Unconventional Warfare. Additional logistical support from the Theater Special Operations Command is informal and often incapable of meeting non-standard logistics requirements in a timely and robust manner. TSOCs are primarily headquarters and planning organizations, and do not have transportation or other logistical assets directly under their control. United States Special Operations Command, Unconventional Warfare support structure must be openly available and clearly defined to the Special

Forces Group logisticians for Unconventional Warfare operations to be successful; the majority of SOCOMs Unconventional Warfare logistical capabilities are close hold and need to know based on the security classification. Although operational security is paramount throughout the SOF community, SOF logisticians and non-commissioned officers must have visibility and capability knowledge of SOCOM programs prior to real world deployment.

Joint Unconventional Warfare logistics training within United States Special Operations Command and across the Special Operations community is almost completely ad hoc. There are minimal structured training opportunities for officers, Non-Commissioned Officers and Department of Defense Civilian logisticians within the United States Army Special Operations Command or United States Special Operations Command enterprise. The vast majority of Unconventional Warfare logistics experience has been developed through real world contingency operations and unit specific logistical training. Special Operations logisticians generally learn to apply logistics fundamentals and Techniques, Tactics and Procedures (TTP's) to Unconventional Warfare requirements through on the job experience, with little to no training or guidance for identifying and coordinating non-standard equipment and resources to support operational requirements for Unconventional Warfare and other Special Operations missions.

Special Operations logisticians receive little or no training guidance on unconventional warfare support requirements or how to properly operate in a permissive or semi-permissive target country or geographic area. Both officers and NCO's need to have the logistical capability to plan, develop and manage combat service support

(CSS) and combat support (CS) within the unconventional warfare spectrum of operations. Almost all unconventional warfare logistics knowledge, expertise and skills are developed through multiple special operations assignments that include deployments in support of unconventional warfare or foreign internal defense operations. Due to the lack of formal unconventional warfare logistical training guidance or structure; transferring unconventional warfare specific knowledge, skills and experience are almost always left on the outgoing logistician to pass on to the new officer or non-commissioned officer within that specific unit or section.

In addition to training shortfalls, there are organizational failures as well. Currently neither United States Army Special Operations Command nor United States Special Operations Command have a staff section or unit identified to oversee Unconventional Warfare logistics training across the Special Operations enterprise, to consolidate unconventional warfare logistical skills and best practices. Due to security classifications and unit barriers, most unconventional warfare logistical knowledge is never transferred between special operations forces, conventional forces or joint units. Best practices in supporting Unconventional Warfare operations are not passed on throughout the USASOC / USSOCOM community. As a result, United States Army Special Operations Command sustainment units currently have minimally trained personnel to conduct unconventional warfare logistics, and the majority of their personnel have no experience in planning or resourcing unconventional warfare operations in a denied or semi-denied area. While some units within United States Army Special Operations Command have sent their logisticians for training throughout the

Department of Defense and other Government Agencies, the majority of units are still operating via the on the job (OJT) training program.

To truly build a Special Operations logistician capable of supporting Unconventional Warfare operations, SOF must invest our time and resources into a robust training program that trains our logistics soldiers to conduct Unconventional Warfare support no matter the environment or political situation. We must base our training objectives on the SOF truths as we do for the Special Forces operative, to effectively support and sustain the world's elite fighting force: "SOF Truths: Humans are more important than hardware; quality is more important than quantity; SOF cannot be mass produced, and competent SOF cannot be created after emergencies occur; most special operations require non-SOF assistance."⁶

SOF should develop a four-phased training program to develop SOF Logisticians capable of supporting unconventional warfare operations. SOF logisticians defined for this mission requirement would be in the rank of Staff Sergeant and above, due to operational security and level of planning and operational knowledge to support UW operations. The four-phased consecutively run logistics training program would consist of: Phase 1 Unit/Section Indoctrination; Phase 2 Cross Training; Phase 3 Joint/Inter-Agency; Phase 4 Capstone Training.

Phase1. Unit/Section Indoctrination

During the 7 to 21 day indoctrination phase, SOF Logisticians work hand in hand with SOF operatives to define unconventional warfare and clearly understand the combat service support, required by the Teams, Battalions and Special Forces Groups.

Phase 2. Cross Training

This phase is designed to ensure that all SOF Logisticians are cross trained in all facets of Combat Service Support (CSS). In order to truly support UW operations, all SOF logisticians must be able to conduct and execute all CSS functions (supply, water, fuel, ammunition, local purchase and contracting support) in direct support and with minimal guidance. SOF logisticians focus in this phase will be in developing soldiers who are capable of operating independently or in small teams to support unconventional warfare while maintaining a small foot print and mission security.

Phase 3. Joint/Inter-Agency

This phase will focus on the Joint / Inter-Agency relationship and support structures available to the SOF logistician in direct or indirect support of unconventional warfare. During this phase SOF logisticians would cross train with our sister service forces and also participate with Inter-Agency directorates to better understand their capabilities and internal logistics support requirements for unconventional warfare operations. SOF logisticians must understand that each service brings a unique and different set of capabilities and resources to the joint fight; these partners also bring challenges for the SOF logistician who must be capable of supporting commercial and unique joint SOF equipment and Soldier systems.

Phase 4. Capstone Training

The final phase is the Capstone training event designed to test the relationship between the SOF logistician and the SOF operative in the execution of their Unconventional Warfare training plans. This should be accomplished through numerous

training venues, but a real evaluation of the support structure and associated Techniques, Tactics, and Procedures would require a major training exercise, such as at the Joint Readiness Training Center (JRTC) or the National Training Center (NTC).

IV. Equipping:

Logistics support as defined in Field Manual 3-05.201 describes logistics support to Unconventional Warfare (UW) as the following:

“Logistic support of guerrilla forces includes the same functions as those of conventional forces: labor, maintenance, construction, hospitalization, evacuation, supply, and transportation. Problems of transporting supplies and equipment over or through territory under enemy control complicate this support. It creates a requirement for clandestine delivery, which limits the amount of external logistic support for the JSOA. External sources have not always furnished extensive transportation, maintenance, hospitalization, evacuation, and construction to the JSOA. METT-TC and the delivery means available determine the nature and extent of external logistic support. External support will eventually end, and the guerrillas must be prepared to continue without these supplies.”⁷

The Special Operations logistician must be able to properly train and support the guerrilla force in managing maintenance and sustainment capabilities. Unconventional Warfare operations often require the procurement of material and equipment from outside the standard military requisition systems, with items running the gamut from traditional military equipment and supplies, to non-standard supplies and commercial off the shelf items (COTS). Equipment and material requirements for UW operations can be broken into two distinct categories: (1) material for SOF execution of support activities, and (2) material for supporting surrogate or guerilla forces. Due to the operational security concerns to UW procurement methods and delivery, receipt, storage, and distribution methods must be in accordance with all DOD security procedures and United States Special Operations Command policies and regulations.

SOCOM maintains a Special Operations Forces Support Activity (SOFSA) in Lexington, KY, that can repair and support SOF Unique equipment for the SOF logistician in the worldwide fight. Prior to 9/11, the command held a yearly conference at this facility focused on improving the attendees' understanding of capabilities, standard operating procedures, and how to obtain both maintenance and supply support. Recent funding constraints, however, have eliminated this event leaving the new logistician without a basic understanding of the facility's capabilities. The United States Special Operations Command Logistical Officer (J4), and Component Logistical Officers, must establish a system focused on educating their logisticians on the non-standard maintenance and logistical support available at these great facilities that are structured to repair and return the SOF-Unique weapons and equipment.

Organic logistics support to Army Special Operations Forces (ARSOF) consists of a Group Support Battalion (GSB) and the 528th Special Operations Sustainment Brigade. Neither of these elements are prepared to support Unconventional Warfare Operations. This capability gap was evident in the opening days of both Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom. The 528th was quickly overwhelmed within its organic capabilities and was forced to request augmentation from conventional forces to sustain operations without mission failure.

While standard operating procedures (SOP) and Department of the Army regulations outline the management of Army common material and equipment, many SOF logisticians are not properly trained in procuring or managing non-standard equipment and material in support of Unconventional Warfare operations. Through twelve years of war in Iraq and Afghanistan, however our logistics community has

gotten much better in accounting, receipt, storage and issue of non-standard equipment through United States Special Operations Command logistical guidance and directives in support of other similar programs.

V. Manning:

The Joint Logistics world will not get any easier given the myriad of operations that SOF forces will be called upon to conduct in the years ahead. Joint Logistics Leaders will have to embrace the Sequestration and Budget Reduction Act and plan for reduced funds and resources over the next 10 year period and beyond. The era of big military budgets that gave the US Military the freedom to modernize our forces with the newest gadgets and weapon systems is over. The modern force is in the process of reverting back to the low budget Army of the 1990's after the Gulf War. A majority of the Army's Junior Officers and mid-level Non Commissioned Officers (NCOs) have never experienced budgetary constraints associated with limited funds, equipment and restricted training budgets.

Logistical support for all SOCOM components comes from two lines of command: 1- SOCOM provides "SOF-peculiar support to SOF units worldwide." An example of SOF-peculiar support would be providing ammunition for foreign weapons, and special supplies to SOF supported guerrillas.⁸ The Geographic Combatant Commander, however, has overall responsibility for all joint support in his theater. The Theater Special Operations Command (TSOC) logistics officer (J4) is responsible for using the extraordinary procurement mechanisms legislatively authorized for SOCOM, and making sure they are used properly and supplies are accounted for in accordance

with regulations and Department of Defense policy.⁹ The second line of logistics support is provided by the supported unit's component command.

All Special Operations Command units receive Logistical support from the Theater Special Operations Command Logistics section when operating in their Geographic area. The Theater Special Operations Command, Commander provides combat service support to the Special Operations forces in theater until the Conventional Force (CF) arrives and establishes a theater logistical support structure. The Theater Special Operations Command Logistics Officer (J4) is responsible for planning, coordinating, synchronizing, and controlling SOF combat support and combat service support for the Geographic Combatant Commander. In the projected Future Operating Environment, according to SOCOM 2020 and ARSOF 2022, SOF will be the only combatants on the battlefield supporting Unconventional Warfare and other SOF missions in austere and semi-denied areas around the world. This requirement calls for well trained, mature, educated and experienced special operations logistics Officers and Non-Commissioned Officers to execute critical support operations in austere and remote environments with minimal, or no, conventional force logistics support or infrastructure.

Currently United States Special Operations Command has no human resource structure to track SOF logistics officers and NCOs that served in special operations component units. This could be true for all branches of military occupation skill identifiers, but due to the unique requirements it takes to support Unconventional Warfare in an austere or semi-denied area, experienced logisticians are critical to mission success.

A potential solution for SOCOM is to establish a Joint Talent Management Office in the SOCOM Human Resources Office (J1) that works with the Component Commander's Human Resources (G1) to ensure that quality and experienced SOF logisticians are being assigned to the Theater Special Operations Command Logistics sections (J4), and that we manage SOF logistician's career tracks to include broadening assignments to the Geographic Combatant Commanders and Theater Special Operations Command. Perhaps the greatest challenge will be convincing the Services to segregate a certain population of logisticians that will career track mainly in Special Operations assignments and then Joint assignments to the Theater Special Operations Command's and Geographic Combatant Commands. With United States Special Operations Command taking the lead on the assignment process this solution would result in increased support to both the Geographic Combatant Commander and Theater Special Operations Commander.

The majority of senior NCOs and officers being assigned to the Theater Special Operations Command are on their first assignment to the Special Operations community and have very little knowledge or experience on how Special Operations units are dispersed throughout the operational area. It typically takes 12 -18 months to get a firm understanding of how to support Unconventional Warfare operations. The current 24 to 36 month joint permanent change of station cycle means that those soldiers usually depart for their next assignment before the Theater Special Operations Command gets the full benefit out of that now trained and experienced Special Operations logistician.

Currently Army officers and NCOs assigned to special operations units for 12 months, or longer, receive an Additional Skill Identifier (ASI). Allowing only those officers and NCOs with the Special Operations ASIs to fill Special Operations coded billets ensures that service members filling key assignments arrive with at least some understanding of the environment they are about to endure. However, at least for the officer ranks, this has little to no impact on future assignments. A potential solution for senior logisticians with respect to the assignment dilemma would be for Theater Special Operations Command Logistical Officer positions (J4) to be treated similarly to assignments coded as Former Battalion Commander (FBC) billets. The population allowed to fill Former Battalion Commander coded billets is closely managed by Army Human Resources Command. This ensures, at a minimum, that officers filling those assignments arrive with the experience and understanding of how to be effective leaders. Assigning responsibility to United States Special Operations Command in coordination with the Special Operations component commanders for management of such a pool of officers and NCOs that are assigned to key Theater Special Operations Command positions ensures highly trained and SOF experienced personnel are assigned to these critical Joint Logistics positions. Support to Special Forces operations with little to no conventional force logistics infrastructure requires unique skill sets and training that enables these logisticians to support Special Operations missions in even the most austere environments. Each component command has their own training plans for Special Operations logisticians, and many have no additional training at all besides what is learned on the job with time and experience. Logistics support to teams and maintenance support to nonstandard equipment additionally requires a

unique skillset. United States Special Operations Command assuming responsibility for the talent management for these joint positions would yield a training base that provides service personnel trained on supporting SOF operations and maintaining SOF unique equipment. This baseline training pipeline will also ensure logisticians have a common operating picture of the Special Forces support structure that exists to support the Joint SOF.

The key to logistical success, or failure, during Unconventional Warfare operations is largely based on the logistics planner's ability to understand the types, sequence, and scale of anticipated support requirements and how these requirements will change and evolve throughout all phases of an Unconventional Warfare Campaign. The sheer amount of requirements will force the SOF organic logistician to seek assistance from the Theater Special Operations Command Logistics Officer and in many cases will require the Theater Special Operations Commander's special authorities to execute Unconventional Warfare logistics while supporting guerrilla or insurgent forces. As requirements exceed organic capabilities and experience, the establishment of a Logistics Fusion Cell will be necessary. Once formed, the Logistics Fusion Cell serves as the focal point for Non Standard Logistics (NSL) practices not resident within the Theater Special Operations Command logistics section. The manning of such a cell requires personnel with extensive Special Operations and/or Inter Agency experience not typically found in the Conventional Force.

VI. Conclusion:

Unconventional warfare is a complex and ever changing environment that requires special skill sets and training to logistically support our special operations

soldiers on this complex battlefield. This research study attempts to pave an outline for special operations logisticians to build a framework for training, manning, and equipping our soldiers during these highly intense operations. As best described in ARSOF 2022, by the United States Army Special Operations Command, Commander:

“While our success over the past decade of conflict highlights our relevance, both in and out of declared theaters of war, we cannot afford to become complacent or maintain the status quo. As a force, we must continuously learn, anticipate and evolve in order to defeat an adaptive enemy and the uncertain threats of the 21st century. Without question, over the next decade, we will face complex challenges that will test the mettle of our force. To ensure that we can find, fix and finish tomorrow’s enemy, the U.S. Army Special Operations Command is moving forward with a deliberate plan, ARSOF 2022.”¹⁰

The difficulties in supporting and maintaining Special Operations Forces during unconventional warfare is compounded by the lack of resources and methods available to most special operations logisticians during the initial phases of Unconventional Warfare Operations. The United States Army has improved training guidance and regulations, and provided U.S. Army Field Manuals to support and assist the operative in conducting Unconventional Warfare Operations; however, the subject of resupply and logistics support during these operations has remained vague in part due to the complexity of these types of operations.

It is essential that Special Operations Logisticians be firmly grounded in conventional Army logistics systems and procedures prior to facing the challenges associated with unconventional warfare logistical requirements associated with protracted unconventional Warfare Operations. By investing and training our Special Operations Logisticians to the same standard as their ARSOF counterparts, we will increase the effectiveness of the Special Operations Warrior and our ability to project

Unconventional Warfare worldwide and with heightened effects. Special Operations forces will remain our nation's force of choice to find, fix, and finish any terrorist organizations; to meet this requirement effectively these forces need experienced, competent, and timely logistics support.¹¹

The difficulties presented in supporting unconventional warfare are compounded by the lack of non-standard logistical infrastructure within Army Special Operations Command, Theater Special Operations Command and United States Special Operations Command to assist and guide the Special Operations logistician through Unconventional Warfare planning and execution. With the Army and United States Marine Corps updating its concept and framework in Unconventional Warfare and planning to publish additional doctrine in the next 24 to 36 months, we now have a window in time to put logistics structure and support mechanisms in place. These changes will improve the Special Operations Logistical support to Unconventional Warfare¹²

The increased visibility of unconventional warfare across the Joint Special Operations and Geographic Combatant Commands, United States Army Special Operations Command provides a window of opportunity to develop and train Special Operations logisticians with skills and talents to execute Unconventional Warfare support both standard and non-standard on any battlefield or remote austere environment, and accomplish the Commanders Objective for ARSOF 2022.¹³

By building on these basic fundamentals the Special Operations community can support Special Operations Logisticians in improving their ability to support and sustain Unconventional Warfare operations across the full spectrum of military campaigns. The

cultivation of these skill sets will be a requirement for success in future SOF operations. By fully integrating Joint Special Operation forces into Unconventional Warfare training and manning policies, United States Special Operations Command will integrate all joint Special Operation assets into the Unconventional Warfare fight and sustain the “best and the brightest” personnel with relevant experience in supporting Unconventional Warfare.¹⁴

Endnotes

VII. Endnotes:

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