

THE ROLE OF SPECIAL FORCES IN
INFORMATION OPERATIONS

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ABSTRACT

THE ROLE OF SPECIAL FORCES IN INFORMATION OPERATIONS by MAJ
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This thesis examines the role of the special forces group in information operations. It focuses on providing information to the joint task force planner and the special forces unit leaders. It provides the joint forces commander and planner an understanding of special forces unit's core capabilities, mission types, and operational methods. It provides the special forces leader an understanding of what information operations are, and how his unit fits into the overall structure of an information operation. The thesis looks at four recent operations (Just Cause, Desert Storm, Noble Obelisk and Joint Guard) and special forces unit's missions during those operations. The missions are explained and cross-referenced with the elements of information operations (operational security, military deception, psychological operations, electronic warfare, physical destruction, physical security, counterdeception, counterpropaganda, counterintelligence, special information operations, and computer network attack) to demonstrate the potential role of special forces units in future information operations.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Joint Vision 2010 introduced the term Information Superiority (Joint Vision 2010) to the American military community. The Army has moved forward by defining the theory of Information Superiority:

The capability to collect, processes, and disseminate an uninterrupted flow of information while exploiting or denying and adversary's ability to do the same. It is a window of opportunity created by focused efforts that allows the action or beliefs of the adversary commander to be influenced in support of military operations. It is gained by an integration and synchronization of information management and information operations. (FM 100-6 1999)

The current joint definition of information operations is: “Actions taken to affect adversary information and information systems while defending one's own information and information systems” (JP 3-13 1998). The Army, in the initial draft of Field Manual (FM) 100-6, furthers this definition by including adversary, friendly, and other actions in the area of operations or area of interest: actions taken to affect adversaries' and influence other's decision-making processes, information and information systems, while defending friendly decision-making processes, information, and information systems (FM 100-6 1999, viii).

FM 31-20 *Doctrine for Army Special Forces Operations* has assigned information operations as one of the seven Army special forces missions (unconventional warfare, direct action, foreign internal defense, special reconnaissance, counter proliferation, combating terrorism and information operations (FM 31-20 1998, 2-3). The same manual has given a total of only fifteen lines of print to describe to the special forces commander the intricacies of information operations. No definitive doctrine has been

proposed for the role of information operations in the Army's special forces group or the role of the special forces group in information operations.

With the fall of the Soviet Union, the mission for military planners has become increasingly multidimensional. With the Soviet threat, the military commander's planning was simple: counter the Soviet military, and the commander would be a success. Reviewing the recent military actions shows the departure from traditional military versus military operation into an operation involving more factors. As the nature of operations becomes more and more nebulous, planning and operations became more difficult. Other aspects of the battlefield have to be taken into account. Currently, a commander has to be concerned with the adversary, the local and national politicians, public figures, the press, displaced persons and the worldwide public opinion of his operation. As the US moves further into the Information Age and access to information sources and outlets become easier, the military must be able to counter all of the factors in an operation. To accomplish this the joint forces commander must grasp the concept of information operations.

As the US Army has been called on to handle situations involving an increasing number of variables there has been an increased reliance on Army special forces. It is imperative that special forces leaders communicate the best way to use special forces to joint forces commanders during the conduct of an information operations. The special forces must develop doctrine that will aid the special forces commander in this mission.

Proposed Research Question.

The primary question is what is the role of the special forces group in information operations?

The subordinate questions are:

1. Is the special forces group structured (soldiers, material, organization) to conduct information operations as a mission?
2. What are the systems that currently exist in the special forces group that support information operations?
3. What, if any, changes in doctrine, training, leader development, organization, material and soldiers in the special forces group need to be made to support information operations?

Context

Several manuals have been written on information operations, Army special forces operations, command and control, and other special forces missions, but there is no official doctrine for information operations in the special forces group. When the special forces commander considers information operations as a mission along the side of the first six, his imagination runs wild. His thoughts range from a vision of a team of special forces soldiers huddled around a computer executing their mission on the internet, to a complete misunderstanding of the scope of information operations (Luanga 1999).

When the joint forces commander begins to build his information operations, he will be presented with a variety of targets and tasks. He has to decide how to accomplish those tasks, and what effects he wants to use to execute the targets. For example, if a joint force commander wants to neutralize an enemy unit, he has to decide how to do it.

During a cold war military confrontation, he had a variety of lethal methods to neutralize the unit: field artillery, close air support or a conventional force on force attack. As the nature of conflict has evolved, the commander, the joint force commander has to understand that he now has a variety of lethal or non-lethal methods of neutralizing that adversary unit. Information operation gives him the ability to accomplish that mission with non-lethal methods.

Importance

In years to come, our ability to wage information warfare will give us a decisive edge over potential adversaries. Information operation has emerged as a major area of interest for the Department of Defense.

Information operations and Information Superiority are at the core of military innovation and our vision for the future of joint warfare. Joint Vision 2010 provides the conceptual template for the ongoing transpecial forcesormation of our military capabilities needed to significantly enhance joint operations. Information operation applies across the full spectrum of military operations and is fundamental to successpecial forcesul execution of Joint Vision 2010 concepts.

General Henry H. Shelton, *A Strategy for Peace, The Decisive Edge in War, Information Operations*

By providing a better understanding of information operations to the special forces community, a better understanding of how their role for the type of operation outlined in Joint Vision 2010 will be developed (CJCS Joint Vision 2010 1999, 67). Conversely, this thesis will demonstrate the role of special forces in information operations as part of a joint task force or operation.

Background

FM 31-20 has assigned information operations as a mission to the special forces group, giving it the same weight as the traditional special forces missions: unconventional warfare, direct action, foreign internal defense, special reconnaissance, counter proliferation, and combating terrorism (FM 31-20 1998, 2-1). A special forces group is designed to execute those traditional missions. A special forces operational detachment alpha can be given a direct action mission to execute, assigned a target to conduct special reconnaissance on, or assigned a host nation unit to train. These are traditional missions that the special forces understand. When information operations is added to the list, the special forces commander is not prepared to understand the mission or his role in it based on the current description of information operations in FM 31-20, *Doctrine for Army Special Forces*.

Before offering doctrine to explain the role of the special forces group in information operations, three questions must be answered. The first of these concerns an information operation. What exactly is an information operation, what are the different elements of it, and where does it come from? The second question is what are special forces and what are their unique capabilities? The final question is how can the two previous elements, information operations and special forces, be combined to enhance the synergy of an operation. By answering the final question, the role of the special forces in an information operation can begin to be understood.

What is an information operation?

In an easy to understand form, information operations are a synergistic effort to provide the critical pieces of information that a commander needs to make the proper

decision on the battlefield, while denying the enemy commander the information that he needs. Instead of separate elements controlled by separate groups, information operations doctrine combines them in a common area, so that the efforts of many can be maximized. By giving the joint forces commander an understanding of the unique capabilities that the special forces group brings to an operation, the commander's information ability is maximized.

Information operations are derived from the concept of information superiority presented in Joint Vision 2010. Information superiority is the capability to collect, process, and disseminate an uninterrupted flow of information while exploiting or denying an adversary's ability to do the same (CJCS Joint Vision 2010 1996, 19). FM 100-6, *Information Operations: Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures*, breaks information superiority into two parts: information management and information operations. Two related activities that may contribute to information operations are civil affairs and public affairs (FM 100-6 1999, viii). Currently the civil and public affairs doctrine does not integrate into the body of information operations (Wright Task Force Briefing 1999).

Information management involves directing relevant information to the right person at the right time in a usable format to facilitate decision making. Information management is broken down into two parts: information systems and relevant information. Information systems are used to collect, process, store, display, and disseminate data and information. Relevant information is all information of importance to the commander and staff in the exercise of command and control as shown in figure 1.

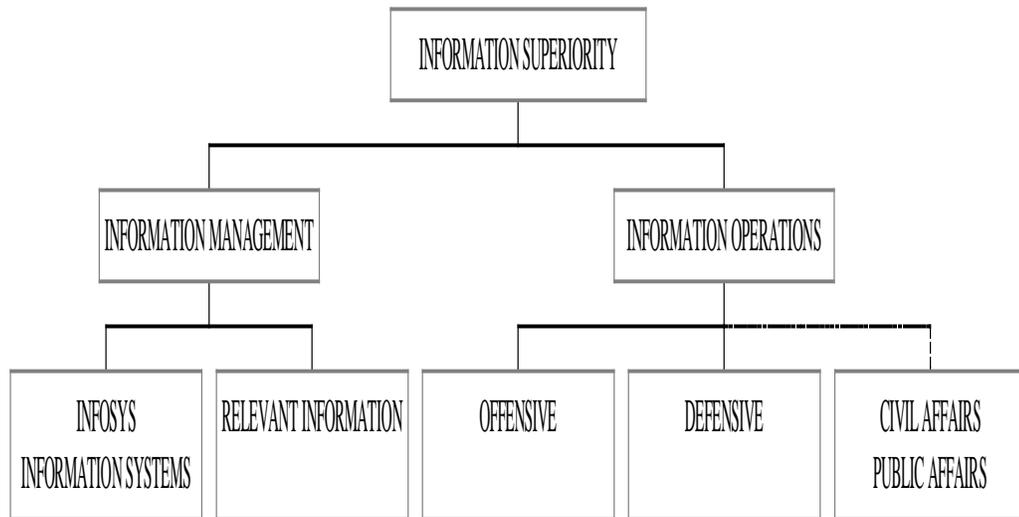


Figure 1. Information Superiority

The application of information operations is done through offensive information operations and defensive information operations. Offensive information operations are the integrated use of assigned and supporting capabilities and activities mutually supported by intelligence, to affect adversary decision-makers or to influence others to achieve or promote specific objectives (FM 100-6 1999, viii).

Defensive information operations are the integration and coordination of policies and procedures, operations, personnel and technology to protect and defend friendly information and information systems. Defensive information operations ensure timely, accurate, and relevant information access while denying adversaries the opportunity to exploit friendly information and information systems for their own purpose (FM 100-6 1999, viii-ix).

The previous section has been used to give an explanation of information operations. It outlines the basic doctrine behind an information operation, where an

information operation comes from and the offensive and defensive nature of the operation. The next step is to develop what an information operation consists of. After the framework of an information operation is explained, historical examples of recent operations and the special forces contributions to those operations will be studied. When information operations and the role of special forces during the operations are compared, the role of special forces in information operations can be explained.

Key Definitions

Army Special Forces. One of the components of the US Army that has been developed to plan, conduct, and support special operation activities in all operational environments and across the range of military operations (FM 100-25 1998).

Information Operations. Actions taken to affect adversaries' and influence other's decision-making processes, information and information systems, while defending friendly decision-making processes, information, and information systems.

Despite special forces joint nature, concentration will be on the Army definition of information operations. It incorporates additional elements into the joint definition. The difference is an expansion of the joint definition to include the concept of “others” in the Area of Operations and Interest.

This compliments the joint definition by recognizing that the Army conducts operations in an area that includes an adversary as well as other groups of people and individuals during operations. Information operations address these others as sources for information. An example of potential others is a refugee moving from an adversary's zone of control into an Army unit's area of operations. A second example is a non-governmental organization or PVO that requires specific information to assist in

controlling the population in an area, a group that requires proper information (Wright 1999).

Limitations

This thesis will use both the Army and joint definition for information operations and apply that doctrine to the special forces group.

1. Army special forces operate in the joint realm on an everyday basis.

2. The difference between the joint and Army definition of information operations is the Army expands the definition in two ways: the Army definition includes a consideration of the adversaries', friendly and other's decision making process, while the joint definition concentrates on the adversary and friendly decision making processes. The Army also includes the decision making process, as well as information and information systems.

This thesis will concentrate on the special forces group because it is the largest deployable element of special forces, and controls many of the assets that a subordinate unit will request for its missions.

Delimitations.

This will not discuss the relevance of information operations because its importance for the future has been established: the concept of information operations has been developed into doctrine, and has been used in operations (CALL Newsletter 99-2 1999). In order to progress with the newly developed doctrine, special forces leaders and soldiers need to understand the doctrine, and their role in information operations.

This thesis will concentrate on information operations and not discuss information management. Information management concerns improvements in managing

information, the speed of it, improving the clarity and necessity. These improvements apply across the military, and are not in question.

Summary

Joint Vision 2010 introduced information superiority. General Shelton calls information operations a core military innovation and a necessary process for the future of joint warfare. Special forces offer the joint force commander an expanded range of options to integrate into his information operations and is the force of choice for dynamic, ambiguous and politically volatile missions. The core competencies, regional orientation and wide variety of mission types that can be executed by special forces groups ensure that they will be included in any future information operations. It is imperative that the special forces commander be provided more doctrinal guidance concerning the nature of information operations beyond the fifteen lines of explanation included in FM 31-20. This thesis will demonstrate that special forces groups have been executing missions that contribute to larger information operations.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

We have the people, the motivation and the reputation for unconventional thought and action. Now is the time to justify the faith our nation's leaders have placed in us by being in the forefront of change. Now is the time for us to develop new paradigms that will allow us to continue to make significant contributions to the nations security.

Wayne A. Downing, *Special Operations Forces: Meeting Tomorrow's Challenges Today*

The purpose of this chapter is to provide the raw background information concerning information operations and special forces. After a firm understanding of information operations and special forces is established, this thesis will look back at the contributions that the special forces has made in several operations. The group of operations selected represents a continuum of operations ranging from war, Desert Storm and Just Cause, through situations short of war, Noble Obelisk, peacekeeping operations, and Joint Guard.

Something important to remember is that although there are eleven clearly defined elements of information operations the contributions of the special forces units will be studied in the context of an entire information operation. The special forces operations may or may not fall neatly into one of the elements some analysis will be used to demonstrate how the missions contributed to the overall information operation. When these contributions are compared to the elements of information operations special forces's role in information operations can be developed.

Throughout this thesis, there is a heavy reliance on published doctrine, joint and Army. The study of the doctrine concerning the conduct and nature of information

operations is important. Information operations are a relatively new concept that is evolving as our military and its missions evolve. Without a thorough understanding of how our leaders envision an information operation being conducted, the role of special forces cannot be understood.

The study of the doctrinal application of special forces is very relevant. As one of the smallest parts of the Army, the way that special forces operate is not common knowledge. In order for a conventional joint forces commander to understand how he can apply the combination of information operations and special forces to his operation, he has to understand the doctrine that governs the application of special forces.

Information Operations

FM 100-6, *Army Doctrine for Information Operations*, was used for the background of this thesis because it represented the most current Army thoughts on information operations. When considering information operations, the Army, with FM 100-6, differs slightly from the joint community (JP 3-13 1998). The primary difference is in the Army's more specific definition of information operations. As introduced in chapter 1, the Army definition compliments the joint definition by recognizing that the Army conducts operations in an area that includes an adversary as well as other groups of people and individuals during operations. The Army definition of information operations addresses these others as sources for information--or recipients of information (Wright 1999). This is an important addition to the definition because it recognizes that an information operation can be oriented on groups or individuals other than just the adversary. This ties in with ensuring that the objective of the operation is fully understood from all perspectives.

How did information operations evolve?

Achievement of total situational awareness in the 21st Century will prove to be more deadly than the use of gunpowder was at the turn of this century.

General Johnnie Wilson, *The Information Age Army*

Understanding information operations as defined in JP 3-13 is difficult to do without an understanding of how information operations evolved in the US military.

Modern information operations began, according to Tulak, in September 1987 with the publication of JP 3-13, *C3CM in Joint Military Operations*. This was the first publication to start joining elements (jamming, operations security, physical destruction, and deception) of information to provide better synergy on the battlefield. The doctrine focused on integrating the deep operations plan to disrupt enemy target acquisition, intelligence gathering and command and control systems while protecting friendly command, control and communications from the enemy. Physical destruction was added to the idea in FM 100-15, *Corps Operations* (Tulak 1999).

After Desert Storm, several elements of current information operations were added. Military deception, psychological operations, and electronic warfare all contributed to the allied success. When these elements were added to the previous five elements and the emerging information management technologies (data collection and processing, rapid dissemination of intelligence, precision attacks, and near-time surveillance), the beginnings of information warfare began to fall into place.

In 1993, the Joint Chiefs of Staff introduced command and control warfare (C2W). Command and control warfare was defined as “the integrated use of operations security, military deception, psychological operations, electronic warfare, and physical

destruction mutually supported by intelligence to deny information to, influence, degrade, or destroy adversary command and control capabilities, while protecting command and control capabilities against such actions.” In 1994, TRADOC Pamphlet 525-200-5 added special operations and psychological operations as elements of a strategy employing simultaneous attacks throughout the depth of the enemy's battlespace. When Force XXI was introduced as the new concept of land warfare, information operations began to be developed as doctrine.

In 1996, with the publication of JP 3-13.1, *Joint Doctrine for Command and Control Warfare*, information operations was expanded to cover the entire range of military operations, including military operations other than war (MOOTW) and information operations. This was brought about because the nature of conflict began to shift from military on military conflict (Desert Storm) to peacetime operations (Joint Guard, Noble Obelisk) (Tulak 1999).

Where does information come from?

There are four tangible resources that can be manipulated or wielded by a nation to accomplish a national goal. The first, diplomatic, is the use of international systems of communication to promote and protect its purposes and interests with other nations. The second element of power is economic power. A nation uses its economic power to protect its industries and markets, stabilize the economy of an ally, and improve the quality of life of its population while adversely affecting the economy of a potential opponent. The third element, military power, is the sum of a nation's weapons and equipment, trained manpower, organization and doctrine (Davis, Dorf, and Walz 1999, L-1-A-12--15).

The final “Instrument of Power” is information. Information is the conscious use of communication to inform foreign publics regarding US policies and actions for the purpose of affecting these publics in the ways favorable to US national policy (Davis, Dorf, and Walz 1999, L-1-A-12--15).

National information goals are coordinated for the joint forces commander at the national level to support the Secretary of Defense contingency planning guidance and national military strategy, or in response to a regional crisis (JP 5-0 1995, I-8--9). The goals are coordinated with diplomatic and economic objectives to ensure unity of effort with the joint forces commander. The joint forces commander develops a plan for the operation, providing boundaries for all phases of planning. The information operations planner at the joint forces commander ensures that these boundaries are in line with the national informational objectives (JP 3-13 1998, IV-3 figure V-1-3).

The joint forces commander information operations planner reviews the national information objective and identifies the adversary informational vulnerabilities and friendly information weaknesses that will be addressed in the plan. The information operations planner also begins to devise the required tasks and the subordinate force element that will be responsible for executing these tasks. These tasks are integrated into an operation plan or order for execution by the subordinate elements (JP 5-0 1995, I-10).

When the joint forces commander information operations planner develops his plan he considers the elements of information operations and how they can be used to affect an adversary's information capability or to influence others to achieve or promote specific objectives (offensive), or protect his own information capability (defensive). The planner considers: operational security, military deception, psychological

operations, electronic warfare, physical destruction, information assurance, physical security, counterdeception, counterpropoganda, counterintelligence, special information operations, and computer network attack.

What are the different elements of information operations?

There are eleven separate elements of information operations, that can be used in an offensive or defensive manner, depending on the needs of the information operations planner. The first element is operations security (OPSEC). Operations security is the process of identifying critical information and subsequently analyzing friendly actions attendant to military operations and other activities to do three things: identifying those actions that can be observed by adversary intelligence systems; determining indicators hostile intelligence systems might obtain that could be interpreted or pieced together to derive critical information in time to be useful to adversaries; and selecting and executing measures that eliminate or reduce to an acceptable level the vulnerabilities of friendly actions to adversary exploitation (FM 101-5-1 1997, 1-116).

The second element of information operations is military deception. These are measures designed to mislead the enemy by manipulation, distortion or falsification of evidence to induce them to react in a manner prejudicial to his interests (JP 3-13 1998, GL-8).

Psychological operations, the third element, are planned operations that are designed to convey selected information and indicators to foreign audiences to influence their emotions, motives, objective reasoning and ultimately the behavior of foreign governments, organizations, groups and individuals. The purpose of psychological

operations is to induce or reinforce foreign attitudes and behavior favorable to the originator's objectives (FM 101-5-1 1997, 1-125).

The next element is electronic warfare (EW). Electronic warfare is any military action involving the use of electromagnetic and directed energy to control the electromagnetic spectrum or to attack the enemy. The three major subdivisions within electronic warfare are electronic attack, electronic protection and electronic warfare support. Electronic attack is the use of electromagnetic energy, directed energy or anti-radiation weapons to attack personnel, facilities or equipment with the intent of degrading, neutralizing or destroying enemy combat capability (FM 101-5-1 1997, 1-58). Electronic protection is the division of electronic warfare involving actions taken to protect personnel, facilities and equipment from any effects of friendly or enemy employment of electronic warfare that degrade, neutralize or destroy friendly combat capabilities (FM 101-5-1 1997, 1-59).

Electronic warfare support is the division of electronic warfare involving actions tasked by or under direct control of an operational commander to search for, intercept, identify, and locate sources of intentional and unintentional radiated electromagnetic energy for the purpose of immediate threat recognition. It provides information required for immediate decisions involving electronic warfare operations and other tactical actions such as threat avoidance, targeting, and homing. Electronic warfare support data can be used to produce intelligence, communications intelligence, and electronics intelligence signals (FM 101-5-1 1997, 1-59).

Physical destruction, the next element of information operations, is action taken to destroy or neutralize adversary forces, facilities, and equipment (JP 3-13 1998, II-5). The

sixth element of information operations is information assurance. These are operations that protect and defend information and information systems by ensuring their availability, integrity, authentication, confidentiality, and nonrepudation. This includes providing for restoration of information systems by incorporation protection, detection, and reaction capabilities (JP 3-13 1998, GL-7).

Physical security is physical measures designed to safeguard personnel; to prevent unauthorized access to equipment, installations, material and documents; and to safeguard them against espionage, sabotage, damage and theft (FM 101-5-1 1997, 1-121).

The next three elements are both designed to counter a specific enemy threat. The first of these is counterdeception. These are efforts to negate, neutralize, diminish the effects of or gain advantage from a foreign deception operation. Counterdeception does not include the intelligence function of identifying foreign deception operations. Next, counterpropaganda is activities that identify adversary propaganda to contribute to situational awareness and serve to expose adversary attempts to influence friendly populations and military forces (JP 3-13 1998, III-7, GL-5). The next element of information operations is counterintelligence, information gathered and activities conducted to protect against espionage, other intelligence activities, sabotage or assassinations conducted by or on behalf of foreign governments or elements thereof, foreign organizations, foreign persons, or international terrorist activities (FM 101-5-1 1997, 1-40).

Special information operations are information operations that by their sensitive nature, due to their potential impact, security requirements, or risk to the national security of the US, require a special review, and approval process (JP 3-13 1998, GL-10).

The final element of information operations is computer network attack. These are operations designed to disrupt, deny, degrade, or destroy information resident in computers and network themselves (JP 3-13 1998, GL-5).

A recent example of this can be found in the Russian conflict in Chechnya (not from a US information operation, but very relevant as an example). The first time the Russians moved into the contested area, there was a great deal of resistance from the targeted adversary and the local population. Three years later, when the Russians moved into the region for the second time, they incorporated extensive information operations into their operation, explaining to the local population who they were targeting and the purpose of their operation. As a result of this explanation, the Russian military received assistance (civilians identified terrorist locations) from the local population, rather than the locals constituting another hostile force (JP 3-13 1998, GL-5).

Description of an Information Operation

For this description, I will use the joint task force as the standard headquarters; this is a common headquarters that can easily be understood by military members. Offensive information operations may be the main effort, a supporting effort or a phase of a joint forces commander's operation. Defensive information operations take place across the joint task force, to ensure the joint forces commander achieves information superiority over the adversary as shown in figure 2.

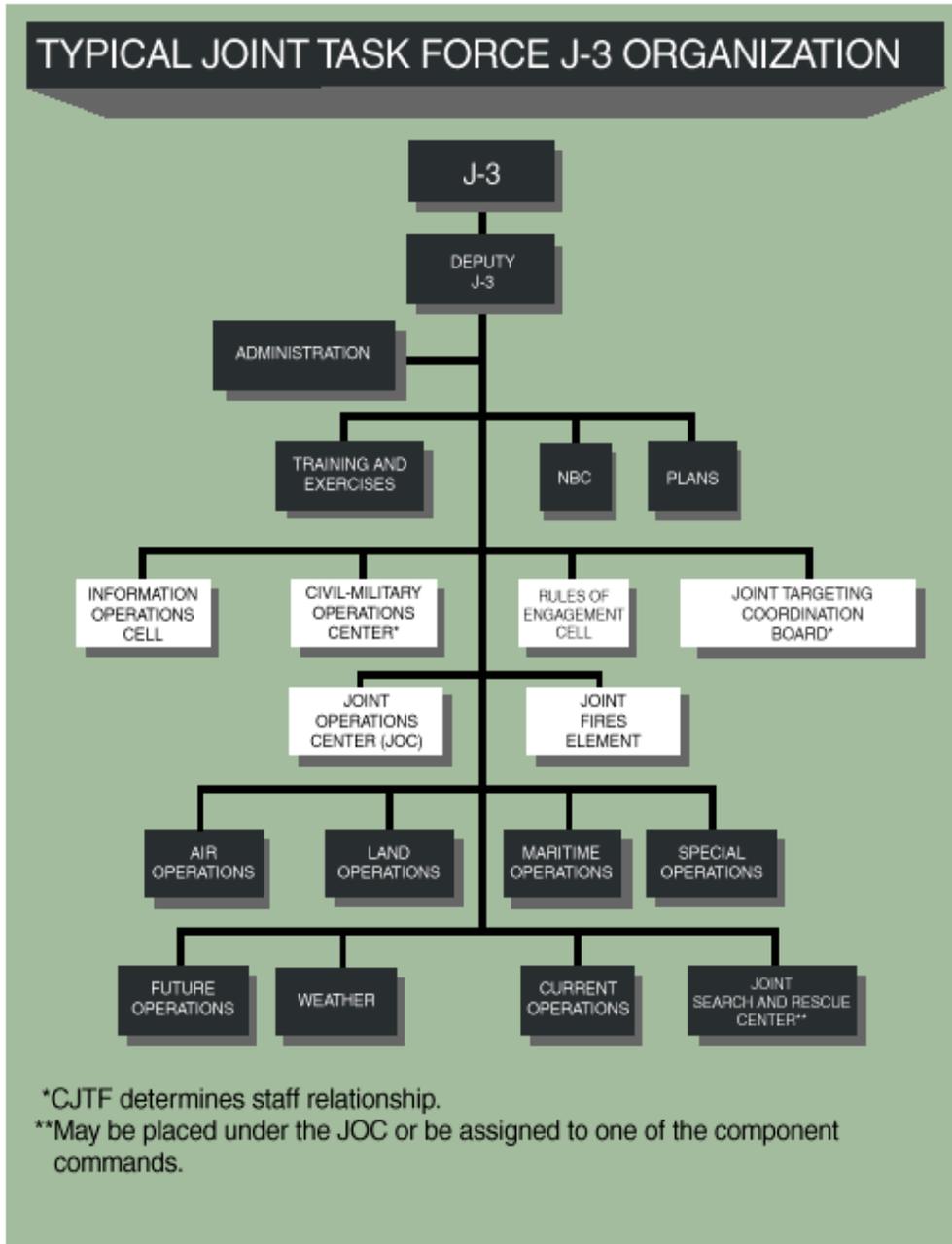


Figure VII-1. Typical Joint Task Force J-3 Organization

Figure 2. Typical Joint Task Force J-3 Organization (JP 5-00 2 1999, VII-2)

Within the joint task force, the responsibility for ensuring that information operations capabilities and activities are planned, coordinated, and integrated within the joint task force staff, with higher, subordinate, adjacent headquarters, and external

agencies is the information operations officer in the J-3 section. Figure 3 shows the typical Joint Task Force J-3 (Operations Cell). The information operations officer ensures information operations are implemented per the joint forces commander's guidance. The information operations officer has several responsibilities throughout the operation. The first function is to ensure that the commander develops guidance for information operations, to ensure unity of effort for the information operation. Next, the information operations officer establishes information operations priorities, and determines the availability of information operations resources to carry out information operations plans. When developing the information operations cell, the information operations officer ensures necessary staff representatives are consolidated at the correct time to ensure efficiency of effort in planning, integrating and executing information operations. After the plan is developed, the information operations officer serves as the primary advocate for information operations targets nominated for action. Upon completion of an information operation, the information operations officer ensures that the information operations target is assessed, and any corrections or additional attacks are executed (JP 3-13 1998, IV-3).

In order to ensure that all informational efforts are coordinated, the information operations officer establishes an information operations cell. The cell consists of representatives from each of the primary staff sections, supporting commands and subject matter experts for the information operations elements (a counterintelligence and operational security specialist, for example). The cell is the coordination element for the duration of the joint task force's operation. A representative from the joint special operations task force is a member of the board, to ensure that the special operations

(Army special forces is included in special operations) forces are coordinated during the operation (JP 3-13 1998, IV-3).

The information operations officer ensures that the proper representatives are on hand for the planning and execution of an operation. For example, if during a phase of an operation a special forces detachment is executing a target as part of an information operation, the information operations officer ensures that there is a representative for special forces available during the planning and execution phase of that part of the operation.

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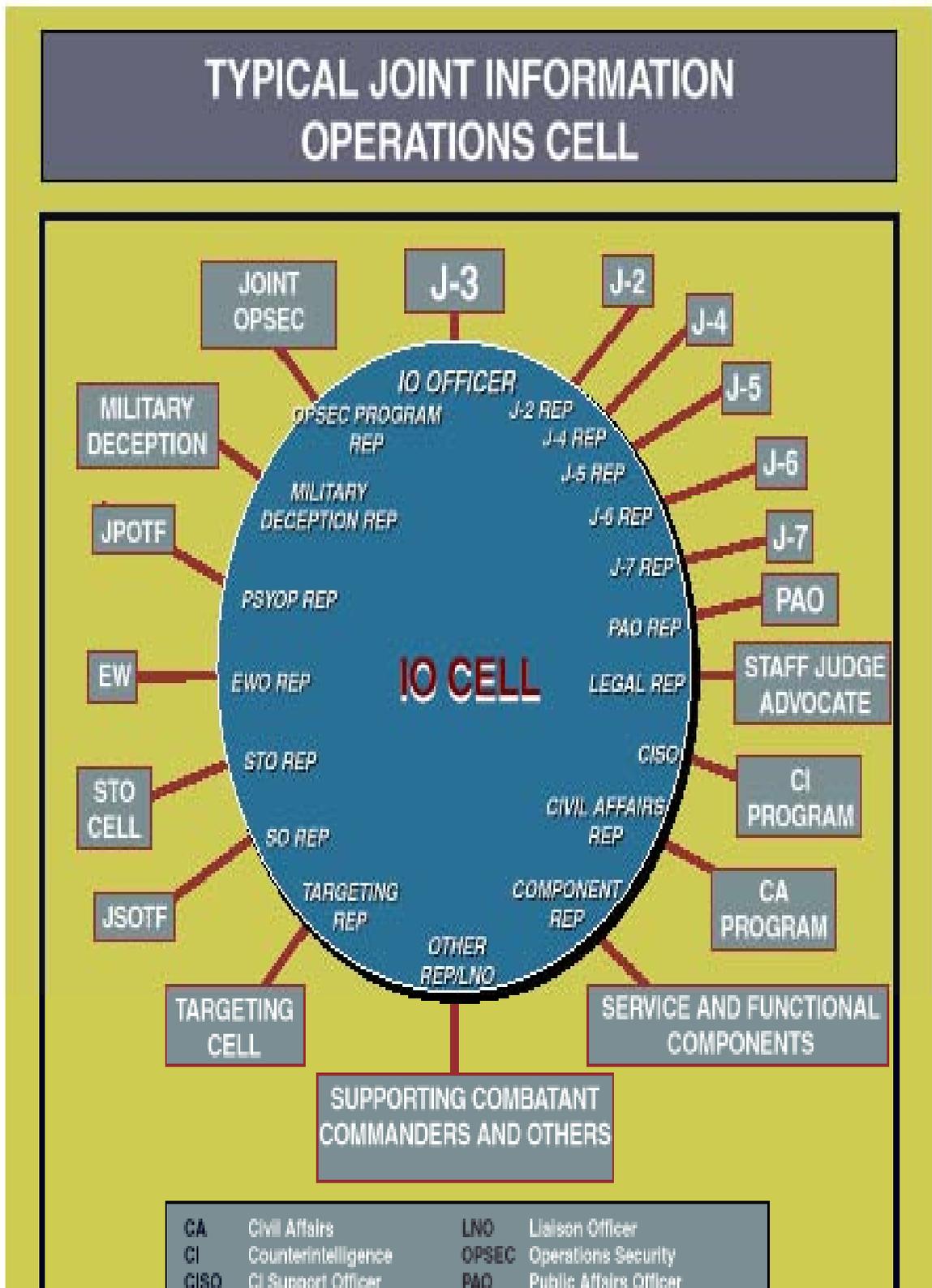


Figure 3. Typical Joint Information Operations Cell

Planning

The planning for an information operation is imbedded in both the deliberate and crisis action planning processes as described in JP 5-00.2, *Joint Task Force Planning Guidance and Procedures* (JP 5-00.2 1999, Chapter IX). The fundamentals of information operations planning begin with receiving the commander's intent and guidance for information operations from the joint forces commander. The joint forces commander is the individual responsible for ensuring that the military efforts are synchronized with the diplomatic, economic and informational efforts made to achieve national objectives. The information operations officer is responsible for ensuring that the joint task force commander's guidance is in line with the national objectives.

It is essential that the joint task force commander's information guidance is issued very early in the planning phase, information operations require long-term development and preparation. This allows the information operations officer to arrange for the proper assets, relationships and staff to support the information operation. The integration of staffs, assets (air, land, sea, space, interagency, and special operations) and relationships during the conduct of the operation allows the information officer to achieve a unity of effort towards achieving the commander's guidance (JP 3-13 1998, V-1).

From the beginning of the operation, the information operations officer and cell are developing ways to protect friendly assets from the adversary. The protection of friendly information can range from basic operational security measures, to national level efforts at the governmental and department of defense level. This allows the joint forces commander to operate with the assurance of information superiority.

As the operation planning proceeds along the systematic planning lines, the information operations cell identifies assets (air, land, sea, space, interagency, and special operations) that will be available to it during the operation. Once the course of action is identified, the information operations cell identifies adversary vulnerabilities and develops the effects that complement the COA's requirements (Lambert 1999). Once the effects are identified, the information operations cell matches the effects with tasks and the assets available to the joint task force. These tasks are incorporated into the overall plan for the operation developed by the joint task force.

The key to ensuring the tasks are integrated into the overall plan is participation in joint planning groups. This ensures early and continuous exchange of information and close coordination of the information effort. The joint targeting and coordination board provides a means to coordinate joint forces capabilities with the effects and tasks identified during the planning process (JP 5-00.2 1999, VII-5).

What is a special forces group?

As shown in Figure 4 the largest deployable element of special forces is the special forces group, followed by the battalion, company and detachment. The special forces group is a flexible, multipurpose organization designed to plan, conduct and support special operations in any operational environment in peace, conflict or war (FM 31-20 1998, 3-14). The special forces group is the command and control element for three special forces battalions, as well as the different support detachments in the group (signal, military intelligence, and service).

Each special forces group is equipped with two types of units that are capable of conducting operations in conjunction with other special forces units: chemical

reconnaissance detachments and support operations teams, alpha. The chemical reconnaissance detachment is a unit that is specially trained to collect, secure and transport a chemical or biological sample. A support operations team, alpha are low-level signal intelligence and electronic warfare collection teams that intercept and report combat and technical information collected over a variety of communications bands (FM 31-20 1998, 3-12).

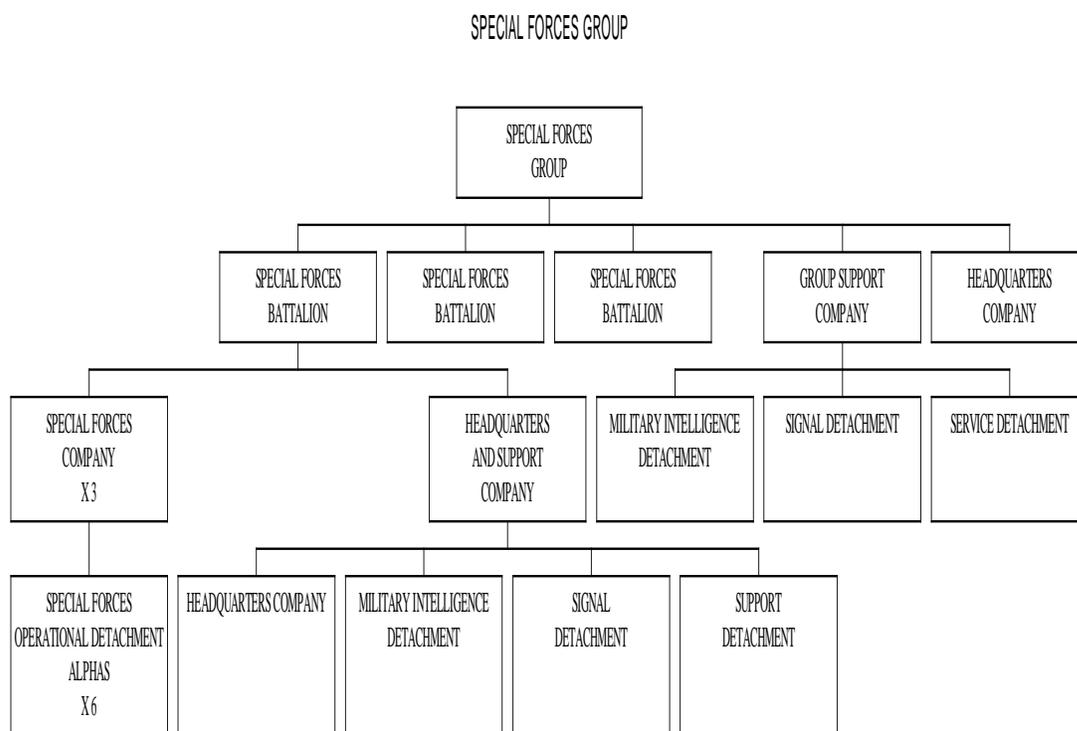


Figure 4. Special Forces Group

The special forces group can form the nucleus for a joint special operations task force (with augmentation from other services), or the army special operations task force command and control element, or a component of the army special operations task force as shown in figure 4 (FM 31-20, 4-1).

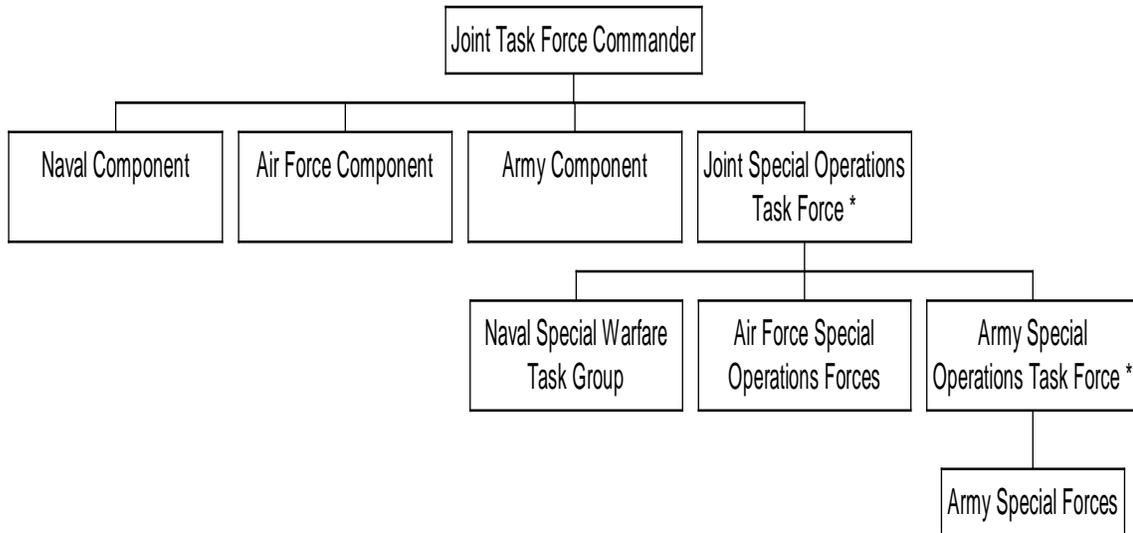


Figure 5. The Joint Task Force

*Potential Locations for the special forces Group as a Command Element

What are special forces and what are their unique capabilities?

When considering information operations objectives, the joint forces commander information operations planner has a variety of assets available, including assets from all of the services and national assets as shown in figure 5. The unique capabilities of special operations force (Army special forces is a component of special operations force) enable the joint forces commander to access, alter, degrade, delay, disrupt, deny, or destroy adversary information systems throughout the range of military operations and at all levels of war (JP 3-13, 1998, I-17).

Special forces offer a collection of capabilities that are not available elsewhere in the Armed Forces of the US. While other organizations may possess some of the capabilities, no other organization possesses the unique assortment. This uniqueness is derived from four areas: special forces mission types, the way that missions are executed, cultural and language skills, and composition of the detachments.

Mission Types

The first of the areas that makes special forces unique is the types of missions that special forces execute. The US Army organizes, trains, and equips special forces to perform seven primary missions: unconventional warfare, direct action, foreign internal defense, special reconnaissance, counterproliferation, combating terrorism, information operations, and several collateral activities.

Unconventional warfare is a broad spectrum of military and paramilitary operations predominately conducted by indigenous or surrogate forces organized, trained, equipped, supported, and directed in varying degrees by an external source. It includes guerilla warfare and the indirect activities of subversion, sabotage, intelligence activities, and unconventional assisted recovery (FM 31-20 1998, 2-1). The second mission type is direct action operations which are short duration strikes and other small-scale offensive actions by special forces to seize, destroy, or inflict damage on a specified target or to destroy, capture, or recover designated personnel or material (FM 31-20 1998, 2-3).

Foreign internal defense is a protracted and interagency activity to organize, train, advise, and assist host nation military and paramilitary forces to protect its society from subversion, lawlessness, and insurgency (FM 31-20 1998, 2-2).

The next mission type, special reconnaissance, is reconnaissance and surveillance actions conducted by special forces to confirm, refute, or obtain by visual observation or other collection methods information on the capabilities, intentions and activities of an actual or potential enemy. Special reconnaissance missions can also be conducted to secure data on the meteorological, hydrographic, or geographic characteristics of a particular area (FM 31-20 1998, 2-4). With additional assets, a special forces unit can

conduct chemical, biological or electromagnetic collection in support of the reconnaissance. Chemical reconnaissance detachments and support operations team alpha are two units found at the group level which routinely train with special forces detachments in mission execution.

Counterproliferation is action taken to locate, identify, seize, destroy, render safe, transport, capture, or recover weapons of mass destruction (FM 31-20 1998, 2-3). The final type of mission that special forces is trained and equipped to conduct is combating terrorism. This includes both offensive and defensive measures taken by civilian and military agencies of a government to prevent, deter, and respond to terrorism (FM 31-20 1998, 2-5).

Along with the seven primary missions discussed above, special forces conduct several other missions called collateral activities. This group of missions are missions that special forces are not specifically trained to conduct, but their unique skills are used to contribute to the accomplishment of the assigned task. These missions include humanitarian assistance and disaster relief, security assistance, personnel recovery, counterdrug operations, countermine activities, and special activities (FM 31-20 1998, 2-6-8).

The final collateral activity, special forces support of multinational operations is a recent development for special forces, and stems from the importance of multinational coalitions during of recent operations. Special forces soldiers collocate with military forces of coalition partners and provide key command, control, communications, computers, and intelligence links to the coalition partner. The special forces liaison elements provide the coalition commander with the higher headquarters military

intentions and capabilities while confirming the situation on the ground, assisting with fire support planning and enabling overall coordination between US forces and their coalition partners (FM 31-20 1998, 2-9).

It is important to understand that these missions can be conducted separately or in conjunction with another mission type. For example, during a foreign internal defense mission, a special forces unit may be called on to assist the host nation during a disaster. A second example of the multiple and follow on mission is the special forces unit that discovers a target during a special reconnaissance. The unit may be called on to provide terminal guidance for an aircraft or precision munitions to the target that was acquired (FM 31-20 1998, 2-7).

Mission Execution

With the exception of unconventional warfare, most any type of unit in the US Army can conduct a majority of these missions. An infantry squad can conduct a direct action mission or a special reconnaissance. Conventional chemical units can collect samples, or a military intelligence unit can collect electronic data. The uniqueness of special forces stems from the way that these missions are executed. The factors that make the execution unique for special forces units are their ability to gain access to remote, denied or politically sensitive areas; mission duration and mission adaptability (Mitchell 1999, 77).

Special forces routinely conduct training in a variety of infiltration and exfiltration techniques ranging from walking, through long range, cross-country vehicle movements, and airborne operations to underwater operations. The infiltration and exfiltration techniques all focus on reaching an objective undetected so that the optimal

amount of time can be spent on the objective. The method of infiltration is selected on a “by mission” basis, considering the demands of the mission, platforms available, time available, and terrain that has to be covered. Each infiltration and exfiltration is carefully rehearsed, including any contingencies that could arise.

Special forces units conduct detailed mission planning prior to their mission execution. The planning normally takes place over a ninety-six-hour time period and entails detailed planning, contingency development, and detailed, mission-oriented rehearsals. Every aspect of the mission, from the infiltration into the area of operations, the communications required, the actual mission execution, and exfiltration. Also planned are contingencies that could occur--casualties, loss of equipment, or loss of personnel. Each member of the detachment knows the minute details of the mission and all of the contingencies that could arise, and their actions during those contingencies.

Upon reaching the mission area, the special forces unit can be tailored to execute a mission of longer duration than a conventional unit. Based on the size of the special forces unit, its logistic requirements can be transported during infiltration and either maintained with the unit or cached for later use and recovery.

Special forces have repeatedly demonstrated an ability to apply their skills to a variety of tasks and complex issues ranging from a humanitarian demining mission (a collateral activity) to implementation of the Dayton Accords in Bosnia. This core competency is another reason that special forces offer expanded choices for the joint forces commander. This adaptability is the result of several factors: willingness to be innovative and try unconventional approaches; organizational flexibility; and the maturity of special operation force personnel (Mitchell 1999, 77).

According to Colin Gray, special operation force (Army special forces being a component of special operation force) can provide a laboratory for innovation. The small scale and high risk of special operations require that special operation force adopt “equalizing techniques and equipment” (Gray 1996, 175). The unique organizational culture of special operation force also contributes to innovation. Although a relatively new branch, special forces have a heritage that starts with the Jedburgh teams infiltrating into occupied Europe to assist and coordinate French resistance. The heritage continued through the conflict in Vietnam, where special forces operational detachments worked with the indigenous populations to resist Vietcong aggression. The modern special forces soldier is able to draw on a long tradition of developing innovative techniques to accomplish difficult missions.

The maturity and experience of special forces personnel contributes to adaptability. Special forces personnel are frequently older and more experienced than other soldiers, their experience makes them better able to deal with complex missions or situations. All special forces soldiers are selected after their initial enlistment in the Army, and are rigorously assessed prior to selection to find the candidates with the highest potential for success in special operations. Further, all special forces soldiers undergo realistic and stressful training not only during the Special Forces Qualification Course but also in their units (Mitchell 1999, 80-82).

Cultural and Language Skills

Each special forces group is oriented on one of the regional commanders-in-chief’s (European, Central, Southern, and Pacific) areas of responsibility. Within the groups, each subordinate unit (battalion, company, and detachment) has a more specific

area on which to focus. For example, Third Special Forces Group is oriented on EUCCOM and West Africa. Each of the three battalions has a specific part of West Africa for which it is responsible and groups of countries are assigned to companies and detachments. This allows the special forces groups to concentrate on the language, cultural, non-verbal and interpersonal skills that are unique to that region (FM 31-20 1998, 1-3).

This does not mean that special forces units are limited to their region or area of responsibility. Special forces training in cross-cultural communications allow them to operate in different regions. Special forces soldiers tasked during Operation Provide Comfort missions were not area or language-oriented; Northern Iraq was not their normal area of operation. However, because of their past operations with various people around the world and past training, the soldiers recognized the importance of cultural awareness. Within a matter of days, the special forces soldiers knew the customs of the people, allowing them to establish rapport critical to mission success (CALL Newsletter 1999).

Detachment Composition

The basic building block unit for special forces operations is the twelve-man operational detachment, alpha. A captain leads the special forces operational detachment alpha, with a warrant officer and a master sergeant as his two primary assistants. This provides the detachment with a great deal of operational experience and mature leadership. The special forces operational detachment alpha has two specialists in each of the four primary functional areas (weapons, engineer, medical, and communications) and one assistant operations and intelligence sergeant (FM 31-20 1998, 3-1).

The weapons sergeants are trained in the use of a variety of small arms, light crew-served weapons, anti-aircraft and anti-armor weapons. The engineers are trained in all aspects of combat engineering and light construction engineering. The medical sergeants provide emergency, routine and limited definitive care for detachment members, and associated indigenous personnel. The communications sergeants are trained in all aspects of military communication (FM 31-20 1998, 3-4). When all of the unique capabilities are added together (mission types, method of execution, cultural awareness, and detachment composition), the joint forces commander is given an asset that can be tasked with a variety of missions.

During wartime, special forces units can be infiltrated well beyond the range of conventional units to strike targets or provide a long-term reconnaissance asset on a target. They can be attached to a coalition partner to give the coalition partner access to the joint forces command, control, communications, computer and intelligence assets, and ensure full interoperability for the coalition partner. In situations short of war, special forces units can train with potential coalition partners, or be deployed into regions where their cultural and language skills can be maximized.

Summary

Information is the currency of victory on the battlefield.

General Gordon R. Sullivan

Now that a firm understanding of information operations and special forces has been provided, the next step in discovering special forces's role in information operations is to look back at missions that special forces units have executed. The four operations that will be studied are Just Cause, Desert Storm, Joint Guard, and Noble Obelisk. Once

the missions have been studied, they will be compared to the eleven elements of information operations as outlined in FM 100-6, *Information Operations: Tactics, Techniques, And Procedures* (Initial Draft).

CHAPTER 3

OPERATION JUST CAUSE

The first operation that will be studied is Operation Just Cause, 20 December 1989 through January 1990. This operation is important to study because it represents the first military operation under the reforms outlined in the Goldwater-Nichols Act of 1986. Just Cause, occurred a short three years after the Department of Defense reorganization. This is significant because of the jointness in Just Cause mandated by the Goldwater-Nichols Act. General Thurman, the commander of Just Cause has the ability to draw on all of the services, including Special Operations Forces.

Historical Background for Just Cause

There were certain things that we had to do. We knew we had to knock out the (Panamanian Defense Force central headquarters in Panama City, La) Commandancia, to neutralize the command and control. We knew we had to take down the police and most of the institutions of government, because they, too, were run by the Panamanian Defense Force.

General Carl Stiner

During the 1988 presidential election in the United States, George Bush took a tough, anti-Noriega stand, implying that he would find a solution to the problem in Panama. Bush's political and diplomatic solutions were unsuccessful, so he turned to the military to remove Noriega. The final military plan that was developed concentrated on two political goals: the removal of Noriega and the establishment of a legitimate government recognized by the US (United States Special Operations Command History 1998, 20). With the removal of Noriega as a goal, the plan had to include eliminating the Panamanian Defense Force in order to be successful. Without eliminating the

Panamanian Defense Force, another Panamanian Defense Force strongman could rise up and seize power similar to Noriega (Woodward 1999, 28).

After several evolutions, Operation Blue Spoon (later renamed Just Cause) took shape. The plan called for an overwhelming attack on the Panamanian Defense Force, several target lists were developed for both conventional and special operation force. The special forces missions consisted of maintaining surveillance on several key Panamanian Defense Force installations and routes, and the neutralization of key communications facilities. Task Force Black, the special forces element of the Joint Special Operations Task Force, set-up their headquarters in a hanger at Albrook Air Force Base, and prepared for their H-hour missions (Donnelly, Roth, and Baker 1999, 122-3).

Special Reconnaissance

At H-hour, the primary special forces unit in Task Force Black was C Company, 3d Battalion, 7th special forces Group. C Company was stationed in Panama and had been operating in the country and interacting with the Panamanians, especially the areas that they were going to be executing their Just Cause mission. This gave the soldiers of that unit a familiarity with Panama and the Panamanian people. After H-hour, other elements of 7th Special Forces Group that is oriented on South and Central America, were tasked with missions as they arrived in country (Donnelly, Roth, and Baker 1991, 122-5).

The first missions executed were special reconnaissance missions designed to give the joint task force commander early warning if the Panamanian Defense Force began to move to reinforce any of the main target areas. There were three units and locations that the joint task force commander was concerned: Fort Cimarron, the base of

the Panamanian Defense Force Battalion 2000; the Pacora River bridge, which sat astride the main route of the Battalion 2000 into Panama City, and Tinajitas barracks, home of the 1st Panamanian Defense Force Company (Donnelly, Roth, and Baker 1991, 123-124).

These three missions were conducted by Company B, 3d Battalion, 7th Special Forces Group. The first special reconnaissance was to observe the Panamanian Defense Force's Battalion 2000 at Fort Cimarron, to alert the joint task force if the Battalion 2000 left the fort. However, prior to the detachment's insertion, the Battalion 2000 left Fort Cimarron.

The second special reconnaissance mission, the Pacora River Bridge mission, was executed by A Company, 3d Battalion, 7th Special Forces Group. The original mission called for a four-man observation position was to report the movement of the Panamanian Defense Force BN 2000 between Fort Cimarron and Panama City. Major Higgins, the commander of Company A, made the decision to reinforce the four-man team with twenty additional men, based on the size of the Panamanian Defense Force unit, and the likelihood of contact. Upon notification of a Panamanian Defense Force convoy leaving Fort Cimarron towards Panama City (and the bridge), the mission turned into a direct action mission to deny the Panamanian Defense Force access to the bridge. The helicopters arrived at the bridge, just as the first Panamanian Defense Force vehicle started to cross. The special forces soldiers with the assistance of an Air Force AC-130 halted the convoy, preventing the BN 2000 from interfering with the invasion plans (Donnelly, Roth, and Baker 1991, 127-129).

The final special reconnaissance target was the 1st Panamanian Defense Force Company at Tinajitas. This mission was important to the joint task force headquarters

because the 1st Panamanian Defense Force Company was equipped with mortars that could range US facilities at Fort Clayton (US Southern Command Headquarters). If the mortars were employed against Fort Clayton, that could disrupt the US command and control center for Operation Just Cause (Donnelly, Roth, and Baker 1991, 123). The detachment inserted, and reported seeing or hearing no activity at the barracks, except for two mortar rounds being fired early in the morning (USSOCOM History 1998, 30). The special forces team was directed to locate the mortar position, but was unable to find the mortars. No more mortar fire was received from Tinajitas.

Direct Action

The next group of missions involved Direct Action missions on key communications locations. The joint task force commander's desired effect for these missions was to deny the Panamanian Defense Force any means of rallying their forces, or broadcasting anti-US information to the population. These missions were unique because the joint task force commander wanted the communications facilities to be able to be used by the US psychological operations units and the legitimate government of Panama. At H-hour, special forces operational detachment alpha 785, led by Captain John M. Custer, infiltrated with a technical expert to the hills northeast of Panama City. The detachment fast roped from two helicopters, seized the television complex, secured it from the Panamanian Defense Force and allowed the technical experts to disable the station (USSOCOM History 1998, 31).

After the H-hour missions, TF Black received follow on missions as the situation developed. The first of these missions involved removing AM and FM stations that were broadcasting pro-Noriega messages. Company C, 3d Battalion, 7th Special Forces

Group, led by Major David E. McCracken, received the mission to silence the broadcasts. At 1850 on 20 December 1989, the teams infiltrated the area by helicopter, secured the radio broadcast building, and took the AM radio station off of the air by destroying the electric junction box between the antennae and the control room. The teams were not able to locate the FM antennae, and returned to Albrook Air Force Base. Upon their return, they were provided the location of the FM transmitters. After a quick planning and coordination sessions, the detachments launched a second mission at 2015 to the new location. By 2045, Company C had found the FM transmitter, and destroyed the antennae (USSOCOM History 1998, 31).

About 21 December 1989 a third pro-Noriega radio station began to broadcast intermittent messages from the area near the disabled television tower. Company B, 3d Battalion, 7th Special Forces Group was directed to find the transmitter and take it off the air. The special forces soldiers used their Spanish language abilities and their long experience in Panama to gain the trust of the population in the vicinity of the transmitter. Following information received from the Panamanian civilians, the Special Forces Company located the transmission site and destroyed it on 29 December 1989 (USSOCOM History 1998, 32).

Operation “Ma Bell”

The final group of post H-hour missions involved Company A, 1st Battalion, 7th Special Forces Group. These missions were undertaken to pacify the western Panamanian districts of Herrera, Cocle, Los Santos and Santiago Veraguas. All of these missions involved operating with the 2d Brigade of the 7th Infantry Division (Light), to secure the surrender of the Panamanian Defense Force garrisons in that region, with a

minimum of casualties. There were three Panamanian Defense Force garrisons in the region: Santiago, Chitre, and Las Tablas. These missions, called Ma Bell missions, were all two-phased operations (Chief of Public Affairs 1989, 16).

The first phase of the missions consisted of a special forces detachment infiltrating into the town that housed the Panamanian Defense Force garrison in the region. The detachment would contact the commander of the garrison by telephone, and tell him to come to the airfield to discuss his garrison's surrender. When the US commander arrived at the airfield, he explained the terms of the surrender: unconditional surrender, all weapons secured in the barracks arms room, and all soldiers assembled on the parade ground. The commander also explained the consequences of not complying with the surrender terms (having to face the US military might).

Major Gilberto Perez, the commander of Company A, 1st Battalion, 7th Special Forces Group would fly over the barracks with the Panamanian Defense Force commander to ensure that the terms were met. If the terms were not met, Major Perez would have an AC-130 gunship fire into an unoccupied area, to demonstrate that extreme force would be used to secure the surrender. After the surrender, a light infantry company and a special forces detachment would occupy the towns to secure the area.

With the exception of a few shots being fired during the first mission in Santiago, all three garrisons quickly met the terms of the surrender. Upon the surrender of the garrisons, the special forces company began to retrain the former Panamanian Defense Force soldiers, and turn them into a law enforcement agency, rather than a military force (Chief of Public Affairs 1989, 17).

The challenge was establishing a relationship with the civilian governments in the region and the local population. Major Perez, the company commander, worked with the US district commander (a lieutenant colonel from the 7th Infantry Division, Light) to establish a working relationship with the mayors and government officials and the former Panamanian Defense Force members in the region. The final step was to get the newly trained Panamanian security forces accepted by the government and population so that the mission of maintaining law and order could be passed from the US military to the Panamanian government (Chief of Public Affairs 1989, 17).

From 22 to 31 December 1989, elements of TF Black were instrumental in the surrender of fourteen curatels (barracks or garrisons), almost 2,000 Panamanian Defense Force soldiers and over 6,000 weapons without a single casualty. After the surrenders, the special forces teams involved were instrumental in rebuilding the governmental infrastructure, and training, and reestablishing the Panamanian police elements.

Were these special forces missions?

In order to proceed to the next step, the intent of joint forces commander has to be studied. After understanding that, it will be possible to proceed to the subsequent questions: are these special forces missions and if so, how do they fit into information operations?

When the joint task force commander passed the special reconnaissance, direct action and Ma Bell missions to TF Black, he desired a specific effect for each of the missions. His primary goal was to remove Noriega and his accomplices, allowing a smooth transition to the democratic government of Panama (USCINCSO OPORD 1-90 1989, 4). This had to be done with the entire world watching and with an eye to putting

Panama back together quickly after the invasion. Using powerful conventional weapons on several targets could cause large amounts of collateral damage, and delay putting the nation back together (Woodward 1999, 28).

In order to accomplish the first goal, the Panamanian Defense Force had to be eliminated quickly and not allowed to rally support to Panama City. The conventional forces and rangers could effectively eliminate the main Panamanian Defense Force units. To prevent them from rallying Panamanian Defense Force garrisons and Noriega supporters from the suburbs of Panama City and the rural areas of Panama, the public communications systems had to be temporarily taken off of the air. This had to be done with an eye to minimizing damage to the communications systems, so the legitimate government of Panama could use them. The desired effect was to temporarily neutralize the systems. Once the main Panamanian Defense Force units in and around Panama City were removed, the rural garrisons had to be neutralized, once again with minimum damage.

In order to understand if special forces' role in Just Cause was a precursor of an information operation, one must confirm that these were missions that only special forces could accomplish. To do this, one must return to the four factors for special forces missions discussed in chapter 1: mission types, mission execution, cultural and language skills, and the detachment composition. With the exception of the Ma Bell missions, the mission executed by special forces during Operation Just Cause were doctrinal special forces missions, the types of missions that special forces routinely train for and rehearse (FM 31-20 1998, 2-1--2-9).

Any unit could have executed direct action missions against the radio and television transmitters however both targets required a high level of precision. The joint task force commander wanted the transmitters to be in a condition to be used by the legitimate government after the operation, with little or no repair. The special forces detachments planned these missions to accomplish this objective: each target had to have a specific, easily repairable part of the system destroyed. For the television transmitter, a technical expert infiltrated with the detachment to disable the system. For the AM radio station, an electrical junction box was destroyed, leaving the control room and transmission tower intact.

Other assets were available to the joint forces commander for these targets: conventional artillery, laser-guided bomb, or a conventional army unit. However, the potential for collateral or indiscriminate damage would increase with those assets and the transmitters would take a longer period of time to repair. Conventional artillery would require a forward observer to be accurate with the first round to achieve the desired effect or there would be a great deal of damage as the rounds were adjusted onto the target. A laser-guided bomb would also require an observer to designate the target, and also has the potential for a large amount of collateral damage. Both the conventional artillery forward observer and target designator would require an additional element for security, increasing the number of units required to achieve the effect of the small detachment.

The first set of radio tower targets (20 December 1989, AM and FM towers) required two missions to achieve the joint forces commander's desired effect. Both missions required a special forces element to infiltrate into Panamanian controlled (denied) territory, execute the target, and exfiltrate the target area. Upon completion of

the first mission, the unit was required to rapidly turn around and execute the second mission, with little or no planning or preparation. The amount of flexibility that was demonstrated by the two back-to-back missions required a mature and experienced unit.

The requirement for the cultural and language skills possessed by special forces units was demonstrated by the third radio transmitter destroyed. The joint forces commander did not know the exact location of the transmitter. Special forces units used their language and cultural skills to establish rapport with and question the local inhabitants. By conducting interviews with the local residents, the special forces soldiers were able to narrow down the area that they had to search. After narrowing the area, they were able to locate the transmitter and prevent it from transmitting.

All of the missions required the entire detachment to execute the mission. The first three missions (special reconnaissance) were communications intensive, the joint forces commander to have the information about the Panamanian Defense Force units' locations quickly to make his decision. The next three missions, the radio and television towers and the radio transmitter required the assistant operations sergeant to use his intelligence gathering and processing capabilities to plan and execute the mission.

The final group of missions, the Ma Bell missions also required a high-level of cultural and language skills. The special forces commander relied on his language skill to communicate with the Panamanian Defense Force commanders, and convince them to surrender with no resistance. This was a factor of the special forces commander's familiarity with Central American military units, and his ability to not only converse with the commander, but convince him to surrender.

Was this an information operation?

Operation Just Cause took place over ten years ago, prior to information operations becoming a common term. Nevertheless, were these missions part of an information operation? The key to discovering this is to review why these missions were executed. The first missions, the three direct action missions against the television and radio stations, clearly demonstrate an element of information operations. These missions were specifically designed to deny the enemy commanders the means to communicate to his soldiers and the people of Panama. All of these missions were designed to allow the television and radio stations to be put back on the air, as soon as the legitimately elected government of Panama needed to communicate with people of Panama. The Direct Action missions directly correlate with the “Physical Attack and Destruction” element of information operations. Physical Attack and Destruction, are actions taken to destroy or neutralize adversary forces, facilities and equipment, to prevent the enemy from using them (JP 3-13 1998, II-5). The joint forces commander wanted to temporarily neutralize the Panamanian Defense Force's ability to transmit its message to the people of Panama. These missions can also be looked at from the perspective that they denied the Panamanian Defense Force the ability to broadcast any propaganda, correlating with the information operation element of “Counterpropaganda” denying the Panamanian Defense Force the ability to influence the Panamanian population (JP 3-13 1998, III-7).

The second groups of missions, the Ma Bell missions, were designed to convey information (the necessity of surrendering) to a selected audience (the commanders of the garrisons). The special forces commander used the telephone system to have a direct contact with the Panamanian Defense Force commander, explaining to him the necessity

to surrender, the terms of the surrender and the consequences of not surrendering. This directly affected the rural Panamanian Defense Force commander's decision making process. This was a good example of a “Psychological Operation” as defined in Joint Publication 3-13, *Joint Doctrine for Information Operations*, II-4: actions taken to convey selected information and indicators to a foreign audience. (Author's Note: Not to confuse this with the doctrinal mission of a United States Army Psychological Operations unit.)

The final groups of missions, the special reconnaissance missions, are more difficult to classify as an element of information operations. The special reconnaissance missions were executed to provide the joint task force commander early warning if Panamanian Defense Force forces moved towards the main target areas. The Cimarron Barracks, Pacora River Bridge, and Tinajitas missions were designed to provide a specific bit of relevant information that the joint forces commander needed to complete his plan. The relevant information provided about the two Panamanian Defense Force units and barracks gave the joint forces commander critical elements of relevant information so that he could achieve his overall objective. These missions do not fall into one of the elements of information operations, but fall more into the information management part of information superiority. Figure 6 shows that the relevant information was critical to the joint forces commander.

Mission	Doctrinal Mission Type	Mission Execution	Cultural/Language Skill	Composition
Cimarron Barracks	Special Reconnaissance	Remote/Denied Area Infiltration Required	no	- Commo
Tinajitas	Special Reconnaissance	Remote/Denied Area Infiltration Required Adaptability	no	- Commo
Pacora River Bridge	Special Reconnaissance	Remote/Denied Area Infiltration Required Adaptability	no	- Commo
Radio Towers	Direct Action	Remote/Denied Area Infiltration Required Adaptability	no	- Intelligence
Television Tower	Direct Action	Remote/Denied Area Infiltration Required Adaptability	no	- Intelligence
Radio Transmitter	Special Reconnaissance Direct Action	Remote/Denied Area Infiltration Required Adaptability	yes	- Intelligence
Ma Bell	Hybrid of: Unconventional Warfare Foreign Internal Defense	Remote/Denied Area Infiltration Required Adaptability	yes	- Intelligence - Commo - Medical

Figure 6. Information Operations

CHAPTER 4

DESERT STORM

The next group of special forces operations to be studied are those that took place during Operation Desert Storm. Desert Storm is significant to the US military for two reasons. First of all, Desert Storm represented the largest post-Vietnam deployment of troops. Secondly, Desert Storm reintroduced the US to coalition warfare, in particular with non-Western militaries. Significantly, Egypt, Syria, Saudi-Arabia, and Kuwait contributed brigade to corps-sized elements to the coalition. Desert Storm is significant to special forces because 5th Special Forces Group (Airborne) was involved from the beginning to the end of Desert Shield and Desert Storm. Even though Desert Storm was conducted prior to the development of information operations doctrine, it provides examples of special forces contributions to what are now considered elements of information operations.

Historical Background Desert Storm

After the 2 August 1990 invasion of Kuwait, Iraqi forces were massed along the Saudi border. Saudi Arabia deployed its defense forces along the border to counter the Iraqi forces. US Central Command (the warfighting CINC responsible for Southwest Asia) prepared to reinforce the Saudi forces. As forces began to flow into Saudi Arabia, the 5th Special Forces Group that was oriented specifically on Southwest Asia, deployed the 1st Battalion to King Fahd International Airport (KFIA), and the 2d and 3d Battalions, to King Khalid Military City (KKMC) (Flanagan 1991, 14). In addition to 5th Special Forces Group, 1st Battalion, 3d Special Forces Group, and a company from the 10th Special Forces Group deployed in support of Operation Desert Storm.

Operation Desert Storm was the largest post-Cold War military operation, involving forces from the US, our NATO allies (Great Britain and France), and a host of Arab Gulf Cooperation Council members. The contributions of the special forces units involved (3d, 5th, and elements of the 10th) ranged from establishing the initial “line in the sand” through providing critical information for the maneuver commanders to developing the coalition forces that were the key to victory in the war (Mazekas).

Special forces units, along with the 82d Airborne Division, were some of the first units deployed to Saudi Arabia to support Central Command (Flanagan 1991, 15). The first mission that special forces undertook was establishing a series of outposts on the 300-mile Saudi-Kuwait-Iraq border. Elements of 5th Special Forces Group teamed up with Saudi Airborne and special forces units to man a series of border monitoring stations (called Mazekas by the Saudis) along the 300-mile Saudi-Kuwait-Iraq border.

From September 1990 to February 1991, the combined reconnaissance served two purposes for the Central Command commander. First of all, they provided real-time information concerning of Iraqi movements or buildups. Each of the detachments was equipped with satellite communications radios that allowed them to reach the higher headquarters quickly, to report any movement. From the Mazekas during the day, and during mounted patrols at night, the combined detachments provided a clear vision of Iraqi units, including location, type, and activities. An accurate picture of the Iraqi units was developed and passed on to Central Command. General Schwarzkopf points out that the combined detachments were the only eyes and ears on the ground for the entire coalition force (Johnson 1996, 45).

The second thing the combined detachments provided was a degree of operational security for the coalition build up. By keeping a constant watch on the border, and establishing a presence, the detachments were able to deter any similar Iraqi reconnaissance efforts. This was critical during the build-up phase, and the shifting of forces prior to the “left hook” operation. This allowed the coalition to maneuver without fear of detection, adding to the surprise of the operation.

Special Reconnaissance

To assist in the ground offensive, eight special forces detachments were infiltrated deep behind enemy lines to provide critical information concerning Iraqi movements. This series of special reconnaissance missions represented one of the biggest challenges for the 5th Special Forces Group: the terrain near the required avenues of approach lacked concealment (vegetation, rocky formations, or folds in the ground) that was good for constructing hide sites (reconnaissance positions). If there was good terrain that offered concealment near the Tigris or Euphrates rivers, the area was populated with Iraqi farmers and farm animals.

Because of the intricate nature of the missions (long infiltration routes, difficult terrain to hide in, and possible populated areas), the special forces detachments began rehearsing these missions as early as October 1990. The rehearsal included infiltration techniques, hide site construction (concealed reconnaissance locations), immediate action drills and emergency procedures. All rehearsals took place in desert terrain, similar to the expected terrain in Iraq (Johnson 1996, 45).

On 23 February 1991, special operations aviation helicopters infiltrated the eight special forces detachments. Because of the length of the infiltration, the amount of time

on the ground prior to daybreak for constructing concealed locations for reconnaissance was severely limited. Of the eight detachments, four requested immediate extraction based on the total lack of concealment in the target areas. Two detachments were infiltrated into populated areas and were detected by Iraqi citizens soon after daybreak (both detachments were extracted without loss of life). The remaining two detachments were successful in providing critical information to the Central Command ground commanders (Johnson 1996, 52).

A second special reconnaissance mission took place prior to the ground offensive beginning. Both the VII and XVIII Corps commanders were concerned about the ability of the Iraqi soil to support their tanks, armored personnel carriers and trucks during the offensive. The Central Intelligence Agency had reported that the soil in the areas of Iraq that they were planning on using for the left hook operation was very soft, and the heavy vehicles would bog down in the sand. The available maps for the region were not sufficient so the commanders turned to 5th Special Forces Group to confirm the ability of the soil in the area (Flanagan 1991, 14).

A six-man special forces detachment planned, rehearsed, and executed a mission to gather the information needed. The detachment scooped up a large sample of the soil and provided videotape of the area, as well as transmitting digital photographs back to the corps headquarters. Upon analysis of the soil samples, it was found that the soil would support the traffic, and the videotapes and pictures of the area provided commanders first-hand information about the area that they were going to moving through.

One final reconnaissance contribution from the special forces groups was the support operations team alphas signal monitoring and radio direction finding operations.

Shortly after their arrival in Saudi Arabia, the support operations team alphas were put to work in joint and combined electronic listening posts. With their electronic intercept and language capabilities, the detachments made an immediate impact. The information that the support operations team alphas collected contributed to the surveillance effort along the border, and helped to pinpoint the location of Iraqi headquarters and artillery observers. This information was passed to the Central Command targeting elements for processing (CJSC Title V Report 1992, 533).

Coalition Warfare--Special Forces Liason Elements

The special forces groups biggest contribution to Desert Storm was supporting the coalition and allied partners that were critical to the success of the operation. The 108 special forces liaison elements were deployed with every allied unit, down to the battalion level (Flanagan 1991, 16). Special Forces noncommissioned, warrant, and commissioned officers served as trainers, advisors, and the integrating element that allowed the effective conduct of combined and coordinated US-Arab coalition operations in Desert Storm (Johnson 1996, 47). Special forces liaison elements provided the ground truth to the location and capabilities of the allied unit.

Coalition partners included Oman, United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Syria, Egypt, Bahrain, Kuwait, Morocco, Senegal, Nigeria, Afghanistan, Saudi Arabia, Bangladesh, Czechoslovakia, France, and Great Britain. It is easy to picture that the Cold War, western allies (Great Britain, France, and the US) could have developed enough combat power to defeat the Iraqi invasion forces. However, Desert Storm would have been impossible without the integration and support of the Persian Gulf coalition members. The special forces liaison elements ensured that support (Brownlee 1993, 40).

The special forces liaison elements mission concentrated on three tasks. The first task was ensuring an equal level of training for the coalition partners. In order for the coalition partners to be used in a way that would give them a significant part of the operation, they had to be at the same level of training. For example, several of the partners had little or no training in nuclear, biological, and chemical operations. This was critical in view of Iraq's chemical arsenal and history of using chemical agents. In order for the coalition partners to be able to contribute, special forces liaison elements had to first assess the unit's nuclear, biological, and chemical operations capability (training and equipment) and build-up their capabilities so they could be employed in the operation (Brownlee 1993, 42).

In addition to the training, the coalition ground forces commanders had to understand the ground truth concerning a unit's combat capability. This was necessary to ensure that a coalition unit was not used in a way that was beyond their capability. In order to do this, the special forces liaison elements reported unit location and capabilities to Central Command through 5th Special Forces Group. For example, if an Egyptian unit was being considered for a role in the initial stages of the offensive, it was important to know if the unit had mobility (engineering) assets that would allow them to breach the Iraqi defenses. The special forces liaison elements provided detailed reports to the Central Command planners to ensure proper use of allied assets (Brownlee 1993, 41).

The second task assumed by the special forces liaison elements was ensuring that the coalition forces were integrated into the defensive and offensive operations. In order to understand the importance of this part of the special forces liaison elements, consider the operational maps hanging in Central Command. The maps depicted an Egyptian

Corps operating next to a Saudi Division composed of two Saudi Brigades and two Kuwaiti Brigades and a Syrian Division screening forward of them. The US 1st Cavalry Division was on the western flank of the Egyptian Corps (Group Scales Papers 1991-1992, App. A).

The picture on the map looks neat and clean, but, when one considers the actual forces on the ground, another picture is developed. Few of them had experience managing the coordination necessary to maneuver a corps, and more importantly, none had experience operating with a coalition unit. Each battalion-sized unit in the sector had a special forces liaison elements; the brigade, division and corps headquarters were equipped with additional special forces detachments. The special forces liaison elements would report critical statistics (unit location, activity, and statuses) to the next higher and adjacent special forces liaison elements. The special forces liaison elements would also assist the coalition commander to understand the nuances of the higher headquarters' orders.

The Arab coalition forces were divided into two Joint Forces Commands, East and North. These forces were positioned in eastern Saudi Arabia on the Kuwaiti border. Prior to the ground offensive, the two joint forces commands were used as part of the military deception plan: demonstrating the build-up to strike straight into Kuwait. This held the attention of the Iraqi commanders. During the ground offensive phase of Desert Storm the coalition forces were used to hold the Iraqi's tactical and operational forces in place by breaching Iraqi defenses in Kuwait and encircling Iraqi forces in Kuwait and Kuwait City.

Joint Forces Command North:

Egyptian Corps

3rd MECH Infantry Division
4th Armored Division
Ranger Regiment

Syrian Division

9th Armored Division
special forces Regiment

Force Muthannah

20th MECH Brigade (RSLF, Saudi)
35th MECH Infantry Brigade, Kuwaiti

Force SAAD

4th Armored Brigade (RSLF)
15th Infantry Brigade, Kuwaiti

JFC-N Troops

Niger Infantry Battalion
1st Aviation Brigade (RSLF)
15 Field Artillery Brigade

Joint Forces Command - East

Force Abu Bakr

2nd SANG Brigade (Saudi)

Force Othman

8th MECH Infantry Brigade (RSLF)
Kuwait Al-Fatah Brigade
Oman Motorized Infantry Battalion
Bahrain Infantry Company

Task Force Omar

10 MECH Brigade (RSLF)
UAE Motorized Infantry Battalion

Task Force Tariq

Marine Battalion Task Force (Saudi Marines)
Infantry Battalion (Senegal)
6th MECH Infantry Regiment (Morocco)

JFC-E Troops

Qatar MECH Infantry Battalion
1st East Bengal Infantry Battalion
Combat Aviation Battalion (Kuwait/UAE)
14th FA Battalion (Towed 155) (RSLF)
18th FA Battalion (MLRS) (RSLF)
Engineer Force 5 Saif Allah (RSLF)
(CJSC Title V Report, 236-237)

By keeping the attention of the Iraqi commanders in Kuwait, the two joint forces commands allowed the coalition to execute the wide left flank into the desert.

The initial problem that was presented to the special forces liaison elements was that the Egyptian, Saudi, Syrian and US forces had no means of common communication to conduct coordination for unit positions and movements. If the units are executing a defense, it is essential that flanks and boundaries be coordinated to ensure complete coverage of a front. If the units are executing an offensive, all movements have to be coordinated to ensure that there are no friendly fire casualties. The fact that some of the Arab coalition members were equipped with Soviet-style equipment (the Egyptians and Syrians) that was exactly the same that the Iraqi meant that any movement had to be coordinated with the next unit over to prevent fratricide.

The special forces liaison elements coordinated the location of the units with the adjacent special forces liaison elements and with the special forces liaison elements at the higher headquarters (battalion-to-brigade special forces liaison elements, brigade-to-division special forces liaison elements, and others). The special forces liaison elements also passed this information to the joint task force, ensuring that all units had an accurate picture of unit locations.

On 13 January 1991, Iraqi movement was detected forward of the Syrian division. Central Command directed the US 1st Cavalry Division to pass through the Syrian division and assume a defensive position (CJSC Title V Report, 236). Once again, on the map, the movement looks simple. But, when one considers a few simple facts--US forces moving through to counter an Iraqi threat, the Syrian division equipped with vehicles and equipment similar to Iraqi units in the area, and conduct of this operation at night--the amount of coordination for what we consider a relatively simple movement becomes incredible.

The special forces liaison elements at the Syrian units had to ensure that routes were clearly marked and the US forces clearly understood the locations of the Syrian forces in relationship to those routes. If one young soldier, Syrian or US, had slipped on the trigger, the potential for friendly casualties would be enormous, not to mention the damage a situation like that would cause to the coalition effort (Johnson 1996, 49-51).

The third task of the special forces liaison elements was to ensure that the allied commanders had the capability to request and control close air support. This was a two-way mission. First, as the ground war proceeded, coalition partners had to be able to employ control close air support to assist them with their missions. Few of the coalition

partners had the radios necessary to request and control allied control close air support. The special forces liaison elements were specifically equipped with communications equipment to call for and control close air support. This allowed the allied commander to tap into the combat power provided by close air support (Schoomaker 1998, 3).

The second part of the close air support mission was critical to avoiding friendly fire casualties. With equipment similar to Iraqi equipment, most of the Arab coalition partners presented good targets to fast moving allied close air support. With a special forces liaison elements present, accurate unit locations were provided to higher headquarters providing close air support coordination and the special forces liaison elements could talk directly to approaching aircraft (Schoomaker 1998, 3).

From the very beginning of Operation Desert Shield, through the final ground operations of Desert Storm, the special forces elements provided critical support for combined commanders. The first elements of 5th Special Forces Group deployed to the Gulf and established the combined observation outposts, the Mazekas. These posts provided real time information for the coalition commanders, while denying the Iraqi commanders that ability. The special reconnaissance missions performed by special forces detachments provided critical relevant information for the ground forces commanders while they were formulating (soil samples) and executing their plans (special reconnaissance missions).

The final and most important contribution of the special forces detachments was to provide the “. . . glue that held the coalition together” (Locher 1991). The special forces liaison elements provided the coalition commander a way to effectively integrate

Arab forces into the command and control, communications, and intelligence structure of the combined forces.

Were these special forces missions?

Once again, in order to find if these missions intersect between special forces and information operations, one needs to analyze if these are special forces unique missions. In order to do this, one must again return to the four factors discussed in chapter 1: mission types, mission execution, cultural and language skills, and the detachment composition.

During Desert Storm, special forces units executed two broad categories of missions, the special reconnaissance missions and the coalition support missions. Both of these missions are listed in FM 31-20 ((Initial Draft) *Doctrine for Special Forces Operations*) as doctrinal missions that special forces trains for and is expected to execute. Special reconnaissance is listed as a primary mission and coalition support is a collateral activity (FM 31-20, 2-1--2-9).

The next unique area that must be established is the way the missions were executed by the units. The first group of special reconnaissance missions, the Mazeka missions, required a detachment to link up with a Saudi unit, establish a rapport with the unit, and execute combined patrols with the unit in a remote area along the 300-mile border region. This required a great deal of cultural and language interaction. The soldiers of 5th Special Forces Group had worked with the Saudi units and were familiar with their operating characteristics. As a result of their training missions in the Mideast deserts, the 5th Special Forces Group detachments were also intimately familiar with the type of operations required for this mission.

The remote nature of the missions also required a unit that was capable of long-term self-sustained operations. The composition of the detachment was ideal for the long-term missions along the borders. The detachments had the communications assets and expertise required for long distance communications, a medical element focused on sustaining the detachment, and a logistic subject matter expert (the detachment engineer). When the composition of the detachment is added to the cultural and language skills, and their experience, the detachments from the 5th Special Forces Group were ideal for the Mazeka missions.

The second type of special reconnaissance mission executed by special forces units, the surveillance missions and soil sample missions, were missions that required infiltration deep into enemy held territory. The infiltration was conducted with long-range rotary wing aircraft, aircraft that special forces units rehearsed with routinely. The mission called for a collection of soil, live video shots and digital photographs of the area. The special forces detachment was familiar with all of the equipment used, and was able to provide the corps commanders the information they needed to confirm their course of action.

The final missions executed by the special forces units; the coalition support missions required the unique capabilities of the special forces units. The special forces liaison elements were required to live and operate with the coalition forces. This required the cultural and language skills that the detachments possessed. Training missions with coalition militaries prior to Desert Storm allowed the detachments to become familiar with the characteristics of the allied units. The composition of the detachment supported

this mission as shown in figure 7. Each of the skill areas corresponded with a staff area, and allowed the detachment to assist the allied unit beyond command and control.

Mission	Doctrinal Mission Type	Mission Execution	Cultural/Language	Composition
Mazekas	Special Reconnaissance	Remote Area Maturity/Adaptability	Yes	Commo Medical Engineer
Soil Sample	Special Reconnaissance	Remote/Denied Area Infiltration Required Adaptability	No	Commo
Road Intersection	Special Reconnaissance	Remote/Denied Area Infiltration Required	No	Commo
Coalition Support	Special forces Liaison Element	Maturity Adaptability	Yes	- Commo - Command and Control - Intelligence - Medical - Engineer

Figure 7. Composition of the Detachment Supported Mission

Were these information operations?

When looked at from a strict review of the elements, only the Mazeka mission is an information operation. However, when looked at a broad view of providing critical bits of relevant information to the commander, all of these operations increase in importance.

The first operation discussed, the Mazeka operation, was a form of long-term special reconnaissance. The combined detachments provided critical information to the joint forces commander, when there was no other asset in theater capable of providing that information. Secondly, the combined detachments prevented similar Iraqi units from

executing any cross border reconnaissance missions for the Iraqi chain of command. This denied the Iraqi critical information about the allied buildup, and prevented the Iraqis from gathering any intelligence indicators regarding the allied course of action. The Operational Security provided by the Mazekas was vital to shielding the “left hook” into the desert.

The second series of special reconnaissance missions, the soil sample and deep infiltration missions provided the coalition commanders specific bits of relevant information required to confirm or deny their course of action and the Iraqi's anticipated course of action.

The final mission, the coalition support or special forces liaison elements missions, is the most interesting mission to study from an information operations viewpoint. This mission does not fall neatly into any of the eleven elements. However, when looked at what was provided to the joint forces commander by the detachments, the mission becomes more interesting.

First of all, the detachment provided an instant communications link between the allies, down to the battalion level. This allowed the immediate transmission of any intelligence information gathered by the coalition partners to the joint forces commander. Prior to the special forces liaison elements, there was no mechanism for communicating that information to the higher or adjacent headquarters. Secondly, the communications network allowed the joint forces commander to pass guidance and intelligence to the coalition partners, where there was a special forces soldier who were able to communicate that to the coalition commander.

Second, the special forces liaison elements were able to provide the ground truth as to the coalition partners exact capabilities. This becomes critical when one considers the size of the Iraqi military and the size of the allied force arrayed against them. The joint forces commander was able to match those capabilities with missions required. If the joint forces commander needed a division to execute the initial penetration of Iraqi defenses, he has to have an assessment of the unit's capabilities to ensure that he was not tasking a unit with a mission that it was not equipped to execute.

The second part of the ground truth was to provide exact locations, down to the battalion level, to the coalition and joint forces commander. The Joint Forces Command-North was composed of the Egyptian Corps, 9th Syrian Armored Division, Kuwaiti Brigades and an assortment of Saudi brigade-sized elements (Report 1991-1992). From a command and control perspective alone, the exact location of the different units was critical. When maneuver and firepower are added to the picture the unit location, a relatively small bit of information, becomes critical for preventing fratricide.

The final and most important contribution of the special forces liaison elements was they added legitimacy to the coalition military. From an information operation perspective, this accomplished several tasks. First of all, the joint forces commander was able to project the coalition as a united military front, which thwarted any Iraqi propaganda (counterpropaganda) effort to fragment the allied forces. According to Joint Publication 3-13, Joint Doctrine for Information Operations, the element of counterpropaganda is activities that identify adversary attempts to influence friendly populations and military forces. This denied Iraq the ability to create a wedge between

the coalition forces. With the special forces liaison elements in place the joint forces commander was able to ensure that the coalition forces were capable and well trained.

The in nuclear, biological, and chemical training that the special forces liaison elements provided to the coalition partners allowed the partners to be used in an area where chemical warfare was a serious threat. No other unit was capable of effectively training the coalition partners in nuclear, biological, and chemical defensive techniques.

The final contribution of the coalition forces supported by the special forces liaison elements was initially as an operational security screen turning into a military deception. As Joint Force North (Egyptian, Syrian, and Saudi forces) and Joint Forces East (Saudi and Qatar forces) were initially deployed, they presented a defensive screen to the Iraqi forces. This allowed the US and other coalition partners time to build up their forces in theater without the threat of Iraqi reconnaissance. Once the US and other coalition forces effected their build up, the two joint forces (North and East) along with the presence of the US Marine forces, acted as a deception (Military Deception) for the Iraqi forces. The threat of the two joint forces held Iraqi units in Kuwait.

CHAPTER 5

OPERATION NOBLE OBELISK

So, there was--obviously chaos.

Captain Fran Beaudette, USSOCOM Interview

The third operation, Noble Obelisk, provides a unique look at a specific special forces operation and how it related to a quickly planned and executed noncombatant evacuation operation. Noble Obelisk was the name of the non-combatant evacuation operation in Sierra Leone, conducted by an marine expeditionary unit and a special forces detachment in April 1997. The Special Forces Operational Detachment Alpha, from 3rd Special Forces Group, was conducting a training exercise with the host nation military, when a rebel force, including elements of the military executed a coup in the country. The Operational Detachment Alpha was in the unique position to conduct elements of an information operation while assisting the joint forces commander to conduct the evacuation.

Historical Background to Noble Obelisk

In April 1997, a special forces detachment from 3d Special Forces Group deployed to Freetown, Sierra Leone to conduct joint combined exchange training. On 25 May 1997 a military coup erupted in Sierra Leone. What happened next was not a calmly planned operation centering on offensive and defensive information operations, but an impromptu joint operation to effect the evacuation of American citizens and third party nationals. When the operation is studied from an information operations perspective the interaction between the marine expeditionary unit commander show the capability that a special forces unit offers a joint task force commander.

Early in April 1997, Special Forces Operations Detachment Alpha 334 deployed to Sierra Leone to conduct combined training with a 300-man battalion from the military of Sierra Leone. During early May, the battalion training with the operations detachment alpha was alerted to move northward and to counter an on-going insurgency in the country. The battalion was scheduled to return to Benguema (the location of the training base) on or about 24 May to resume training with the 334.

Sometime around 24 May, elements of the battalion started to drift back to the training base. On 25 May, gunfire erupted at the base, isolating the detachment in their barracks in the training base (Beaudette 1998, 13).

After reporting the incident to Special Operations Command, Europe, the detachment secured its building and began to make contact with the US Embassy in Freetown. The detachment also prepared to evacuate its building in the training base. On 26 May, after conducting a reconnaissance of the area, the detachment moved to the US Embassy residential areas at the request of the Deputy Chief of Mission, Ann Wright (the ambassador had departed on leave earlier that week). The detachment was split between the two residential areas, Signal Hill and Smart Farm, ensuring the security of the two areas and establishing communications between the two areas and Special Operations Command, Europe. During the detachment commander's initial meetings with the Deputy Chief of Mission, (the ranking state department person in Sierra Leone) a non-combatant evacuation operation was discussed (Beaudette 1998, 17-20).

On 27 May, the special forces operations detachment alpha continued to secure the two compounds and made contact with the marine expeditionary unit moving towards Sierra Leone to conduct the non-combatant evacuation operation. The detachment

immediately began to provide information to the marine expeditionary unit. The marine expeditionary unit commander made contact by tactical satellite radio and requested the ground truth information from the detachment: general threat around the capital, status of the international airport, status and trafficability of major bridges and roads. The “real time” information provided the commander of the marine expeditionary unit invaluable situational understanding (Greenwood 1999).

On 28 May, the detachment became OPCON (Operational Control, fell under the command of) to the marine expeditionary unit Commander. The rest of the day was spent securing the two compounds and conducting the initial coordination necessary for the noncombatant evacuation operation. First, an initial reconnaissance of the landing zones proposed by the embassy was conducted to ensure they were suitable for the Marine helicopters. Following that, the detachment commander and the regional security officer from the embassy began coordinating with the rebel leaders. Two meetings were conducted, to ensure that the rebel forces understood that a noncombatant evacuation operation was going to be conducted, and what the operation would entail. This was done to ensure that the rebel forces did not react negatively to the presence of the Marines and their helicopters (Beaudette 1998, 24).

Between 29 and 30 May, Captain Beaudette also made contact with the commander of the Nigerian battalion in Sierra Leone. (Historical Note: The Nigerian forces were part of an ECOMOG (Economic Community Military Operations Group, the military branch of Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)) operation in neighboring Liberia. During the coup in Sierra Leone, the Nigerian units assisted the legitimate government to resist the rebels). The Nigerian battalion was an unanticipated

unit operating in Sierra Leone, adding to the confusion of the situation. Because of the battalion's size and capability, it was necessary to coordinate the operation with the battalion to ensure there was no confusion during the operation. Once coordination with the Nigerian commander began, Captain Beaudette ensured that the commander understood what the Marines would be doing in the area, and received his cooperation with securing the landing zones for the non-combatant evacuation operation (Beaudette 1999).

On 29 May, the Marine Ground Forces Commander, Lieutenant Colonel Thomas Greenwood, came ashore to further coordinate the noncombatant evacuation operation. The detachment commander, Captain Beaudette, took Lieutenant Colonel Greenwood and the Regional Security Officer to the Ministry of Defense to reinforce the coordination of the noncombatant evacuation operation. On that same day, the evacuation order from the Department of State was received, the evacuation would begin on the 30 May (Beaudette 1998, 26).

Upon returning to the compounds (Signal Hill and Smart Farm) the detachment and marine commanders discussed the role of the special forces detachment in the non-combatant evacuation operation. Captain Beaudette and the rest of 334 would establish a series of blocking positions between the outer security ring (Nigerian military elements) and the marine security positions (a marine rifle company). The detachment would also act as a liaison between the Nigerians and any rebel forces that approached the perimeter (Beaudette 1998, 26).

On 30 May, the detachment ensured that the Nigerians and rebel forces understood that US helicopters and marines would be active in the area, and moved the

embassy personnel from the two locations (Signal Hill and Smart Farm). As the noncombatant evacuation operation was conducted, the detachment ensured that no rebel forces were allowed to interfere with the operation. By the end of the day, the detachment had moved to the USS Kearsage, the Marine amphibious assault ship.

After an unsuccessful attempt to land on the 1 June (the unarmed Marine landing craft were turned around by an unidentified patrol boat), the Marines sent an amphibious assault group back to the evacuation sites on 3 June, to continue the noncombatant evacuation operation. Once again, parts of the special forces operations detachment alpha accompanied the marine force to act as liaisons between the rebel forces and the marine security perimeter. By this time, the Nigerians had surrendered, and were moving out of the country. The evacuation on 3 June was uneventful, and close to 1,500 US and third party citizens were evacuated.

Over the eight days of Operation Noble Obelisk over 2,500 people were evacuated from Sierra Leone after the military coup. The special forces detachment played an integral part in the operation from the beginning. The detachment provided the Special Operations Command Europe commander the initial information concerning the coup at virtually the same time it was happening. During the chaotic time before the arrival of the marine expeditionary unit, the detachment secured the two residential compounds and made coordination between the rebel factions and the Nigerian soldiers concerning the upcoming non-combatant evacuation operation. During the evacuation, the detachment provided a buffer between the Nigerian and rebel forces and the Marines executing the noncombatant evacuation operation.

They made an invaluable contribution to our mission success because they raised our situational awareness.

LTC Thomas Greenwood

The mission passed to the marine expeditionary unit was to evacuate American citizens in Sierra Leone. As mission planning began several questions emerged: the status and location of the citizens, the location and intent of the Nigerian and rebel forces and the physical layout of Freetown. As mission planning continued, four major tasks fell out:

1. Conduct a reconnaissance to determine the physical locations (landing zones and routes) that were to be used.
2. Locate and gather the American citizens to be evacuated.
3. Establish a secure area to conduct the evacuation.
4. Coordinate with the various factions (rebels, Nigerians) involved in the coup.

For this operation, the joint forces commander required situation awareness. According to Lieutenant Colonel Greenwood, the Ground Forces Commander, nobody on the USS Kearsage had ever been to Sierra Leone. The only information the entire marine expeditionary unit had was a map of the Freetown, Sierra Leone (Greenwood 1999).

Was this a special forces mission?

This mission does not fall into any of the doctrinal special forces mission or collateral activities. However, no other unit would be capable of conducting a similar operation. First of all, the detachment had all of the communications assets and expertise to establish contact with Special Operations Command Europe and the incoming marine expeditionary unit, between the two residential compounds and with the Marine aircraft.

More importantly, the detachment was intimately familiar with the military and culture of Sierra Leone. The detachment was able to coordinate with all of the military forces involved. From the very beginning, the detachment was able to talk to the local soldiers to find out details of the coup and transmit them to Special Operations Command Europe. As the detachment moved to the two residential areas and became aware of the noncombatant evacuation operation, they were able to coordinate with the rebel military to ensure there was no interference with the evacuation. During the evacuation, the detachment was able to act as a buffer between the marines, the Nigerian military and the rebel forces.

Are there elements of an information operation?

Figure 8 shows that the Noble Obelisk mission did not fall neatly into any of the elements of an information operation. There was no attempt at deception, no physical destruction, and no electronic warfare. However, when one studies the actions of the detachment during the operation, one can start to make the connection to an information operation. The detachment provided the critical, relevant information to the marine expeditionary unit commander that allowed him to form a plan of execution for the non-combatant evacuation operation.

Mission	Doctrinal Mission Type	Mission Execution	Cultural/Language	Composition
Noble Obelisk	A Non-doctrinal mission or collateral activity	Remote/Denied Area Adaptability Maturity	yes	- Commo - Medical - Intelligence

Figure 8. Noble Obelisk Mission.

Information about the political situation on the ground, information concerning the rebel and Nigerian forces and information concerning all of the aspects of the evacuation: landing zones, routes, bridges, and evacuees. The detachment also provided critical, relevant information to the rebel and Nigerian commanders. Before the marines were in position to conduct the noncombatant evacuation operation, the detachment was going over the details of the operation with both commanders, ensuring the cooperation of the rebels, and the assistance of the Nigerians. This relevant information, like the special reconnaissance missions during Just Cause and Desert Storm, is not an element of information operations, but rather information management.

The detachment also provided the rebel and Nigerian forces key relevant information about the upcoming evacuation and the Marine operations. This served to enable the evacuation and limit the possibility of any interference from factions. From a strict definition, this is a form of psychological operations. The detachment, through their face-to-face communications with the faction leaders influenced the faction leader's behavior, prior to the Marines arriving (JP 3-13 1998, II-4). Although the detachment's actions do not fall neatly into one of the elements of information operation, the relevant information provided by the detachment to both sides was the key to success of Operation Noble Obelisk.

CHAPTER 6

OPERATION JOINT GUARD

The final operation, Joint Guard reviews special forces contributions in Bosnia starting in October 1996. This is a unique operation from an information operations perspective: the joint forces commander was the first commander to make an overt effort to incorporate emerging information operations doctrine into his plan.

Historical Background to Joint Guard

The eyes and ears of stabilization force.

Major General Montgomery Meigs

The Dayton Peace Accords approved by the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, the Republic of Croatia, and the Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina brought about a cessation of hostilities in the Bosnian Civil War. The accords directed the former warring factions (later renamed entity armed forces or entity forces) to withdraw behind a two-kilometer zone of separation and authorized international peace enforcement operations in the Bosnia-Herzegovina. In December 1995, the United Nations Security Council authorized member states to establish a multinational implementation force to implement the military provisions of the Dayton Peace Accords (CALL 1999, 7).

Bosnia-Herzegovina was divided into three multinational divisions (multinational divisions) led by the French in multinational division-Southeast, the British in multinational division-Southwest and the US in multinational division-North. In October 1996, the 1st Infantry Division was alerted to deploy to Bosnia-Herzegovina to assume control of in multinational division-North. The 1st Infantry Division would deploy as

part of stabilization force, responsible for deterring hostilities and contributing to a secure environment which promotes the reestablishment of civil authority (USOSOCOM History, 55).

Major General Meigs, the incoming commander of the 1st Infantry Division, began the first information operation using the newly published FM 100-6, *Information Operations* (Shanahan and Beavers 1997, 53). Major General Meigs realized that the key to success during the mission was not his division's overwhelming combat power or its ability to fire and maneuver, but its ability to maintain information superiority.

Major General Meigs formed a division information operations cell, supported by a land information warfare activity forward support team, which became the main effort for the joint and combined forces operating in multi-national division-North. During Joint Guard, information operations were the primary means by which the stabilization force achieved effects in changing attitudes and reducing the barriers to implementing the Dayton Peace Accords. Included in the information operations cell was a member of the special operations command and control element, representing the special operations forces (including special forces) available to the commander for tasking.

During the mission planning, Major General Meigs' intent was to use every means at his disposal to convey information to desired audiences, such as local politicians, military and police leaders and the general public. Several imperatives guided the implementation of his intent:

1. Respond quickly to propaganda and misinformation
2. Leverage the truth and stress peaceful cooperation

3. Hold public officials accountable for their actions

The key to accomplishing Major General Meigs' intent was maintaining situational awareness throughout the multi-national division-North. One of the assets at his disposal was the joint commission observers. The joint commission observers are special forces detachments formed into neutral teams and placed in areas that were considered hotspots, areas that were traditional troublespots for IFOR and earlier United Nations missions. The joint commission observers were controlled by special operations command and control elements.

The use of joint commission observer was not a new idea. The initial joint commission observers were part of the earlier United Nations mission supporting United Nations Protection Force. When United Nations forces began operating in Bosnia the infrastructure was so disorganized that there was no way for key political, military and faction leaders to communicate with the United Nations or each other. The initial mission of the joint commission observers was to maintain communications between the United Nations peacekeeping force, the former warring factions and various faction leaders. British forces supporting the United Nations Protection Force developed composite units that were capable of operating amidst the local population, with the mission to gain the ground truth and maintain liaison with the former warring factions (CALL 1999, 50).

When the mission in Bosnia transferred from the United Nations to NATO, the joint commission observers were retained. The joint commission observers communicated specific issues between the NATO commander, Bosnian political leaders

and entity armed forces military leaders. The joint commission observers lived among the local population, spoke the language or used translators, participated in cultural, social and other local events, met daily with varied elements of the Bosnian society: Former warring factions organizations, church authorities, local police, prominent citizens and refugees. The joint commission observers were able to monitor the pulse of the local population. The joint commission observers were able to provide a sensing of what was happening in local population, the local population's impressions and ground truth.

The US special forces assumed the joint commission observer mission from British units beginning in November 1996. The joint commission observers were impartial brokers of information, living and operating overtly within a designated local community to gain the trust of local civilian and former warring faction leaders. Joint commission observers served as a responsive, two-way conduit and crisis resolution mediator for stabilization force. One of the keys to the success of the joint commission observers was their maintenance of neutrality. The joint commission observers and their chain of command were careful to avoid becoming intelligence collectors. The Bosnian individuals that they were meeting with understood that the joint commission observers reported their findings to stabilization force, but understood that they were neutral (Heinemann 2000). It is important to stress that the joint commission observers were not an intelligence collection asset. If the Bosnians felt that the joint commission observers were collecting, the conduit of information would be closed.

The joint commission observers had 6 tasks to accomplish:

1. Act as impartial brokers
2. Provide the ground truth
3. Assist former warring factions to liaison (with all other elements)
4. Respond to crisis
5. Coordinate with non-governmental organizations and civilian authorities
6. Compress the communications hierarchy (Combined Joint Special Operations

Task Force 1998)

In order to provide the battlespace understanding that the multinational division commander required, the joint commission observers integrated themselves into the local community, establishing rapport with the former warring factions and the civilian structure in a local area. It is important to remember that as the Joint Commission Observer mission progressed, the tactics and techniques were refined. In 1998, the tactics and techniques that were being used were formalized into a standard operating procedure (Joint Commission Observer Standard Operating Procedures 1998). This standard operating procedure was used to instruct special forces detachments rotating into the joint commission observer mission on what had been successful in the past. It was stressed that the tactics and techniques were a generic model, and each area or town had different characteristics and might require different techniques. This pattern revolved around four types of patrols: reconnaissance and assessment, force projection, personality meet, and crisis response. All of these patrols were used to increase the joint commission observers

awareness of their assigned area of operations (Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force 2000).

The reconnaissance and assessment patrols were used early on in the detachment's joint commission observer rotation to familiarize the detachment with their physical operating areas. The patrols looked for routes, locations, helicopter landing zones, landmarks and checkpoints. Once a joint commission observer became familiar with the area of operations, it transitioned into force projection patrols (Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force 2000).

Force projection patrols were used to establish and maintain a presence in the area. During these patrols, the joint commission observer began to initiate contact with local Bosnian personalities. The joint commission observers lived in the communities that they were monitoring, which gave them the opportunity to collect information unhindered by normal military procedures: the special forces detachments conducting the joint commission observer mission had unrestricted access to the population. Day-to-day activities (shopping in the market, having coffee, walking around, and talking to people) allowed the special forces soldiers to gather the pulse of a community. For example, a special forces joint commission observer soldier conducting his normal food shopping trip could strike-up a casual conversation with a shopkeeper and during the course of the conversation, the joint commission observer could steer the conversation towards a subject about which he wanted information. When added to other bits of information, these informal contacts provided a clear picture of community reaction to an event.

A second example of a force projection patrol was to attend local civic events. The special forces detachment members would attend town meetings, public political meetings, and press conferences. The detachments were not attending as representatives of the US military, NATO or stabilization force, but as impartial observers. After the meeting, the detachment would collate the highlights of the meetings, and add that to its situational picture (Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force 2000).

The third type of patrol was the personality meeting. Once the joint commission observers had developed a physical understanding of their area of operation through the reconnaissance and assessment patrols, and began to understand the personalities in the area, they began to deliberately approach specific personalities in the area of operation. The joint commission observers scheduled and conducted regular meetings with local civic leaders, politicians, non-governmental organizations working in the area, other stabilization force units in the area and former warring faction (entity armed forces) military leaders.

The meetings were coordinated to address specific issues and concerns that were established during the earlier force projection patrols. Meetings were conducted to increase the joint commission observers awareness of the area of operation and were conducted using a specific agenda, known by all parties in the meeting, or in an informal manner. The meetings gave the local leaders an opportunity to “tell their side of the story” to an impartial audience, so that it could be passed to the stabilization force commander. The meetings gave the special forces a chance to expand on any theme or

message that stabilization force was broadcasting, as well as explain stabilization force actions (Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force 2000).

The final type of patrol was a response to a developing situation or crisis in the joint commission observers area of responsibility. If there was a crisis in the area, a riot, a demonstration or confrontation, the joint commission observer was able to react to the situation and provide the higher headquarters (stabilization force or the multinational division commander) his impression of the situation. The joint commission observer was seen as a neutral observer to both sides, and could compress the communications hierarchy involved in the situation. Ideally, the joint commission observer would know who in the area had specific knowledge of the crisis, the driving force and purpose of the crisis. The joint commission observer could gather the facts and communicate them quicker than another stabilization force representative responding to the situation (Joint Commission Observer Methodology Brief, 1-10).

When the four types of patrols were added together, they provided the detachment a total awareness or understanding of the area of operations, including the influential personalities. This knowledge, when added to the other joint commission observers throughout a region provided the stabilization force and multinational division commander an awareness of the region. The key to success for the joint commission observers was their ability to maintain neutrality within their region.

Operation Joint Guard Summary

Was this a special forces mission?

In order to understand if this is a mission that only a special forces unit could execute one needs to return to the four unique factors. During the initial look, the joint commission observer mission was not a doctrinal mission type as explained in chapter 2 of FM 31-20, *Doctrine for Army Special Forces Operations* (Initial Draft). However, after looking deeper into the mission the joint commission observer mission transcends several traditional special forces missions. The mission has elements of a special reconnaissance mission intersected with humanitarian assistance (a collateral activity) and parts of the special forces liaison element and coalition support as discussed in the previous section. The joint commission observers were collecting information on the capabilities, intentions and activities of the former warring factions and entity armed forces, leaders of a region and the entire population of an area.

The joint commission observer mission required a long-term commitment to a remote region that may or may not have been friendly to a stabilization force or the US military. The joint commission observers were posted to towns that were considered “hotspots” by the stabilization force commander. They were executing a mission that was not one of their traditional missions, but one that consisted of aspects of several of the missions that they had trained for. This required the detachments to develop a new methodology to execute the mission. The detachments executed two-man patrols and meetings throughout their region, relying on the rapport that they established for safety.

The detachments had to rely on their maturity and judgment to separate the different populations in their area and develop a way to distinguish fact from fiction.

When initially establishing the joint commission observers throughout the area, the special forces detachments had to rely on their cultural and language skills. The Bosnian society could range from a Serbian population in Bosnia on an Orthodox religion, through a Muslim population to a Croat population in Bosnia on a Catholic religion. Even within these population groups, different factions with different beliefs could exist. During the final Bosnian war, Muslim factions were fighting the Serb forces, as well as the Croat forces assisting a different Muslim faction, and even a different Muslim faction (Glenny 1996, 138-180). When this is added to the traditional historic differences that contributed to the breaking up of Yugoslavia into several nations, the cultural and population differences were significant. In order to operate in that environment, the special forces detachments had to understand not only the differences but also how to operate successfully in their assigned areas.

To execute the mission, the skills of the entire detachment were required. The detachments were required to operate in an area that may or may not have been close to another unit, so that all aspects of support (logistics, engineering, and medical expertise) were required. The mission was heavily reliant on the detachment's communications capability. Most important, the intelligence skills were necessary to direct the patrols and information collection effort.

Was this an information operation?

In order to determine where this fits into the overall Joint Guard information operation, one needs to review what the joint commission observers contributed to Operation Joint Guard as shown in figure 9. By comparing the role of the joint commission observer with the definition of “civil affairs” found in JP 3-13, the first element is discovered. “Civil affairs encompass activities that military commanders take to establish and maintain relationships between their forces and the civil authorities and general populations, resources and institutions in friendly, neutral or hostile areas where their forces are employed.” Everything the joint commission observers were doing were in accord with this definition. Once again, civil affairs is not one of the elements of information operations, but is recognized as contributing to information operations (JP 3-13 1998, II-6). (Author's Note: Do not get this confused with the US Army Civil Affairs units' missions.)

Mission	Doctrinal Mission Type	Mission Execution	Cultural/ Language	Composition
joint commission observer	Unique, Non-doctrinal mission that includes aspects of several special forces missions and collateral activities	- Remote/Denied Area - Mission Innovation - Maturity and Judgement	Yes	Medical Engineer (Log) Commo Intelligence

Figure 9. Joint Commission Observer Mission

One of the primary roles of the joint commission observer was to provide a strong communications link between the stabilization force and former warring factions and entity armed forces. This allowed both parties to fully understand each other's position on key issues throughout the region. Factual information would be transmitted by the joint commission observer to the stabilization force commander and to the former warring factions and entity armed forces. If the stabilization force commander suspected a former warring faction or entity armed forces of an action that was in violation of the Dayton Peace Accords, the joint commission observer was in a position to report the facts as they were to the stabilization force commander. This dissemination of factual information is very similar to JP 3-13's definition of public affairs: "Public Affairs programs contribute to information assurance by disseminating factual information. Factual information dissemination counters adversary deception and propaganda." Once again, like civil affairs, public affairs is not recognized as an element of information operations, but as something that contributes to information operations (JP 3-13 1998, III-7).

The second part of the public affairs definition expands on the mission of the joint commission observers: they were in the position to counter any propaganda or deception (counterpropaganda and counterdeception) effort made by any of the factions or political groups that existed in Bosnia-Herzegovina. This could happen in two ways. First, the joint commission observer could directly provide the factual information to the misled party, telling them the truth at the grass roots level. Second and more effectively, the joint commission observer could report the propaganda and its perception on the target

audience to stabilization force. The stabilization force information operations cell could analyze this and develop an effective counter to it.

This leads into the final information operations role of the joint commission observers: assessment. Their situation reports were used by the information operations cell at stabilization force to provide feedback and reaction to the effectiveness of the stabilization force information operations products, press releases. They provided the stabilization force commander the perspective of the population (Root 2000).

CHAPTER 7

ANALYSIS AND RECOMMENDATION

The preceding four chapters demonstrated what special forces have done in four operations: Just Cause, Desert Storm, Noble Obelisk, and Joint Guard. Figure 10 shows that when these four operations are looked at from an information operations perspective, four commonalties fall out: the ability to interact with foreign militaries, the ability to conduct long term missions, the ability to provide critical bits of information, and the ability to operate in denied, sensitive, or enemy held territory.

Operation	Mission	Element of IO	Justification
Just Cause	Cimarron Barracks	Relevant Information Provided to JTF CDR Information Management	Not IO, but essential to the JTF mission
	Tinajitas	Relevant Information Provided to JTF CDR Information Management	Not IO, but essential to the JTF mission
	Pacora River Bridge	Relevant Information Provided to JTF CDR Information Management	Not IO, but essential to the JTF mission
	Radio Towers	Physical Attack and Destruction Counter Propaganda	Temporarily destroyed PDF's ability to transmit propaganda or information to other forces
	Television Towers	Physical Attack and Destruction Counter Propaganda	Temporarily destroyed PDF's ability to transmit propaganda or information to other forces
	Radio Transmitters	Physical Attack and Destruction Counter Propaganda	Temporarily destroyed PDF's ability to transmit propaganda or information to other forces

	Ma Bell	Psychological Operations	Conveyed information to rural PDF forces to induce them to surrender
Desert Storm	Mazekas	Operational Security	Prevented Iraqi intelligence gathering by screening the border
	Soil Sample	Relevant information provided to JTF CDR Information Management	Not IO, but essential to the JTF mission
	Road Intersection	Relevant information provided to JTF CDR Information Management	Not IO, but essential to the JTF mission
Desert Storm	Coalition Support	Counterpropaganda OPSEC Military Deception	Countered Iraqi propaganda Secured front of coalition Presented credible capability
Noble Obelisk	NEO Assistance	Psychological Operations Relevant Information (Information Management)	Influenced Faction leaders
Joint Guard	JCO	Civil Affairs (contributes) Public Affairs (contributes) Counter Propaganda/Deception	In a position to counter any propaganda/deception efforts Communication between factions

Figure 10. Four Operations From an Information Operations Perspective

The ability to gain and maintain the trust of foreign soldiers and civilian personnel is repeated throughout the four operations. Whether as a working partner (Mazeka mission), a coalition support element (special forces liaison elements during Desert Storm), as an advanced element working in a hostile environment (Noble Obelisk) or as an overt gatherer of information (Joint Guard), special forces soldiers were able to interact with militaries and civilians to provide a link between the joint force commander and that human element.

All four operations demonstrated special forces ability to integrate and work with foreign militaries. This ability can be used in several different ways. First of all, it can be used to convince an opponent military that his situation is not good, and he would be better off surrendering to the special forces soldiers. This was demonstrated during the Ma Bell missions in Just Cause, a low-key psychological operation to convince the rural Panamanian Defense Force garrison commanders to surrender without resistance.

Also during Just Cause, special forces units interacted with Panamanian civilians others, (FM 100-6 1999, viii) to locate the third pro-Noriega radio station that started to broadcast after 21 December 1989. Special forces soldiers had to gain the trust of the local population, gather information concerning the transmitter, process the information, and locate the transmitter. Without the ability gain the trust of the population, gather, and process the information the transmitter would not have been located.

Second, the special forces were able to work with the various coalition militaries during Desert Storm and Shield. The first mission executed, the Mazeka mission, allowed the joint force command to establish operational security in the vast border region, as well as providing key intelligence about Iraqi unit locations and activities. During the coalition support missions, special forces liaison elements were able to provide a form of public affairs to the coalition commanders, reinforcing the fact that they were needed and adding legitimacy to their militaries by integrating them into the coalition. Although this is not one of the elements of information operations, but something that contributes to it, this accomplished two things. First, it allowed the coalition forces to be used to form the initial defensive screen, providing a form of

operational security. Secondly, it demonstrated to Iraq that the coalition was a strong one, and they would not be able to split the coalition with negative propaganda efforts.

During Noble Obelisk, the special forces detachment on the ground was able to capitalize on their contact with the military units in Sierra Leone. As the coup was occurring, the detachment was able to feed information that they received from the soldiers that they were previously training with to European Command (the regional commander-in-chief) about the coup. As the situation deteriorated, the detachment was able to move around Freetown, contacting the foreign militaries from Sierra Leone and Nigeria and explaining the noncombatant evacuation operation to them, ensuring the missions success. As the noncombatant evacuation operation was in progress, the special forces detachment was able to form a buffer between the Marine forces executing the noncombatant evacuation operation, the rebels and the Nigerian soldiers.

The second commonality that special forces demonstrated was the ability to conduct long-term missions. During Desert Storm special forces detachments executed the Mazeka mission for over six months during Desert Shield and Desert Storm. The detachments lived with the Saudi units on the border during that time period. During the same six-month period, special forces were attached to coalition partners as they executed their liaison missions. From 1996 to the present, special force detachments are executing the joint commission observer mission as part of Operation Joint Guard in Bosnia-Herzegovina. This has required the detachments to remain in contact with the Bosnians seven days a week for the past four years.

The third commonality is the special forces detachments ability to provide critical bits of relevant information to the joint forces commander. Although this is not an

element or a portion of information operations, it is a part of information superiority. In each of the four operations, special forces detachments demonstrated their ability to provide relevant information. At the two barracks, Cimarron and Tinajitas, and Pacora River Bridge during Just Cause; at the road intersections and during the soil sample mission; during the noncombatant evacuation operation in Sierra Leone and as joint commission observers in Bosnia, special forces units and soldiers provided that critical, relevant information to the joint forces commander.

The final similarity between the four operations is special forces's ability to operate in denied, sensitive, or enemy held territory. During the three special reconnaissance missions and the direct action missions against the television and radio towers in Just Cause, the special forces detachments infiltrated through Panamanian held territory to reach their targets. During the special reconnaissance missions in Desert Storm, the detachments were required to infiltrate well into Iraq to get to their hide sites (reconnaissance positions) and to the area where the soil sample was gathered. The detachment working with the Marines during Noble Obelisk operated almost exclusively among the rebel factions that had taken over Freetown. Finally during Joint Guard, the special forces detachments were required to live and operate in areas that the military national division commander considered to be the hot spots of his region.

These four similarities demonstrate what the special forces units were able to do for joint force commanders in the past, during operations that included the elements of information operations. When considering the future role of special forces units and what their role in future information operations should be, these similarities show what they are capable of. When a joint force command needs a unit to interact with a foreign

military or a foreign other, special forces language and cultural skills are ideal for that mission.

When working with the foreign militaries or others they are able to act as a conduit for information, countering any propaganda or deception aimed at them. They possess the ability to influence a foreign group or military by conveying information to the group, conducting psychological operations to gain an effect that the joint force commander desires. By working with a foreign military as a liaison element, special forces units allow that unit to be used by the joint force command for a variety of missions including using them as a military deception or to counter an enemy deception attempted on the ally.

When the ability to interact with foreign militaries or others is added to the other three capabilities, the options for the joint forces commander increase. Special forces offer the commander a unit that can operate in denied, sensitive, or enemy held territory, for an extended period of time. While in that area, special forces units can provide relevant information to the joint forces commander on a continuous, long-term basis.

Primary Question

What is the role of the special force group in information operations?

As the military begins to operate in an asymmetrical environment, the joint force commander will have an increased reliance on information and information operations to succeed. During the Cold War victory was simple, the opposition was predictable and all systems were focused on that opposition. As we move further into the post-Cold War era, and face more conflicts similar to Just Cause, Noble Obelisk, and Joint Guard, the

opposition will not be as easy to predict. The joint forces commander will have to have a variety of assets to employ as he strives to maintain information superiority.

The role of the special forces group in information operations is as an asset to be tasked during the Joint Targeting Coordination Board planning. Special forces units possess unique talents that are not available from any other military unit: they regularly train on specific mission types, they execute their missions in unique manners, they have unique cultural and language skills and are a self-contained unit. When these unique talents were incorporated into the four operations studied, special forces units gave the joint forces commander of each operation the ability to interact in the human dimension whether it is a military or civilian person. They also give the joint forces commander a unit that can operate in a denied, sensitive or enemy held territory for an extended period of time to give the commander a continuous flow of relevant information. During the four operations studied, the special forces groups prepared and launched their subordinate units to support a joint force commander's plan, as a member of the joint task force established to execute the missions.

Secondary Questions

Is the special forces group structured to conduct information operations as a mission?

The simple answer to this is no. An information operation is a huge mission derived from national goals through a theater or unified commander in chief. An information operation must be coordinated with several separate forces and staffs and synchronized throughout the range of the operation. The staff of a special forces group is not robust enough to execute the planning and coordination necessary without a great

deal of augmentation. Doctrinally, the special forces group is designed to prepare, launch, command, and control missions that subordinate special forces units are tasked to conduct as part of a joint special operations task force tucked neatly under a joint task force. In order to conduct an information operation, the national informational goals have to be brought down to the execution level and coordinated across the joint task force.

The special forces group does not have the staff expertise or structure to conduct the coordination necessary employ the eleven elements offensively and defensively. That ability is present at the joint task force. The joint task force has the ability and assets to interact with the levels of command and control to derive the national informational objectives and goals. The special forces group staff and support structure is currently designed to plan, resource, execute and support missions as they flow down from the Joint Targeting Coordination Board at the joint task force.

What are the systems that currently exist in the special forces group that support information operations?

The primary system that exists in the special forces group that supports information operations is the operational detachment alpha, the smallest element. These are the detachments responsible for executing the doctrinal missions (unconventional warfare, direct action, foreign internal defense, special reconnaissance, counterproliferation, and combating terrorism) and the collateral activities (humanitarian assistance, disaster relief, security assistance, personnel recovery, counterdrug operations, countermine activities, and special activities).

When the detachment is augmented with a chemical reconnaissance detachment, the joint force commander has a unit that can be infiltrated into an area that has had or is suspected of chemical activity. The chemical reconnaissance detachment can recover and evacuate a chemical sample for further use by the joint force commander. When a support operations team, alpha is added to the detachment, the joint force commander has the ability to conduct electronic warfare in denied, sensitive, or enemy held territory. What, if any, changes in doctrine, training, leader development, organization, material, and soldiers in the special forces group need to be made to support information operations?

The primary doctrinal change that is necessary is to remove information operations from the list of potential missions that a special forces group is responsible for, and introduce it as an environment or a larger mission that the group will be taking part in. FM 31-20, *Doctrine for Army Special Forces* (Initial Draft) will need to explain the importance of the informational environment, information superiority and information operations. This will allow the elements that execute the missions a better understanding of the emerging environment of information on the battlefield, and how their traditional missions fit into the joint forces commander's plan to succeed in that environment.

Special forces detachments will need to continue to train on the traditional missions as well as receive training on how their traditional missions contribute to the over all joint task force information operation plan. The detachments will also need to continue to train on the aspects of their operations that make them unique: their mission types, the way that the missions are executed, cultural and language skills, and how to develop the dynamics of the detachment. In order to maximize their flexibility, the

detachments need to increase the amount of training that they execute with the chemical reconnaissance detachments and support team, alphas. This will give them the ability to operate with these unique elements when they are required.

Special forces leaders from the operational detachment, alpha and higher will have to understand the environment that they are working in, and how information operations has changed that environment. An excellent example of why this is important is the joint guard joint commission observers mission. Special forces detachments executing that mission were well aware that the information that they were gathering was important to the military national division commander. Therefore, any information that they gathered was submitted to their next higher headquarters and up the chain of command. The bit of information that the joint commission observers did not feel was relevant to their area of operations might be vital to the neighboring area or another military national division, so all information was passed to the higher headquarters. Without the understanding of the informational environment that the joint commission observers were operating in, the joint commission observers might make the decision to not pass that information up chain of command.

While looking at the organization and equipment in the special forces group, the two main areas to focus on are the group's ability to understand the importance of information operations and the detachment's ability to pass information. In order for the group to better understand the importance and relevance of information operations, two information operations functional area officer should be added to the group staff. This would serve two purposes. First, putting trained information operations specialists on the group staff would give the group commander a trained source that could advise him how

to best meet the information needs of the joint forces commander. Conversely, it gives the group the ability to relate to information operations planning cells. The information operations specialists can explain the special forces unit's abilities to the planning cell and ensure that the missions that are passed to the unit from the joint targeting and coordination board are within the unit's capability.

At the detachment level, the area that needs to be emphasized is the detachment's ability to gather and pass information. This can be looked at from two levels. The first level is the ability to gather and pass the raw, relevant information for the joint forces commander. Second and more importantly, the detachment will require more training in the human aspect of the elements of information operations. How does the detachment work in a population to dispel propaganda? What does the detachment do to get an opponent to do what the joint forces commander desires? These are the areas that training in information operations should cover for the detachment: how to use their skills in culture, language and human interaction to accomplish the elements for the joint forces commander.

Unexpected Discoveries

The primary discovery that I did not expect to make from my research was the importance of human interaction during all of the operations that were studied. I was fully expecting to find the importance of special forces in information operations was their ability to move into denied territory and destroy or observe a specific target that the information operations planners had decided was the key to the overall mission success. However, as the missions developed, the importance was more than physical destruction, it was the ability to interact with the human elements during each of the operations.

During Operation Just Cause, the operations against the television and radio towers were interesting and vital: they denied Noriega and the Panamanian Defense Force the ability to transmit information to their units. However, from a military perspective, the ability that Major Perez and his detachments to convince the rural Panama Defense Force commanders to peacefully surrender and begin working for the legitimate government far outweighed the early missions. Major Perez was able to disarm over 2,000 Panamanian defense force soldiers with very few casualties.

During Desert Storm, the same discovery was made. The reconnaissance missions to gather the soil sample and observe the key road intersections were vital and necessary to the joint task force. However, the detachment's ability to interact with the Saudi airborne and special forces units in the Mazekas provided the joint forces commander that initial operational security screen to develop his forces behind, and denied the Iraqi commander the ability to gather any intelligence on the coalition forces. When this is added to the special forces group's special forces liaison elements integration of the coalition forces, a whole new aspect is added. The special forces liaison elements were able to not only report on and train the coalition's forces, but also mold them into a force that the coalition commanders could use as the military deception and later as an independent force, operating alongside the western forces.

When looking at Noble Obelisk, my initial impression was that the special forces detachment was important to the ad hoc joint task force commander (the Marine commander) because they could pass relevant information to the Marines prior to their arrival. However, once the actions taken by the detachment are studied from an information operations perspective, their interactions with the military and civilian

personnel were more important. Once they began to operate with the embassy personnel, rebel and Nigerian military leaders, the operation fell into place.

Operation Joint Guard was the ultimate demonstration of the special forces detachment's ability to operate in the human dimension. Initially, I was interested in the bits of relevant information that joint commission observers gathered and passed up to the military national division commanders. What was more important was how the detachments gathered the information. Their interaction with the individuals, groups, coffeehouse crowd, informal leaders, and government officials was what provided the information. While gathering the information, the joint commission observers were able to counter any propaganda or deception, by providing an open communications network and giving the ground truth to all sides in the operation. Without the cultural ability to interact and succeed in the environment, none of the information would have flowed, cutting off a vital source for the military national division commander.

Recommendation

My final recommendation for understanding the role of the special forces group is to introduce information operations into the group as an operational environment, rather than a mission that is conducted. This will require that FM 31-20, *Army Doctrine for Special Forces Operations* (Initial Draft) be written to explain the role of the special forces group in information operations from the aspect of what the group offers to the joint forces commander. The emphasis should be on the nature of how special forces units are structured (composition) and trained to accomplish their doctrinal missions. Once that is explained, the doctrine should reflect the commonalities that have been demonstrated historically from special forces missions: the human interaction ability, the

long-term nature of special forces mission, the ability to provide relevant information and the ability to operate in a remote, sensitive or enemy held territory.

Special forces soldiers and units should concentrate their information operations training on what they contribute to the information operations arena. Special forces units have an internal counterintelligence section in the military intelligence detachment that is capable of providing operational security, physical security, as well as counterintelligence. This element is responsible for operational security training, and monitoring the unit's security level during mission planning and execution. Working hand-in-hand with the counterintelligence section are the intelligence specialists (assistant operations sergeants) found on each detachment.

With the support operations team, alpha, the special forces unit has an internal electronic warfare element and expertise. The direct action mission capability leads directly to the physical attack and destruction element. When considering the other elements, special forces units will need to be introduced to how their missions correlate to the elements.

For the remaining elements, special forces units need to emphasize their ability to operate at the human level on the battlefield to accomplish their mission. Special forces detachments are not doctrinally equipped or trained the same as an army psychological operations unit, but they can conduct psychological operations by influencing a target individual or group's emotions or reasoning by using their interpersonal skills. A special forces unit would be hard-pressed to conduct a military deception that would affect an adversary leader, but they can work with a host nation or allied partner to enable them to be a credible deception. While working with that individual, group or ally, a special

forces detachment is fully capable of countering any adversary deception or propaganda effort by providing the ground truth to the group that the special forces unit is working with.

When considering the final two elements, computer network attack and special information operations, special forces units need to allow the experts execute these missions. Instead of selling a capability that takes years of training and a high level of technical expertise to master, special forces units can concentrate their resources on the missions and elements that they can effect.

As the US military moves into the era of post-Cold War conflicts, the joint forces executing the assigned mission has to understand how it can succeed in the asymmetrical environment. The joint forces commander is going to be confronted with a wide variety of situations and threats during the conduct of his operation. These threats will range from traditional military threats to others on the battlefield. All of these threats will revolve around information. From preventing the conventional commander from gaining the information he needs to succeed against the joint force commander, through gaining the information that the joint force will need to be successful, to ensuring that the others on the battlefield receive information that they need to be protected from the conflict. The joint forces commander must master information operations as he conducts his mission, and fully understand how to use all of the forces in the joint task force to best reach the goal of the mission.

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