JSOU

Special Operations

Research Topics
2015

Special Operations Research Topics 2015

Joint Special Operations University

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Joint Special Operations University and the Center for Special Operations Studies and Research

The Joint Special Operations University (JSOU) provides its publications to contribute toward expanding the body of knowledge about joint special operations. JSOU publications advance the insights and recommendations of national security professionals and the Special Operations Forces (SOF) students and leaders for consideration by the SOF community and defense leadership.

JSOU is the educational component of the United States Special Operations Command (USSOCOM), MacDill Air Force Base, Florida. The JSOU mission is to educate SOF executive, senior, and intermediate leaders and selected other national and international security decision makers, both military and civilian, through teaching, outreach, and research in the science and art of joint special operations. JSOU provides education to the men and women of SOF and to those who enable the SOF mission in a joint and interagency environment.

JSOU conducts research through its Center for Special Operations Studies and Research (CSOSR) where effort centers upon the USSOCOM and United States SOF missions:

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USSOF mission. USSOF conducts special operations to prepare the operational environment, prevent crisis, and respond with speed, precision, and lethality to achieve tactical through strategic effect.

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On the cover. Upper Left: Nahr-e Saraj district. A Marine with U.S. Marine Corps Forces, Special Operations Command provides security at a landing zone in Nahr-e Saraj district, Helmand Province. Marines with MARSOC's 1st Marine Special Operations Battalion commanded the Special Operations Task Force–West and oversaw one of Afghanistan's bloodiest regions. (U.S. Marine Corps photo by Cpl. Kyle McNally)

Upper Right: A U.S. Navy SEAL provides cover while two Zodiac fast boats with soldiers from the U.S. Special Forces and the Jordanian Special Operations Forces come ashore in an amphibious assault drill as part of Exercise Eager Lion 2013. (Photo by Army Sgt. Aaron Rognstad)

Lower Left: A U.S. Air Force Senior Airman from the 27th Special Operations Wing reunites with his family who, along with many others, gathered at a hangar on Cannon AFB in order to greet their redeployed Air Commandos. (Photo by Airman 1st Class Ericka Engblom)

Lower Right: A CV-22 Osprey takes off over a platoon of Jordanian Armed Forces as part of Exercise Eager Lion 2013 — an annual, multinational exercise designed to strengthen military-to-military relationships and enhance security and stability in the region by responding to modern-day security scenarios. (Photo by Army Sgt. Aaron Rognstad)

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The JSOU Center for Special Operations Studies and Research (CSOSR) is currently accepting written works relevant to special operations for potential publication. For more information please contact the CSOSR Director at jsou_research@socom.mil. Thank you for your interest in the JSOU Press.

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Foreword

The Joint Special Operations University (JSOU) Special Operations Research Topics 2015 publication highlights a wide range of topics collaboratively developed and prioritized by experts from across the Special Operations Forces (SOF) community. The topics in these pages are intended to guide research projects for professional military education (PME) students, JSOU faculty, fellows and students, and others writing about special operations during this academic year. Publishing and distributing this topics list each year is a Commander, United States Special Operations Command (USSOCOM) specified task for the university.

As JSOU executes the joint education mission of USSOCOM, the university is focused on stimulating interest in hard-hitting research among the SOF enterprise. This research will provide a better understanding of the complex issues and opportunities affecting the strategic and operational planning needs of SOF.

Here at JSOU, research is prioritized to support the USSOCOM Commander's vision of developing highly educated special operators who have the ability to think, assess and rapidly respond at the tactical level while always considering the strategic implications of their actions. JSOU is positioned to become an internationally recognized, regionally accredited, degree-producing SOF university that will help educate the world's finest special operations warriors. The research conducted by JSOU directly supports the rigorous academic curricula required for these degree programs.

To develop this list of topics, recommendations were solicited from the USSOCOM headquarters staff, the theater special operations commands (TSOCs), component commands, SOF chairs from the war colleges, and select research centers and think tanks. The topic submissions were then reviewed, revised, rated, and ranked at the annual Special Operations Research Topics Workshop. That workshop produced the first draft of this comprehensive list of issues and challenges of concern to the greater SOF community. The list was reviewed and vetted by the headquarters, TSOCs, and component commands prior to publication.

I encourage SOF personnel to contribute their experiences and ideas to the SOF community by submitting your completed research on these topics

to JSOU Press. If you have any questions about this document or ideas for future topics, contact the Director, Center for Special Operations Studies and Research via e-mail at jsou_research@socom.mil. I challenge you to move the SOF body of knowledge forward by critically thinking and writing.

Brian A. Maher, SES
President

Introduction

The JSOU Special Operations Research Topics 2015 represents a list of SOF-related topics that are recommended for research by those who desire to provide insight and recommendations on issues and challenges facing the SOF enterprise. As with the previous year's topics publication, this list is tailored to address the USSOCOM Commander's four lines of operation (LOOs): win the current fight; the global SOF network; preserve the force and families, and responsive resourcing.

SOF PME students research and write on timely, relevant, SOF-related topics. Such activity develops the individual's intellect and provides a professional and practical perspective that broadens and frames the insights of other analysts and researchers in regard to these topics. This list and the accompanying topic descriptions are a guide to stimulate interest and thinking. Topics may be narrowed or otherwise modified as deemed necessary (e.g., to suit school writing requirements or maximize individual interests and experiences).

Section A (Priority Topics) identifies topics of particular importance. Sections B, C, D, and E each focus on one of the Commander's LOOs. Section F contains topics of importance to SOF that do not fit into the other categories.

All of the topics seek to create curiosity about specific SOF challenges and issues which will then promote critical thinking by researchers in an attempt to understand these issues. The researcher should then explore and identify doctrine, capabilities, techniques, and procedures that will increase SOF efficacy in addressing them. At the same time, the research on these topics should be used to inform policymakers, the larger military profession, and the public of the issues and challenges facing the SOF enterprise.

These topics reflect a consensus of the SOF experts who participated in the research topics workshop as particularly worthwhile in addressing immediate SOF needs and in building future capacity for emerging challenges. They have been vetted through the USSOCOM headquarters, TSOCs, and components prior to publication to ensure emerging topics were addressed.

Previous years' research topics lists provide a repository of issues that were highlighted in the past. These topics lists may provide prospective researchers with additional ideas for relevant research. Previous editions

of these publications (2009 through 2014) are available on the JSOU public web site on the publications page located at: https://jsou.socom.mil/Pages/Publications.aspx.

Please share this reference with fellow researchers, thesis advisors, and other colleagues and feel free to submit additional topics for consideration. You may also visit our publications page on the JSOU public website to see if JSOU has a publication that relates to your area of interest. There is also SOF relevant material available on the JSOU Library web site which can be found at: https://elibrary6.eosintl.com/U60005/OPAC/Index.aspx. We encourage you to send us your completed research on these topics.

A. Priority Topics

Topic Titles

A1. Examining operational economics in unconventional warfare and irregular environments
A2. Evaluating the future role of unmanned aerial systems in special warfare
A3. Assessing tactical operations for strategic effect: Is there a disconnect?
A4. Determining impact and measuring the effects of building partnership capacity and other small-footprint SOF activities
A5. Exploiting urbanization and the velocity of change
A6. Determining the role of SOF in advising at the ministerial and senior command levels
A7. Analyzing sanctuary management in the Sahel
A8. Evaluating the cost versus benefit of maintaining a forward SOF presence
A9. Assessing the rapid acquisition of technology: Winning the current fight in a strategic context
A10. Implementing policy during a period of fiscal uncertainty

Topic Descriptions

A1. Examining operational economics in unconventional warfare and irregular environments

During the last 12 plus years of conflict, economic concerns – legitimate and illegitimate, open, gray and black – play intrinsic and fundamental roles in conflict. How can we educate our operators to understand this reality, its many manifestations, or to professionally train our leaders on how to incorporate that understanding into everything from exercises and simulations, to operational concepts? What tools are available to analyze, assess and draw conclusions on the importance and relevance of economics as a line of effort in the conduct of unconventional warfare (UW) operations? This would include touching upon aspects such as cultural understandings of legitimate economics and corruption as well as a framework for

Previous years' topics lists are available online at https://jsou.socom.mil.

analyzing relevant economic conditions in a conflict area. In short, how do we capture the essence of "operational economics in UW and irregular environments" that could, at least, serve as a point of departure for further development of relevant programs of instruction and a deeper understanding of how UW operations impact economically (both positively and negatively) on campaign success?

A2. Evaluating the future role of unmanned aerial systems in special warfare

Unmanned aerial systems (UAS) have become indispensable tools of SOF. Their use has reportedly overcome many of the historical limitations of warfare including anti-access and area denial, cost, loss of life, and political risk. But how accurate are those claims? Although their use may preclude the loss of American lives, how can SOF reduce the risk of civilian casualties? How do we refine the targeting capability to ensure that we don't inadvertently make more enemies and risk political capital? Does the combination of SOF and UAS technology make military action more likely by reducing the cost and risk to American lives? What future authorizations and capabilities will SOF need to exploit the full potential of UAS? How is this capability shared among partner nations within the global SOF? Where are the doctrinal gaps? Where are the pitfalls?

A3. Assessing tactical operations for strategic effect: Is there a disconnect?

The political leadership of the United States is being questioned about its commitment to strategic victory, that is, the U.S. commits forces to the tactical battlefield, but how resolved is the U.S. to following through at the strategic level. Distributed operations and mission command require understanding of the intended end-state at the lowest level. How does that perceived disconnect affect operational campaign planning and tactical level battles and engagements? What have the lessons been and are we able to improve our strategic performance at the combatant command level?

A4. Determining impact and measuring the effects of building partnership capacity and other small-footprint SOF activities

Traditional metrics are not always applicable to phase zero and phase one activities. What kind of system is necessary to measure the returns on security force assistance (SFA) or foreign internal defense (FID)? To determine success or to measure something implies there is an established baseline against which to measure change. How do we baseline SFA to analyze and determine what works and what doesn't work? Looking wider: How can the efficacy and progress of the global SOF network be quantified and measured?

A5. Exploiting urbanization and the velocity of change

Do rapidly growing urban environments pose a challenge for SOF? Or does the expansion of this interconnected world provide opportunities to exploit? Rapid political and social changes will challenge current forms of governance and international institutions. Not only will rapidly growing urban environments pose a challenge for SOF, so too will the rapidly deteriorating urban environments found in many failed nations and states. Will the U.S. military be able to adapt fast enough and handle the range and scope of this change without being overwhelmed by those rapid developments? Additionally, mega cities offer concentrations of people and intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR) opportunities. What are the emerging "INT" technologies, such as MASINT (measurement and signature intelligence) that can discriminate among dense populations to provide enhanced intelligence gathering in such environments?

A6. Determining the role of SOF in advising at the ministerial and senior command levels

SOF have traditionally been focused at the tactical level and operational level. However, in Afghanistan they are now being asked to work at higher levels, and with more senior officers such as the ministerial levels. Is this an appropriate role for SOF? Advising defense establishments at these levels currently transcends SOF capabilities. Would this role be better suited for others within the interagency community? If SOF are deemed the most appropriate advisors, how do we prepare those SOF members to advise senior host nation

command and staff? Do we establish special training opportunities? Do we need to incorporate this type of awareness in our professional military education programs?

A7. Analyzing sanctuary management in the Sahel

Al-Qaeda in the Lands of the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) and other extremist organizations are using wide and multiple areas of Africa, particularly from northern Mali to southern Libya, as safe havens in order to train and funnel troops and funding and launch attacks against various targets throughout Africa. They then return to those safe havens to rest, refit and re-equip. Is special operations uniquely qualified to capitalize on its Title 10 authorities such as counterterrorism, direct action and FID to control, manage and/or dismantle those sanctuaries? If so, how and what skills would be most effective?

A8. Evaluating the cost versus benefit of maintaining a forward SOF presence

The notion of a global SOF network emphasizes forward basing of SOF. Is the benefit gained worth the investment? Does this equation change if the force is living on a base or within the general population of the country? Is offshore basing a better alternative? What metrics should be considered when evaluating the cost/benefit? These questions must be answered in operations as well as fiscal terms. Since the host nation for any forward basing option also has a vote, what is the political risk or cost?

A9. Assessing the rapid acquisition of technology: Winning the current fight in a strategic context

After 12 years of war, is it time to reassess our acquisition and technology development approach? Do SOF rely too heavily on technology and rapid procurement of that technology? The U.S. is winning battles, but not necessarily the war, yet we continue to acquire new technology at a staggering cost. The Taliban operates with rusty AK-47s and shower shoes, and is very effective in a protracted campaign. What is the right balance between rapid acquisition of systems and simply working with the basics to help defeat insurgents from a

third world country? How can SOF quench its appetite for the best gear without creating more bureaucracy?

A10. Implementing policy during a period of fiscal uncertainty
How do SOF remain effective at the strategic level while fiscal uncertainty threatens Major Force Program-11 (MFP-11) budgets and authorities? Given the uncertainties of committing forces (due to uncertain funding and authorities), and in particular SOF, to the future of Afghanistan, how do we develop a coherent strategy and how do we work within the Washington political process to formulate and execute a sustainable strategy? Additionally, with SOF reliance on support from conventional forces and the forecast reductions in conventional forces, how do SOF prepare to cover gaps while minimizing the burden on MFP-11 funds?

Previous years' topics lists are available online at https://jsou.socom.mil.

B. Win the Current Fight

Topic Titles

B1. Influencing supporters of criminal and extremist activities
B2. Maintaining situational awareness with a light SOF footprint
B3. Analyzing the use of contractors on the battlefield
B4. Examining civil affairs and civil military operations in support of counterterrorism
B5. Advising partner nations on logistics
B6. Developing phased communication strategies to support military campaigns

Topic Descriptions

B1. Influencing supporters of criminal and extremist activities
Campaign efforts have focused on combatting violent extremism (VE) and on the susceptibility of populations to support VE and VE organizations (VEO). Additionally, SOF's increasingly global posture has surfaced this nexus between criminal and VE activity, and VEOs. Examples of this include drugs, arms, and human trafficking. Influence operators are being tasked to deter, reduce, and dissuade support for such criminal activities, but current doctrine lacks clear and specific guidance for influence activities that support campaigns either solely focused on criminal activities or focused on a combination of both criminal and extremist activities. This research topic proposes the exploration of antecedents of support for criminal activities and organizations, including social, environmental, and psychological variables. For example under what conditions are populations more supportive of such criminal activities and organizations? Do metrics exist that can be used to measure a population's susceptibility and vulnerabilities in the context of support for criminal activities and organizations?

B2. Maintaining situational awareness with a light SOF footprint
The U.S. is downsizing in Afghanistan to include SOF. In some cases, the withdrawal of facilities, resources, and capabilities such as

medevac, determines the locations of our combat and combat support forces. But maintaining situational awareness is critical to monitoring programs for which SOF has ongoing responsibility, such as the commandos and the Afghan Local Police (ALP). This has been a major challenge in Afghanistan and will become increasingly acute as SOF presence shrinks. How do we continue to monitor the health and welfare of those organizations and forces that we continue to fund and provide resources? What size SOF element is required to maintain situational awareness and where should those forces be located? Is further investment in ISR capabilities organic to SOF reasonable? How does the leadership continue to provide adequate security, quick reaction force capability, and medical support to ensure the continued safety of troops serving in Afghanistan after the drawdown?

B3. Analyzing the use of contractors on the battlefield

The use of contractors in combat and security roles has changed the modern battlefield. The last decade of combat featured opponents who were categorized as enemy combatants, but did not represent any state or "sovereignty." Irregular forces to include those involved in UW offer opportunities to counter certain threats. All of these factors have exploded the number of civilians on the battlefield. How does this phenomenon change the way that we plan for and fight in the future? Does this in any way cause us to revisit the tenants of the Law of Land Warfare. How might international law change as we further introduce contractors as combatants?

B4. Examining civil affairs and civil military operations in support of counterterrorism

Synchronization of civil military operations (CMO) with the quadrennial defense review, national strategic objectives, and FID and development plans give SOF an opportunity to execute counterterrorism with lasting and sustained effects versus kinetic heavy operations that have characterized the past. Properly executed civil affairs operations (CAO) and CMO also provide a clearer picture of the operating environment to enable counterterrorism operations. The goal of this topic is to explore how SOF, CAO, and CMO can lead to stability and security through non-lethal means while also driving

more precise and effective lethal operations. While CAO and CMO can occur throughout all phases, how can it best be employed during phase zero to preclude escalation of events into later phases? How do we best work with State Department and other interagency partners to be most effective?

B5. Advising partner nations on logistics

Logistics is a critical force sustaining function and it is often a difficult function for partner nation forces to master. SOF advisors very effectively teach partner nation forces to shoot, move, and communicate, but cultural differences between U.S. and other forces can often make providing effective logistics training very difficult. Lessons from both Iraq and Afghanistan show that logistics systems within those societies woefully lack discipline and commitment and are rife with corruption and patronage. This isn't just about changing a system; it is about changing a culture. How do we train advisors to not only change a system but to change attitudes and cultures? How, why and where is SOF involved in those type of advisory roles? How do we best prepare them for those challenges?

B6. Developing phased communication strategies to support military campaigns

The prolonged nature of campaigns implies that a chronological or phased messaging effort be developed to support campaign planning, execution, and assessment. Although current doctrine emphasizes implementation of programs that reinforce messages sequentially across time, it lacks guidance for the development and implementation of branched and/or conditional messaging. It does not address the consideration of target audience conditions that indicate the need for a shift in messaging intensity, strategy, or theme. This research topic proposes an exploration of models of change that could potentially support the development of more effectively phased messaging efforts to support campaign plans. What theories of change can be adapted to campaign planning and assessment? What target audience conditions indicate readiness or need for a change in messaging? How can message phase transitions be implemented most effectively? What is the impact of turning messaging campaigns "off" and "on"

as conditions deem necessary? How are changing conditions of a target audience identified within a strategy and determination made to move to the next phase?

C. The Global SOF Network

Topic Titles

C1. Exploring SOF in new domains
C2. Building a SOF network under conditions of financial austerity
C3. Maintaining SOF relevance as the U.S. reduces its global military presence
C4. Educating SOF operators
C5. Mitigating political risks from partner-nation actions that violate U.S. norms
C6. Analyzing SOF involvement in regional security organizations

Topic Discussions

C1. Exploring SOF in new domains

SOF operations traditionally have been concentrated in the land, maritime, and air domains. As SOF continues to conduct operations in these domains, they may also be required to meet national strategic requirements in new domains. What roles and missions can and should SOF fulfill in the cyber domain and the space domain? Does the new concept of "human domain" entail new roles and missions, or does it encompass only pre-existing roles and missions? Should SOF capabilities be modified in order to meet the needs of new domains of warfare?

C2. Building a SOF network under conditions of financial austerity

In the U.S. and most of its partner nations, budgetary pressures are constraining the amount of funding available for SOF and international SOF networking. What options are available for sustaining the funding of the SOF network? What aspects of the SOF network are most deserving of funding, and where can cuts be made without seriously degrading the network? How can partner nations be convinced to make greater contributions? To what extent will greater partner contributions dilute U.S. leadership of the SOF network? How do reductions in conventional forces capabilities affect the global SOF network, and how can these problems be mitigated?

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C3. Maintaining SOF relevance as the U.S. reduces its global military presence

The U.S. is in a period of military retrenchment, in which the size of conventional forces is diminishing. SOF have escaped much of the downsizing thus far, but budget cuts have begun to affect SOF as well. To what extent will SOF capabilities be affected by the overall retrenchment? Should SOF tailor its actions to impede further erosion of public support for overseas military deployments? Are SOF efforts less likely than conventional forces deployments to undermine public support in the U.S. and the countries where they are deployed? Are SOF more likely to be successful acting unilaterally, or multilaterally as part of a global SOF network?

C4. Educating SOF operators

Historically, SOF operators only had to meet service recruiting education minimum requirements qualifying them for careers as operators. Do current education requirements meet current and future SOF needs? Should education requirements for the future SOF operator change to ensure enduring and target competencies are achieved as well as core activities? What will the core competencies of the future SOF operator be? Do the benefits of master's degrees for officers and bachelor's degrees for enlisted personnel exceed the costs? How much of an operator's education should be SOF-specific? To what extent does the expansion of the cyber domain necessitate changes to the education of SOF operators?

C5. Mitigating political risks from partner-nation actions that violate U.S. norms

Engagement with partner nation SOF entails considerable risks for the U.S., since unseemly actions by the partner nation are often blamed on United States Special Operations Forces (USSOF) that work with them. What criteria should guide selection of partner nation forces for the global SOF network? When partner nation forces engage in activity that violates U.S. or other international norms, should they be ostracized from the global SOF network or given extra attention?

C6. Analyzing SOF involvement in regional security organizations
The U.S. has prior experience in regional partnerships and regional training and education organizations. What lessons from these experiences are relevant to the creation of new regional SOF coordination organizations? What lessons do they offer to the global SOF network more broadly? What non-SOF regional organizations can provide insights into the development of SOF regional organizations?

D. Preserve the Force and Families (POTFF)

Topic Titles

D1. Regulating tempo: Family commitments when not deployed
D2. Preventing SOF suicides
D3. Assessing spiritual support
D4. Examining the relationship between civilian culture and the military
D5. Assessing psychological evaluations
D6. Evaluating family accompaniment policies
D7. Analyzing tempo: Rotation rates

Topic Discussions

D1. Regulating tempo: Family commitments when not deployed
When SOF are not deployed, they often must operate at extremely high tempos at their home units. How does this reality affect the well-being of the force and families? Can units reduce the tempo without forfeiting an acceptable level of readiness? As SOF participation in Afghanistan diminishes, does the need for intensive home-unit preparation diminish? What can be done to help SOF honor family commitments when not deployed?

D2. Preventing SOF suicides
SOF suicides continue to happen, even with focused attention throughout the chain of command. What has been overlooked? What indicators correlate with susceptibility to suicide? Are SOF suicides precipitated by different factors than non-SOF suicides? Can preventive measures be taken to forestall suicide? To what extent do the ethical, spiritual, and moral foundations of SOF warriors influence their mental health under duress? How can leaders be more vigilant and what can we do to increase SOF leader knowledge of indicators to alert them to someone in severe distress? How can we mitigate concern about career ruination to encourage teammates to report worrisome behavior? How can individuals be assisted once they leave service?

D3. Assessing spiritual support

The large majority of the world's population claim knowledge of a spiritual element in their lives. Should spiritual health and development be incorporated into the POTFF construct? How would it contribute to preservation of the force and families? Should chaplains or other spiritual advisors be deployed with SOF units? Should all spiritual advisors be affiliated with a religion? Are any changes required to increase interaction with chaplains?

D4. Examining the relationship between civilian culture and the military

The military's culture has always differed in some respects from the culture of the civilian society it protects, but the gap may be widening, and in ways detrimental to SOF. What are the most significant areas of difference, and how do they affect the POTFF initiatives? Do civilian concepts of gender equality threaten the culture of the military? Are civilian cultural trends, such as immersion in electronic media, coddling of children, and legalized drug use, undermining the military's culture? Does the military need to absorb more from civilian culture, or to resist absorption?

D5. Assessing psychological evaluations

The Department of Defense (DOD) conducts psychological evaluations to determine the suitability of individuals for stressful assignments, and to check for the onset of mental health problems. While these evaluations have alleviated numerous problems that plagued SOF in the past, they have also caused unintended and harmful side effects. To what extent have the results of psychological evaluations led to stigmatization of individuals? Do psychological evaluations lead to appropriate treatment of individuals? Do they receive proper consideration in the allocation of clearances and assignments? Have individuals been unfairly denied opportunities as a result of adverse psychological evaluations?

D6. Evaluating family accompaniment policies

The accompaniment of families with deployed military personnel has been a recurring point of debate throughout history. Concern

for nearby family members could cause troops to lose focus on their mission. On the other hand, repeated and prolonged absences from family can increase the likelihood of divorce and other family problems, and may increase retention problems. Should SOF family members be permitted to accompany deployed SOF personnel under certain conditions? How would it affect mission performance and would it enhance or detract from POTFF initiatives? Would it enhance interaction with partner nation personnel and their families? Has the proliferation of advanced social media reduced the stress associated with protracted separation from family?

D7. Analyzing tempo: Rotation rates

For more than a decade, national requirements have necessitated numerous tours for SOF personnel. Time at home is required between tours for mental and physical recuperation and for family bonding, and managing the tradeoff between deployed time and home time has proven difficult. What are optimal rotation rates for individuals, in terms of both mission performance and POTFF initiatives? Do the optimal rates vary significantly by occupational specialty or mission? Can SOF fulfill its strategic commitments at rotation rates that are sustainable for the force and families over the long term?

E. Responsive Resourcing

Topic Titles

E1. Identifying technology to support SOF distributed operations
E2. Leveraging research and development for SOF purposes
E3. Establishing predictable contingency manning: The role of private military contractors
E4. Evaluating competition versus responsiveness in the acquisition process
E5. Controlling cost growth in contracting
E6. Exploring rapid acquisition and operational employment within SOF
E7. Expeditionary contracting capabilities
E8. Supporting SOF language and culture education

Topic Discussions

E1. Identifying technology to support SOF distributed operations

The majority of SOF operations during the last ten years of conflict have been conducted in the context of substantial general purpose force presence and support. As SOF look toward 2020 and beyond, more distributed operations will likely become the norm. What capabilities and technologies can be used to perform distributed operations and sustainment functions in the future? What options could enable support to units operating in a global, complex environment in response to emerging anti-access and area-denial security challenges to joint operational access concept, as well as support to dispersed special operations units? In this context, describe technology and advanced systems solution that: Reduce drivers for logistics requirements, particularly power and energy, maintenance, fuel and water by fundamentally changing the demand characteristics of the force and increasing capabilities that allow demand to be satisfied at the point of need; improve intra-theater mobility and distribution; and improve near real-time visibility of logistics information. Is there a logistics-centric research and development (R&D) investment strategy that could achieve these objectives?

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E2. Leveraging research and development for SOF purposes

While the SOF Truths say that people are more important than hardware, having a technological edge is still of great consequence in special operations. Is USSOCOM adequately resourcing research and development efforts in the current program objective memorandum (POM) and beyond to ensure that we are prepared for the next fight and next generation technology? Moreover, is SOF leveraging all relevant R&D processes at the right time? SOF already leverages the efforts of multiple labs and research activities. Are there places in other R&D processes where SOF input/cooperation could occur? Could existing R&D relationships be enhanced or made more effective? Is there a point in the R&D cycle in which USSOCOM input and cooperation could be beneficial for the development of special operations-peculiar technologies? Is there a point at which such cooperation is too late to be beneficial?

E3. Establishing predictable contingency manning: The role of private military contractors

As contingencies emerge, military personnel systems can struggle to ensure critical positions are filled quickly with people having the right skills. Does a corporate model exist to better address the problem? Are there innovative solutions within government to ease the strain to fill these positions? What role can or should private military contractors (PMC) take on to fill requirements, both early on when emerging demands may overwhelm current capacity and during sustained operations? Is there a role for SOF qualified PMCs to directly augment SOF formations when needed and what are the authority limitations of such contracting?

E4. Evaluating competition versus responsiveness in the acquisition process

SOF depend on a responsive and streamlined acquisition process to retain their technological edge on the battlefield. In an austere financial environment, competition within acquisition programs can help to more responsibly spend the nation's resources. What are the tradeoffs between increased competition and increased responsiveness? What balance best serves future SOF? How does USSOCOM

improve competitive processes and fundamental competencies involving acquisition strategies and source selection activities while increasing responsiveness to mission needs? Are there bottlenecks in the current process, and if so, can they be minimized? When responsiveness increases, is there a point where the process moves so fast that there may be auditability concerns? Using a systems thinking approach, is there a better way to approach the rapid acquisitions process and potentially produce recommendations that support efficiencies or cost savings?

E5. Controlling cost growth in contracting

Contract personnel are a critical part of the SOF enterprise and they comprise an important part of the current and future SOF capability. Effective management of these contract personnel is of critical importance. Given the current system of utilizing large defense contracting firms, is this the most effective and efficient way to obtain the capability contract personnel provide? Could sole source contracting to smaller startups alleviate some of the contracting costs of the current system? Have multilevel managing within contracting companies caused price inflation in contracting to USSOCOM? To what extent have large contracting companies with demands for high profit margins affected both USSOCOM and contractors? Can awarding contracts to smaller companies result in those companies providing more efficient services to USSOCOM compared to the contracts awarded to larger companies? Using an analysis to determine whether to "rent or buy," when, and for what types of requirements, does it make sense to pursue contract positions and when does it make sense to pursue civil service or military positions?

E6. Exploring rapid acquisition and operational employment within SOF

Should USSOCOM explore and develop a set of principles common to rapid acquisition and expedited engineering programs within the special operations community? The research would examine how current rapid organizations apply acquisitions and engineering methodologies to satisfy urgent military needs developed in response to changing threats. Research should focus on leveraging currently

available methods, processes, and tools to create an expedited systems engineering framework which can be validated in SOF operations. The research should provide insights into the consistently recurring characteristics of rapid organizations. Previous research has shown there are twelve habits, tenets, or heuristics that are the driving and defining behaviors of these rapid organizations. These principles are organized into three categories; people, process, and product. Each grouping of principles is centered on these three categories, defined as follows. People (who) representing the characteristics, knowledge, education, and behaviors of the personnel in the SOF community. Process (how and where) that describes key programmatic and system engineering strategies used to successfully execute rapid product development and get the right product to the user as fast as possible. Product (what and why) that defines conceptual use of technology used to meet the SOF operational needs. The principles of rapid acquisition and expedited systems engineering should be maximized in the SOF acquisition process to provide the right tool at the right time for SOF operational use.

E7. Expeditionary contracting capabilities

The standard contracting process is not designed to rapidly and effectively award contracts in response to immediate needs in hi-tempo, combat or contingency environments. Expediting contract award capability is critical in an era of persistent conflict because the needs of the operational commander are often immediate. The term "expeditionary contracting" describes the concept for effectively meeting contracting requirements of a deployed force in this type of environment. Are the Services responsive enough to SOF requirements? With global persistent presence and deployments to regions that may not have conventional force infrastructure, does USSOCOM now need its own an expeditionary contracting capability to procure material and services to responsively support the resource requirements of deployed SOF? If USSOCOM was to conduct expeditionary contracting activities, are safeguards in place to insure it is done effectively, efficiently, and not conducted with nefarious individuals or the organizations that support them? Are there innovative solutions

that leverage partner nation facilities, logistics, and infrastructure to provide forward basing options with little to no cost to SOF?

E8. Supporting SOF language and culture education

Language and cultural expertise are critical skills for today's SOF warrior. Is the force being educated in these areas to sufficient levels to effectively conduct their missions? This research should address this question: What is the requirement and criteria for an effective SOF Learning Management System (LMS) able to support SOF anywhere, anytime? How will distance learning approaches deal with challenges such as non-citizen or non-DOD instructors and physical limitations like bandwidth and varying network security features? How well would the current top commercial-off-the-shelf or government-off-the-shelf LMS meet SOF's distance learning needs? What critical attributes do SOF require in an LMS? What elements would a future LMS requirements document contain that states in detail what SOF will need from now until at least 2020?

F. Additional SOF Issues

Topic Titles

F1. Implementing SOF mixed-gender elite teams
F2. Supporting the joint force commander
F3. Evaluating non-standard aviation assets
F4. Evaluating how career SOF NCOs fare in transition
F5. Assessing the use of civil affairs and civil military operations in unconventional warfare
F6. Utilizing SOF operators after a successful military career
F7. Determining the right USSOCOM organization?
F8. Developing SOF counter-UAS tactics and equipment
F9. Influencing attitudes in addition to behaviors
F10. Educating SOF NCOs

Topic Descriptions

F1. Implementing SOF mixed-gender elite teams

In January 2013, the Secretary of Defense removed the ban on women in specialties and positions whose primary mission is direct combat. During 2013 and 2014, USSOCOM commissioned several studies to determine the effect of mixed-gender team compositions on SOF elite teams. For those roles and missions that do not preclude mixed-gender teams, what is now the best way to implement new policy? What implementation lessons can we learn from other organizations, military and non-military, U.S. and foreign, that have integrated women into their elite teams and combat formations? How does assessment and selection, in particular the psychological vetting of candidates change under a mixed-gender team paradigm? What new challenges do mixed-gender teams face? Organizationally what should SOF leaders undertake now to prepare the force for successful implementation of mixed-gender elite teams? Should SOF equipment be evaluated to determine if there must be new designs or configurations, and if so, determine the cost benefit/benefit of redesign?

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F2. Supporting the joint force commander

What capabilities and technologies can be used to perform distributed operations and sustainment requirements in 2020 and beyond in support of the joint force commander? What options could enable support to units operating in a global, complex environment in response to emerging anti-access and area-denial security challenges to joint operational access concept, as well as support to dispersed special operations units? What are some technology and advanced systems solution that: Reduce drivers for logistics requirements, particularly power and energy, maintenance, fuel, and water by fundamentally changing the demand characteristics of the force? What capabilities will allow demand to be satisfied at the point of need; improve intra-theater mobility and distribution; improve near real-time visibility of logistics information? Which initiatives to predict and resolve equipment faults and failures to reduce life cycle sustainment costs are reasonable? Which options and solutions contribute to the integration and execution of logistics capabilities that improve responsiveness, agility, flexibility, and precision within a joint concept of employment, to include optimization of SOF and conventional forces interdependence within areas of strategy, policy, and concepts? Is there a logistics-centric R&D investment strategy that could include a framework, specific research objectives, and a roadmap to achieve previously described objectives?

F3. Evaluating non-standard aviation assets

What non-standard aviation assets does USSOCOM need to acquire to successfully fulfill its global strategic and operational 2020 mission? Do hybrid airships have a role in SOF or could they provide a more persistent ISR platform than existing UASs? USSOCOM requires non-standard aviation assets (fixed-wing, rotary-wing, and lighter-than-air aircraft, and remotely piloted vehicles) to gain access, maintain low visibility, transport SOF assets, support SOF operators and operations. What should be the focus to develop the capability needed to fulfill the needs of SOF in 2020 and beyond? As UASs continue to push the endurance envelope, how will such long duration capabilities change aspects of SOF operations? How can logistics or close air support be rethought given the trajectory

of UAS technology? Which ISR capabilities could be tailored for an organic, service independent, capability to support USSOCOM and TSOC operations? Is the cost of non-standard aviation assets too prohibitively expensive in the current fiscal climate? What is the role and benefit of manned non-standard aviation assets over UASs in the future operating environment?

F4. Evaluating how career SOF NCOs fare in transition

Senior SOF noncommissioned officers (NCO) who have 25 or more years of service and who served during combat operations in Afghanistan and Iraq will begin to retire in increasing numbers over the next five years. These special operators are sent through the service programs at the military installation they are assigned to at the time of retirement. Should there be an effort to follow up with SOF NCOs to ask about successes and failures during the transition process? Is this end of career transition a decisive time in SOF families' lives? Do service transition programs prepare career SOF NCOs for corporate employment after lengthy military service? What are the described gaps? What should the transition goal be for senior SOF NCOs in keeping with the "SOF for life" construct? What are the impacts and should USSOCOM play a role in transition? Do SOF NCOs face a greater or similar challenge to conventional forces in transition? Should USSOCOM take an active role in preparing SOF NCOs for transition? How can USSOCOM help SOF NCOs transition without encumbering MFP-11 funds? What are operators' perceptions about their post-military life in the context of career prospects? To what extent do these perceptions affect career decisions (i.e., decisions to separate)?

F5. Assessing the use of civil affairs and civil military operations in unconventional warfare

CAO and CMO are not "break glass in the event of emergency" forces. As such, their presence and operations in phase zero (steady state) give them unparalleled access and information. This coupled with the increasingly urban and well-educated populations dictate a new approach to UW that goes beyond the traditional models. Which alternative approaches to UW more effectively employ indirect or

non-lethal means to affect the desired outcome? How can influence operations overall versus myopic focus on CAO projects further UW capability? Must CAO remain a relevant part of UW in the future? Has UW become the new norm and is there an increased need for SOF and conventional forces to collaborate in the realm of CAO and CMO when engaged in UW operations?

F6. Utilizing SOF operators after a successful military career

What should the transition goal be for senior SOF NCOs in keeping with the "SOF for life" or "SOF as a system" construct? What are the impacts and should USSOCOM play a role in transition? Talented and experienced SOF operators, after a successful career, have two transition choices: separation or retirement. After military separation or retirement can a program framework be developed that utilizes operators' skill, talent and experience continuing his contribution to win the current fight? How can USSOCOM utilize the skills, knowledge and experiences gained over 20 to 30 years of active service transitioning to passive or static support to the SOF operator? Can a former SOF operator be reutilized to support current operators by recruiting, educating, and providing local expertise as a staff member at a U.S. embassy or at the State Department? Should USSOCOM take an active role in preparing SOF NCOs for transition?

F7. Determining the right USSOCOM organization

Personnel costs are cited as the most significant challenge to the DOD budget and services have made cuts and are likely to continue to make cuts. A hard look at rightsizing, unemotional and metrics driven, is imperative to anticipate further cuts and optimize the mix to meet the prioritized requirements. Given the requirements of Title 10 and future global engagement priorities, what represents an effective, proficient, and professional military command structure or organization with right-sized staff, and how can that model inform change within the USSOCOM organization? Is USSOCOM headquartered in the right place or should other areas be considered after considering the locations of other government agencies and other Service headquarters? The growth of USSOCOM is slowing, and there are no guarantees of future funding. Does that impact the global persistent

engagement envisioned by the command? Looking at the 2012 Front End Assessment, which recommended personnel cuts along the line of 20 to 30 percent, are there areas to cut should the USSOCOM budget continue to slow or even shrink?

F8. Developing SOF counter-UAS tactics and equipment

UAS assisted warfare has truly become an integral part of the current fight. What remains to be seen is the impact that enemy UAS will have on SOF operations in the future? Is it reasonable for SOF to develop some type of anti-drone capability in order to maintain its technological edge? With the proliferation of 3D scanning and printing capabilities how do we prevent the technologies from being mirrored? What skill sets and requirements would be needed for SOF to develop and maintain a counter UAS program in the future? Is it reasonable, given the current state of technology to expect SOF to be able to effectively employ a counter UAS capability? How can SOF counter emerging UAS ISR capabilities from likely adversaries? Should USSOCOM invest in technical solutions to potential UAS problems, or would it be better off attempting to limit the use of UASs through support to diplomatic efforts?

F9. Influencing attitudes in addition to behaviors

Influence operations to persuade target populations have historically been a SOF core capability. But persuasion through coercion and reward is not a viable means to impact long-term behavior and attitudes because such techniques are only successful until the coercion or reward is no longer present. Future reductions in force levels and resources necessitate that long-term objectives of strategic- and operational-level missions should be to persuade a target audience to pursue given courses of action without the use of coercive techniques or large rewards. However, there currently exists a tension between practitioners of influence operations regarding the goals of influence operations. Is the goal to change attitudes, behaviors, or to change both? Well-established behavioral theories are devoted to explaining the relationship between attitudes and behaviors. This research topic proposes that these and other relevant theories should be explored to discover the extent to which they can be adapted to inform campaign

planning and assessment activities. For example, can campaigns support the simultaneous objectives of attitudinal and behavioral change? Does the relationship between attitude and behavior vary according to external variables such as culture or environment?

F10. Educating SOF NCOs

The need for increased enlisted formal education has been championed by the current USSOCOM Commander and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, yet legislation still restricts education programs that can be funded for NCOs. In this time of resource scarcity, the services are tightening the reins on funds for off-duty education and there are limited opportunities for degree completion programs. Research on the topic will take a hard look at the rationale, impact, cost, and return on investment of education programs. What will create what the USSOCOM Commander envisions as "the most educated force in DOD" and how can SOF achieve that goal? To what degree does legislation need to be adapted for NCO education? Will bachelor's degrees for senior NCOs make them better advisors and leaders? What degree programs are more likely to inculcate the critical thinking and complex problem solving skills necessary to develop a SOF NCO corps to meet security challenges of the 21st century? Which is better, a defense focused curriculum from an accredited, degree-granting DOD institution or a more liberal education from an accredited private or public university? Which is more cost effective? Which option will have a greater return on investment? What are the impacts to retention, quality, recruiting, family life, and retirement? Will a more highly educated USSOF NCO corps have an impact on the quality of the international SOF NCOs they will train and mentor? How does a better educated senior NCO corps relate to continuing the career track beyond retirement?