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NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL
Monterey, California

THESIS

AN OPERATIONAL CONCEPT FOR THE TRANSFORMATION OF SOF INTO A FIFTH SERVICE

by

Philip L. Mahla
and
Christopher N. Riga

June 2003

Thesis Advisor: Anna Simons
Second Reader: George Lober

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This thesis defines the strategic utility of Special Operation Forces (SOF), identifies why SOF only provide limited strategic utility, and presents an operational concept for the reorganization, alignment, and employment of SOF to overcome these shortf alls.

The thesis is presented in a deductive manner that argues that SOF were designed for strategic purposes, and leads the reader to conclude that reformation must occur for SOF to provide strategic utility and meet their intent. SOF would be in an optimal position to meet their organizational intent by becoming a fifth armed service within the Department of Defense (DoD). Through the creation of mission-based units and a holistic employment strategy, SOF would become a strategic instrument capability of assisting national decision-makers in blending the elements of national power.

Finally, the thesis concludes with additional required areas for research to make this concept become a reality, but that are beyond the scope of this study.

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AN OPERATIONAL CONCEPT FOR THE TRANSFORMATION OF SOF INTO A FIFTH SERVICE

Philip L. Mahla
Major, United States Army
B.S., Pennsylvania State University, 1991

Christopher N. Riga
Major, United States Army
B.A., Columbia College, 1987

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF SCIENCE IN DEFENSE ANALYSIS

from the

NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL
June 2003

Authors: Philip L. Mahla

Christopher N. Riga

Approved by: Anna Simons
Thesis Advisor

George Lober
Second Reader

Gordon McCormick
Chairman, Department of Defense Analysis

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ABSTRACT

This thesis defines the strategic utility of Special Operation Forces (SOF), identifies why SOF only provide limited strategic utility, and presents an operational concept for the reorganization, alignment, and employment of SOF to overcome these shortfalls.

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Finally, the thesis concludes with additional required areas for research to make this concept become a reality, but that are beyond the scope of this study.

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I. INTRODUCTION

> President Bush has said a new strategy is needed to deal with a new threat he believes is more dangerous in some ways to the United States than the threats posed during the Cold War. No one died from a nuclear exchange between the superpowers, but more than 3,000 Americans have died since the terror war against America began in the early 1980s, culminating in the September 11 attacks last year. (Thomas, 2002, p. 19)

A. BACKGROUND

Since the end of World War II (WWII) and the dawn of the nuclear age, "small wars," terrorism, and irregular threats to the United States and its interests have increased dramatically. The United States (US) Special Operations Command (SOCOM) was created to be a strategic asset to provide the United States the capability to combat these unconventional/irregular threats (U/IT).

SOCOM has often performed brilliantly when conducting "hyper-conventional," direct action type operations, and has provided key decision-makers with diverse options. Since the establishment of SOCOM, direct action operations have moved to the forefront, while Unconventional Warfare (UW) options have often been overlooked, and even disregarded at times. Also, although threats and operational environments have been in flux throughout the world, the overall organizational and structural design to meet these changing conditions have not been substantially altered or even modified since SOCOM's establishment. This lack of adjustment has limited the organization's strategic usefulness in combating the U/IT we face today, as well as threats we are bound to face in the future.

Institutional and organizational limitations and constraints, combined with leadership shortfalls and a lack of holistic understanding about SOF culture, have decreased their ability to conduct warfare against U/IT in complex and unstable environments. The structure and manner in which SOF have conducted operations in the “Global War on Terror” (GWOT) has, in turn, limited their strategic utility in combating the U/IT.

The United States’ model of warfare is based on a large conventional force fighting through various intensities of conflict against an enemy that is easily identified and targeted. This model of warfare has often led to embarrassment or failure in the unconventional or irregular threat environment (U/ITE). “Small wars” or Low Intensity Conflicts (LIC) are not a smaller version of High Intensity Conflict (HIC) and should not be treated as such (Krepinevich, 1986). Because the US military views LIC as simply a smaller version of HIC, our attrition-based mentality has limited our ability to deal with “small wars” and has led us to focus on external environmental factors (relational maneuver) rather than internal bureaucratic processes (Luttwak, 1983).

Dealing with U/IT requires the US to effectively blend the four elements of national power to efficiently overcome these types of threats; however, a review of the history of US operations within the U/ITE reveals that the SOF engagement aspect of the military element of national power is often only a small, supporting effort of the other military operations.

> The application of purely military measures may not by itself restore peace and orderly government because the fundamental causes of the condition are economical, political or social. (Cable, 1986, p. 162)

Unfortunately, the military element is often the one that takes the lead by default due to other measures or elements failing.

In order to correctly identify and defeat the irregular threat, reorganization and restructuring that allows all the elements of national power to be incorporated in the right mix must occur. A second revolution in SOF military affairs, similar to that which led the creation of SOCOM, must occur if the US is to receive efficient strategic utility from SOF.

Since the events of September 11, 2001, DoD has been struggling with exactly how to reorganize SOCOM to conduct the Global War on Terror. In fact, several restructuring concepts have been presented. However, all seem to fall short of addressing the true and necessary changes required to effectively fight a Global War on Terror, let alone other future U/IT. We believe the focus for change must be on reorganization and restructuring that both addresses the effects of near-term problems and also postures the force to be prepared to provide strategic utility in the future.

B. PURPOSE

The purpose of this thesis is to articulate why SOF should be transformed into a separate service within DoD. We will introduce the concept of strategic utility, examine the Global War on Terror, and present an operational concept that will explain: 1) what the new organization should look like, 2) how it should be employed to provide

strategic usefulness, and 3) what other changes need to be made to allow the new organization to function as intended.

The endstate of this thesis will provide decision-makers an alternative approach to the organizational design and future employment of SOF. The SOF organization we envision will: 1) be constructed around the requirements of various mission sets, 2) reduce the current redundancy in mission focus, and 3) allow UW to move to the forefront in order to prepare the battlespace in U/ITEs. This concept will also provide strategic utility by posturing SOF forward to conduct Operational Preparation of the Battlespace (OPB) and Advance Force Operations (AFO) for the introduction of other SOF elements, conventional forces, or a proper mix of forces based on the threat and environment. Additionally, general and specific information gleaned from having this constant forward presence may also yield significant diplomatic, economic, and intelligence benefits.

In order to accomplish the stated purpose of this study, it is first necessary to examine strategic utility. The frameworks established by Elliot Cohen and Colin Gray will be used to develop a base line theory. From this base line we will elaborate what we believe to be the most relevant strategic utility functions as they pertain to Special Operations (SO) in their current historic context. These strategic utility functions will be used to analyze the current capabilities of SOF, their inherent strengths and limitations, and ultimately determine where SOF currently fits within this framework. We will then determine where the status quo organizational structure meets its strategic utility and intent. Essentially, this

analysis will be undertaken to prove our hypothesis that organizational change needs to occur in order for SOF to increase their strategic usefulness, and become a truly unique asset.

C. WHAT IS STRATEGIC UTILITY?

> When the hour of crisis comes, remember that 40 selected men can shake the world.
>
> …Yasotay (Mongol Warlord)

The concept of strategic utility that will be discussed in detail in Chapter II is critical to understanding the employment of SOF, both to ensure their proper use and to avoid misuse of these limited assets. In his article, "Handfuls of Heroes on Desperate Ventures: When Do Special Operations Succeed?" Colin Gray writes:

> The frequently quoted words of Yasotay penetrate to the core of the strategic utility of special operations forces. That utility reposes most essentially in two qualities, economy of force and expansion of choice. In the most general of terms, special operations forces (SOF) offer the prospect of a favorable disproportionate return on military investment. Moreover, SOF provide the possibility of a range of precisely conducted military activities more extensive than that reliably feasible for regular warriors conducting regular operations. Whether or not SOF—or others nominally competent to carry out special operations—can fulfill the strategic promise just suggested may be analyzed usefully in terms of a historically based assessment of conditions for success and failure. (Gray, 1999, p. 2)

In order for SOF to provide strategic utility, there must be a common understanding of their definitions and applications among decision makers, SOF's leaders, and SOF

soldiers. Chapter II will accomplish this, and further chapters will refer back to strategic utility and its purpose.

D. REASONS FOR CHANGE

1. Reasons External to SOF

a. Emerging Threats and National Defense Policy

Globalization and the change in evolving threats since the end of WWII have led to significant shifts in the US National Defense Policy, ranging from nuclear proliferation to a pre-emptive strategy.

> Pre-emptive strikes against terrorists are among the new realities and one of the operational necessities of the 21st Century. Also apparent is the realization that urban operations, crime, terrorism and fourth generation warfare are now part of the same operational environment. We see emerging and mutating forms of violence, conflict, and warfare. The blurring of crime, peace, and war, the decline of the nation-state, and increasingly lethal terrorism embody this volatile hurly burly brew. (Wilcox and Wilson, 2002, p. 2)

These changes in National Defense Policy create new requirements for all governmental organizations, to include SOF.

b. Key Requirements of the New National Defense Policy

The above-mentioned requirements and the direction of the new national defense policy require a critical review of SOF, based on their increased need, and should reveal that radical change (not simply small internal adjustments to the current status quo) is required to meet the goals effectively.

Some of the most significant requirements that fall out of the National Defense Policy are: high-

resolution intelligence, greater integration/ blending of the elements of national power, and increased SOF capabilities. The focus of this study is on the latter of the three requirements listed. However, by thoroughly understanding how SOF reorganization would enhance its strategic utility, the reader should also gain insight into the kinds of contributions SOF can make to gaining high resolution intelligence and help with the blending of elements of national power.

2. Reasons Internal to DoD

a. Institutionalization and Conventional Mind Set

Historically speaking, the US favors large, conventional wars as opposed to "small wars" or low intensity conflict (LIC). However, as Andrew Krepinevich observes, this preference has not provided means to meet the current threat(s).

> …it is necessary to examine the evolution the Army has undergone over its history, particularly in this century--an evolution that has provided the United States with a superb instrument for combating the field armies of its adversaries in conventional (or "mid-intensity") wars but an inefficient and ineffective force for defeating insurgent guerrilla forces in a "low-intensity" conflict." (Krepinevich, p. 4)

Because of this fascination with large wars, the US has grown and molded a military force (down to the individual leader) that efficiently and effectively deals with these types of threats. Thus, the rewards system (promotions) and other pathways toward success have evolved into a highly bureaucratic system that rewards those who are trained to think and react mainly based on standardized

enemy templates, and our currently existing inward-looking internal systems.

Institutionalization has resulted in key leaders and decision-makers being trained and molded to look at all military problems through one “lens”; they approach all problems with slight variations of the same solution. This, of course, is a good thing if you are talking about dealing with a solely conventional threat (The Gulf War of 1991); however, in today’s world of terrorism and other “fourth generation warfare” threats this approach falls miserably short. Fourth generation warfare includes, but is not limited, to the following:

> In broad terms, fourth generation warfare seems likely to be widely dispersed and largely undefined; the distinction between war and peace will be blurred to the vanishing point. It will be nonlinear, possibly to the point of having no definable battlefields or fronts. The distinction between “civilian” and “military” may disappear. Actions will occur concurrently throughout all participants’ depth, including their society as a cultural, not just a physical, entity. Major military facilities, such as airfields, fixed communications sites, and large headquarters will become rarities because of their vulnerability; the same may be true of civilian equivalents, such as seats of government, power plants, and industrial sites (including knowledge as well as manufacturing industries). Success will depend heavily on effectiveness in joint operations as lines between responsibility and mission become very blurred. Again, all these elements are present in third generation warfare; fourth generation will merely accentuate them. (Lind, Knightengale, Schmitt, Sutton, and Wilson, 1989, pp. 22-26)

Because the current system is set up to promote and reward those who fit the conventional mold, rather than

those who understand fourth generation warfare, there are few (if any) true unconventional thinkers in key decision-making positions.

b. Lack of Key Representation at the National and DOD Level

Given the institutionalization of conventional thinking and the fact that there is no SOF seat on the JCS, there are few decision-makers at the national or top DoD levels that can even begin to think about unconventional approaches to other than conventional problems. Yes, the commander of SOCOM is a four star general and gives input to the chairman and the Secretary of Defense, but to what extent this unconventional commander's input is accepted has to be considered questionable. For instance, even when dealing with an unconventional threat or preparing to conduct fourth generation warfare, SOF has been viewed since its inception as a supporting effort of the conventional military. In situations where SOF should have instead been supported *by* the conventional military (Vietnam and Afghanistan for example), this has been thwarted by the large structure in which SOF operates. Not being able to independently brief the President and Secretary of Defense outside the JCS structure means our chief policymakers are being miss-served by not receiving sound, independent, and even contrary advice in constructing an efficient and effective military response to the U/IT.

c. No SOF Theater Combatant Commanders (TCC)

Commanders for theater engagements (i.e. Commander CENTCOM for Afghanistan) are selected based on their positioning within the conventional hierarchal system rather than their experience, threat and/or area knowledge.

The current system makes it next to impossible for a SOF leader to become a TCC.

d. A SOC's Position in a TCC's Pecking Order

The currently accepted response to why no SOF commanders can serve as a Theater Combatant Commander stresses that the SOC, who is a subordinate staff member to the TCC, should advise the TCC and his staff about how to deal with U/IT. There are two problems with this. First, the SOC is a Brigadier General on a four star general officer's staff. Because of the emphasis on conventional thinking and the institutionalization of the TCC's staff members, SOF personnel are not held in the same regard as other conventional personnel. This is due to SOF personnel's non-traditional upbringing and experiences. With that said, it is again questionable as to how much of the advice the SOC provides is truly considered by the TCC and his staff; of course, this influence varies from commander to commander. Second, the SOC performs two distinctly different duties. Not only is he a staff member on the TCC's staff, he is also the commander of his own in-theater forces. Normally speaking, given an opportunity to divide his attention between a staff position (in which he may or may not feel his advice is taken seriously) and being a commander, his personality will normally drive him to spend a preponderance of his time commanding forces rather than performing mundane staff duties.

e. Lack of General Understanding of SOF and UW

Given perceived biases, institutional and personal stereotypes, etc., it is easy to see why there is a general lack of understanding about how to employ SOF properly, and more specifically, how to employ SOF in UW. Proper employment of SOF should be done for strategic

gains, and not as a band-aid for everything that does not fit neatly into a conventional template.

3. Internal to SOF

a. Mission Redundancy

A quick examination of the mission sets that the organizations within SOCOM perform reveals that there is a large overlap, not only in missions, but also in specialization. In fact, some would argue that there is considerable redundancy between the missions performed by SOCOM with those performed by conventional forces. In some respects this is true; however, the argument made in this thesis is that SOF missions require SOF-unique attributes, skills, and maturity that are not found in non-SOF units. A quick glance at the US Army Special Forces and US Navy SEALs highlights the issue of redundancy within SOCOM. Each promotes the same five core missions sets (unconventional warfare, direct action, special reconnaissance, foreign internal defense, and counter-terrorism), but the actual capabilities of these units differ considerably. While SF thrives on UW, FID, and CT, the SEALs specialize in SR and DA. Also, SEALs specialize in waterborne operations, while SF excels in air and land based operations.

The issue here is that too much redundancy equals inefficiency. Chapter IV will present a new SOF organization designed to address these issues.

b. Internal Riffs/Competition

Competition in any military organization is healthy, but can also be destructive. Organizations that become too competitive with one another can detract from combat efficiency, and result in the wrong unit being

selected for a given situation. For example, certain SF elements and SEALs focus on SCUBA operations. Usually SF elements that focus on these types of operations lose their ability to conduct their actual mission set. These elements become good at conducting underwater infiltration methods, but reduce their efficiency and effectiveness in conducting UW. Furthermore, SEALs exist to conduct all types of waterborne operations, so why should SF even attempt to maintain this capability when SF will not (or should not) be chosen to conduct these operations? The excessive competition that results from the redundancy of missions and specialization, we believe, is detrimental to SOF. Again, Chapter IV will address this issue.

c. Leadership and SOF Culture

The top leaders within SOCOM today are products of the institutionalized molding mentioned above. That is to say, in order to become who they are, they have had to "fall in line" with the parent services (Army, Navy, Air Force, etc.). These leaders are promoted not by other SOF leaders, but by boards of conventional military leaders, boards on which there may only be one SOF seat. Leader selection of this type does not work well for SOF and, in fact, conflicts with SOF's internal culture. Without going into too much depth in this introductory chapter, let us just say that SOF culture is the key ingredient in making and keeping SOF personnel unique. The issue of SOF culture will be addressed in Chapter IV.

E. SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

Because there is such an extensive literature on the history of SOF, and because key decision-makers appear to believe SOF should be restructured to make it more DA-oriented, this thesis will not spend a lot of time re-

hashing what has already been reported, but rather will argue that creating a new service is the next logical step in SOF's development. Based on what we have read and gleaned, this is drastically different from any proposed changes on the table for SOF at the present time.

To make our case, then, the thesis will unfold in the following way. Chapter II focuses on the concept of strategic utility. This chapter will provide the reader with a clear understanding of the concepts of strategic environment and strategic utility. Although strategic utility is not a term with an approved definition within DoD, it should be. In this chapter we will discuss what strategic utility specifically is and lay out how it applies to SOF. We will draw primarily from two sources on this topic: Eliot Cohen's Commandos and Politicians: Elite Military Units in Modern Democracies, and Colin Gray's Explorations in Strategy. This chapter will conclude with a recommended definition to be incorporated into DoD definitional terms.

Chapter III will focus on the current war on terror as it has been fought in Afghanistan. In this chapter we will highlight the institutional, structural, and organizational problems that exist within DoD as they pertain to SOF, and institutional, structural, and organizational problems within SOF in order to justify our thesis recommendations, as elaborated in Chapters IV, V, and VI.

Chapter IV will present organizationally what the new SOF service should look like, to include: regional commands, units and their assigned missions, and relationships with sister services and other governmental agencies (OGAs). The new organization will be described

conceptually and will not address all the necessary requirements for actually making this recommended change. Issues such as budgeting, recruitment and selection, regulations, etc. are beyond the scope of this study, but will require very detailed study and planning to accomplish. For now, we are simply building the conceptual argument for a separate service.

Chapter V will illustrate for the reader an operational concept for the employment of the new SOF service. In it we will discuss how "mission units" presented in Chapter IV will allow UW to move to the forefront of SOF operations and increase our global situational awareness. Given this new global situational awareness, other SOF assets can better be employed based on accurate and reliable intelligence. This process, known as regional engagement, will allow SOF to provide strategic utility. Finally, this chapter will discuss command relationships with our conventional brethren to allow for flexibility in the DoD system and maximize DoD's ability to address *any* given military situation.

Chapter VI will outline other changes required to make the new SOF service function as intended. Areas of emphasis in this chapter include: leadership, the development of a true SOF culture, holistic understanding of special operations, agency-like qualities, education, legislative requirements, and a SOF-unique rewards system.

II. STRATEGIC UTILITY

> Special operations might be described as 'parapolitical,' rather than paramilitary. The ultimate objective is political and the political stakes and risks are frequently very high. But the intermediate objectives and the chosen instruments range from the political into the military and paramilitary fields. They may, but more often do not, involve a declared state of war. They represent diplomacy conducted by other means, and as such are usually subject to strict political or military control at the highest levels. (Tugwell and Charters, 1984, p. 34)

A. INTRODUCTION

As stated earlier, strategic utility in general terms is a favorable disproportionate return on military investment. Colin Gray defines the term as "the contribution of a particular kind of military activity to the course and outcome of an entire conflict" (1996, p. 163). In this chapter we will discuss the strategic utility of SOF as it relates to the strategic environment, and how SOF can influence all four aspects of national power. SOF provides strategic utility through various strategic utility functions, and these will be fully examined in this chapter.

A comprehensive and holistic understanding of SOF's strategic purpose (at all levels, both internally and externally to SOF) is critical to the success of the organizational and operational concepts presented in Chapters IV and V. The intent of this chapter is to give the reader a clear understanding of the term 'strategic utility'. We will do this by providing detailed

definitions of strategic utility functions that SOF are required to perform in order to meet their organizational intent.

B. DEFINITIONAL TERMS

1. Strategic Environment

The strategic environment involves all matters of national security. This includes political, military, economic, and information activities used to influence another state or non-state actors in a way that furthers the interests of the US. The strategic environment can include, but is not limited to, all US governmental agencies and institutions, non-governmental organizations, as well as foreign governmental agencies, and other state and non-state actors. Strategic decision-makers must, therefore, carefully blend the elements of national power through the balanced employment/synchronization of the above-mentioned agencies/ organizations in order to achieve US foreign policy objectives.

2. Elements of National Power

The President and his cabinet use the four elements of national power (political, military, economic, and information) to approach strategic problems in a manner that attempts to produce an outcome favorable to the interests of the United States. Traditionally, SOF activities have been treated solely as subcomponents of the military aspect of national power. This thesis will attempt to illustrate how SOF, given the concepts presented in Chapters IV through VI, can positively affect all aspects of national power.

3. Special Operations

Special operations are unorthodox military/paramilitary actions that fall outside the realm of conventional warfare, and are undertaken to provide a nation strategic utility by accomplishing military, political, economic, or informational objectives in support of national foreign policy.

4. SOF

SOF are Secretary of Defense (SECDEF) designated units with specialized personnel, equipment, training, and tactics that exceed the standardized capabilities of conventional military forces in order to conduct and support special operations.

C. SOF AND STRATEGIC UTILITY

> Only an unorthodox state of mind can provide true flexibility in the capabilities of special operations forces, including the raising of new units and [the] temporary dedications of regular units, allowing them to rise in an innovative way to meet extraordinary challenges. (Gray, 1996, pp. 156-157)

1. Colin Gray

Colin Gray has studied the notion of strategic utility extensively. In his studies he attempts to determine what makes special operations successful by reviewing historical accounts. As Gray explains, “the prime concern is not to explain how to conduct special operations, but instead to explore the differences such operations can make for the course and outcome of a conflict” (1996, p. 141). In his book Explorations in Strategy, Gray addresses “key ideas” and “points of interest” to assure a “firm intellectual grip on the subject.”

Gray lists six key ideas that he deems important in the "quest for general wisdom on the strategic utility of special operations":

- Special operations have strategic meaning only with reference to war, or other kinds of conflict as a whole.
- Special operations must be considered in relation to, and as a tool of, national or coalition strategy overall.
- Special operations derive much of their strategic meaning – be it on balance negative or positive – from their historical context.
- Special operations are not, or not only, the expression of a culturally free-floating craft, but rather of particular political and strategic cultures.
- The strategic utility of special operations derives largely from the quality and quantity of performance by conventional forces.
- Tactical excellence in the conduct of special operations is no guarantee of strategic effectiveness. (Gray, 1996, p. 143)

In addition to the above listed key ideas, Gray points out that the boundary line between special operations and regular warfare is not always clear, and that strategic understanding mandates careful attention to definitions. He also raises the pivotal question: in the absence of satisfactory identification of special operations how can their strategic utility be assessed? By way of answering, Gray identifies six points of interest that demand emphasis to ensure a firm intellectual understanding:

- Special operations are qualitatively different from regular warfare, not a subcategory of it.
- Although special operations and SOF display some of the same organizational and tactical features regardless of time, place, or circumstances, the

definition of operations and forces as special varies among political and strategic cultures.

- A broad study of special operations seems to indicate a trained incapacity on the part of conventional military minds to grasp the principles of special warfare.
- In an important sense, special operations comprise a state of mind, an approach to the challenges of conflict.
- Special operations are political-military activities tailored to achieve specific, focused objectives (with occasional exceptions) and conducted by units, which adapt with great flexibility to the demands of each challenge. (1996, pp. 149-152)

Gray concludes with his nine “claims” about strategic utility. These nine claims about SOF’s strategic utility are broken down into two categories, those that he refers to as “master claims” of which there are two, while the other seven he calls “other claims.” Gray’s nine claims are: economy of force, expansion of choice, innovation, morale, showcasing of competence, reassurance, humiliation of the enemy, control of escalation, and shaping of the future. For the purposes of this study we will simply paraphrase Gray’s definition of each of these nine claims.

- Economy of force: “Special operations can achieve significant results with the use of limited forces” (1996, p. 168). Gray identifies economy of force as the most significant claim to strategic utility of SOF. Gray notes numerous way in which SOF can claim strategic utility through economy of force, of which we have listed the most significant below:
    - Special operations can act as a force multiplier and augment the strength of regular forces. Missions such as intelligence gathering, deception and diversion, sabotage, subversion, and kidnapping fit this description. In

conducting these types of operations SOF become “key enablers” for the success of regular operations.

- Special operations can accelerate the pace of military success. This will normally apply to regular warfare of mid to high-intensity; however, commanders tend to neglect the special warfare instrument when they are prosecuting war successfully.
- Special operations can slow the pace of military failure. This normally applies to large-scale conflict and the degree of success depends upon the scope and pace of that failure.
- Special operations can themselves secure operational and even strategic objectives regardless of the level of conflict and particularly in a single mission.
- Special operations can prepare the battlefield for success in regular operations of war.
- Special operations can wage war economically. This applies to all levels of conflict because SOF can conduct operations at a fraction of the cost of regular forces. This holds true in two ways: strategic return in relation to the cost of the investment and; the cost of investment of employing SOF as compared to the cost and scale of effort of employing regular forces.
- Special operations can solve a political problem quickly as well as cheaply.
- Special operations can deny swift military, and hence political, success to the enemy. Because of this special operations can provide strategic utility in all types of conflict.
- Special operations can seize individuals and equipment that are difficult or impossible to reach by regular operations.
- Special operations can impose disproportionate losses on the enemy.

- Special operations can seize the initiative and put the enemy on the defensive. Conducting sabotage and raiding operations in the enemy's rear areas can easily achieve this.
- Special operations can deceive and perhaps immobilize the enemy.
- Special operations can entice the enemy into an overextension of forces.
- Special operations can apply military pressure quietly and perhaps even with some plausible deniability. Special operations can enable a state to apply military pressure when other kinds of military activity are politically impracticable.
- Special operations can find and reach elusive or hard-to-hit targets; they can function as the ultimate "smart weapon" (Gray, 1996, pp. 168-174).

- Expansion of choice: Special operations can expand the options available to political and military leaders and give them the means to apply force flexibly, minimally, and precisely (1996, p. 174).
- Innovation: Special operations can demonstrate new tactical doctrine, equipment, and military methods. In essence, they become a laboratory for innovation. This occurs because of the demanding nature of SOF missions, which push the limits of excellence in military training and equipment (1996, pp. 174-175).
- Morale: Special operations can raise morale and sustain political will. Special operations can personalize conflict and create heroes when the clash of armies becomes too great to engage the imagination. These small-scale and heroic deeds bring war to a level that most people can relate to (1996, pp. 175-176).
- Showcasing of competence: Special operations can enhance the political standing of the country by demonstrating military prowess. The showcasing of SOF military competence can have a deterrent

or coercive effect that can prevent conflict. However, perceived military competence on behalf of the enemy is a prerequisite for SOF being able to have such an effect. If SOF has a reputation for effectiveness, their use or even the announcement of their commitment can help deter (1996, pp. 176-177).

- Reassurance: Special operations can reassure an angry or fearful public or ally that something is being done. In other words, they can serve as politically-expressive blows and act as a safety valve for an angry or frustrated public (1996, p. 177).
- Humiliation of the enemy: Special operations can embarrass an enemy and make him lose face without triggering a much wider war. The employment of SOF can damage an enemy's reputation and thereby achieve a psychological or moral ascendancy (1996, p. 178).
- Control escalation: Special operations can limit the scope and intensity of conflict. Because special operations are small-scale it is easier for a foe to choose a small-scale response, and, therefore, allow the enemy to respond with similar low-level violence (1996, pp. 178-179).
- Shaping the future: Special operations as a contributor to unconventional warfare can help shape the future of political events. Through the conduct of UW, SOF can prepare the political ground in wartime for post-occupation power struggles. Special operations can shape the views of individuals, demonstrate political will and commitment on behalf of those supported, and can alter the cast of players and their relative slate of assets in the politics of a particular country. As Gray states, the proper design of SO allows, "operations of a military or political-psychological nature for the purpose of securing strategic effect on the political level of conflict" (1996, pp. 179-180).

2. Elliot Cohen

In Commandos and Politicians: Elite Military Units in Modern Democracies, Eliot Cohen suggests that elite forces provide strategic utility through their military and political utility. According to Cohen, three criteria define elite units:

> First, a unit becomes elite when it is perpetually assigned special or unusual missions: in particular, missions that are-or seem to be-extremely hazardous. For this reason airborne units have long been considered elite since parachuting is a particular dangerous way of going into battle. Secondly, elite units conduct missions which require only a few men who must meet high standards of training and physical toughness, particularly the latter. Thirdly, an elite unit becomes elite when it achieves a reputation-justified or not-for bravura and success. A compound of envy and admiration puts the final sheen on the image of elite units. (Cohen, 1978, pp. 17-18)

Elite units are often created due to changing military requirements. Also, politically driven/motivated policy changes often indirectly create new requirements for units with special skill sets and capabilities due to a changing political environment.

According to Cohen, elite units provide military utility through performing “specialist functions”, serving a “laboratory role,” and also acting as a “leader nursery.” In combination, these attributes not only benefit the elite units, but also the entire military as tactics, techniques and procedures, doctrine, and advanced leadership skills pioneered and tested in elite units are eventually disseminated to the remainder of the military.

The specialist function is defined as special skills required in order to perform specific types of operations. The focus is not on technological elements, but rather on specialized functions different from those of the ordinary soldier. "Their tasks, then, are non-technical but different from those of the ordinary soldier…" (Cohen, 1978, p. 30). In other words, since the standard infantryman is not capable of conducting the required close quarters marksmanship that may be needed in a hostage-type situation, elite forces with specialized training for this kind of operation must exist. "Elite units often perform tasks which require special training and familiarity with a particular type of operation" (Cohen, 1978, p. 30). In order to perform in this specialist function, elite units tend to maintain a narrow focus. Not only does the ability to conduct this specialist function or certain types of operations provide military utility, but also strategic utility via operational success at the tactical level.

> It is striking how in so many countries these units or their functions are identified by terms such as "Special Forces," "Special Operations," "Special Air Service." They are not, however, specialized in the normal sense of the word. Their specialty consists in being able to perform tasks-guerrilla warfare, counter-insurgency, or now, counter-terrorism-which cannot be performed-or at not at least performed well-by modern military forces because of the very characteristics that make them modern: professionalized officers, conscripted recruits, sophisticated technologies, and complex bureaucracy. (Huntington, 1978, fwd., p. 2)

Cohen argues that elite units are often supported (and eventually protected) because they serve as laboratories for the testing and validation of new weapons systems and

doctrines. “Such units, it is argued, can try out new doctrines, test their validity, and spread the doctrines to the rest of the army” (Cohen, 1978, p. 31). Although there are benefits to be gleaned from this, there has also been a downside.

> The Green Berets, too, have been viewed by their defenders as a laboratory for the development of counterinsurgency techniques--techniques to be adopted by the rest of the U.S. Army. In fact, one of the arguments advanced in 1966 for a reduction of Special Forces strength was that the Green Berets had already fulfilled their laboratory mission--and that henceforth the rest of the army could participate in counterinsurgency operations. (Cohen, 1978, p. 32)

While elite units do, in fact, serve a laboratory role for the testing and validation of various new technologies, the adage “personnel are more important than hardware” cannot be forgotten.

Another way in which elite units provide military utility is that they develop leaders for the rest of the military. “The argument runs as follows: membership in an elite force endows future officers with extra élan and teaches them superior tactical doctrines” (Cohen, 1978, p. 33). The problem with this argument is that often soldiers never leave their elite units, and the ones that do are usually not given the proper representation or “voice” in the conventional units in which they eventually serve. These soldiers are often looked down upon and ostracized, rather than exploited for their knowledge and experience.

Cohen also argues that elite units provide political utility by assisting key decision-makers with forces that can be utilized in situations where there is: “the blurring

of war and peace;" a "politico-military signaling" is required to advance or achieve US interests; and when a "popular symbol" is needed to boost the morale of the military, civilian support for the nation, and/or our friends and allies. Political utility has grown in importance since WWII, thanks in part to the changing political nature of warfare.

The first fundamental change in warfare has been "the blurring of war and peace." We see often, regardless of where the violence is internally or externally generated, whether in a rebellion or a revolutionary form, or the result of a formally declared war. Often, conflict of this sort continues intermittently for an indeterminate period of time, with spurts of varying degrees of fighting interrupting a fragile peace. According to Cohen, this type of warfare is different because the goals of the combatants have changed:

> This new era of warfare differs sharply from that which preceded it. For one thing, territorial questions are less of an issue than previously: current borders have acquired a sanctity unknown in the pre-1945 period…War now focuses increasingly on the question of who shall rule--not what will be ruled over. (Cohen, 1978, p. 45)

Guerrilla and other types of dispersed revolutionary warfare have characterized most post-WWII conflicts.

"Under circumstances of revolutionary or subversive war both sides struggle to mobilize the populace: the prize is popular support, not territory" (Cohen, 1978, p. 45).

The changes in the goals of warfare have resulted in the establishment of elite forces that are able to conduct operations in this kind of politico-military environment.

“Revolutionary or guerrilla war…usually requires the deployment of many smaller units…a small elite unit may be able to perform deniable missions--actions which the government wishes to keep unpublicized” (Cohen, 1978, p. 47).

Cohen adds that, “Small, discrete military actions can be used to signal to a number of audiences (an opposing government, its population, one’s own population) threats, commitments, and intents” (Cohen, 1978, p. 49). Elite units provide utility to the would-be signaler because of the signal sent based on an elite unit’s reputation. This type of signal is often highly publicized to ensure the intended recipient receives the message, and understands the commitment of the signaler. Sensitive signaling operations are usually conducted more for a symbolic or political effect, rather than for a purely military reason (Cohen, 1978). As a result, elite units provide national decision-makers strategic utility.

Lastly, Cohen argues that elite units can raise public morale and serve as “popular symbols.” Often, civilians, as well as members of the military, believe that elite units can provide “brilliant and sudden” military successes. Elite units gain this reputation thanks to their role, and the exploitation of heroic deeds. Elite units provide utility through morale boosting:

> A number of British military authorities, for example, have suggested that even if the Commandos accomplished little militarily, they were invaluable as a morale booster during the dark days that followed the collapse of France. (Cohen, 1978, p. 51)

As Cohen goes on to note, “Societies in a prolonged conflict need heroes, whether the fighter aces of World War I or the Green Berets” (Cohen, 1978, p. 51). These heroes and units can raise public morale, and can also assist with the further mobilization of a society for conflict.

According to Cohen, elite units provide strategic utility based on the aforementioned aspects as they apply to military and political utility. In order that an elite unit survives, never mind exists, and continues to grow in stature and prosperity, it must provide strategic utility and be flexible enough to quickly adapt to current and possible emerging requirements.

D. A RECOMMENDED DEFINITION OF STRATEGIC UTILITY

1. Strategic Utility

For the purposes of this thesis and as a recommended addition to DoD definitional terms: strategic utility as it pertains to SOF is defined as disproportionate national level returns on the small-scale investments of SO. In order to achieve their strategic purpose, SOF have to be uniquely positioned to perform non-traditional political-military roles. We will refer to these non-traditional political-military roles as strategic utility functions. Through our analysis of Gray and Cohen, personal experiences, and requirements of the new National Defense Policy we identify nine strategic utility functions of special operations. This is not to say that SOF can only be used to achieve strategic utility. On the contrary, SOF are also highly capable of providing military utility at the operational and tactical levels as well. However, military utility is not the sole intent of SOF existence. “Special operations forces contribute effectiveness to the

great enterprise of state, either in joint efforts or on autonomous missions, through application of their own distinctive character and virtues" (Gray, 1996, p. 189). This is precisely why SOF should be considered a strategic asset.

Cohen and Gray's concepts of SOF and strategic utility helped us formulate our thoughts on this topic. However, as relevant as their definitions are in the context of the time they were written, they have become dated and must be adjusted in order to better reflect the operational concepts presented in the following chapters. Given the concepts discussed in Chapters IV through VI, we want to highlight the strategic utility functions: heightened global situational awareness, implementers of national power, shaping the future, setting conditions, expansion of choice, economy of force, showcase competence, control of escalation, and boosting morale after reassurance.

- Global situational awareness. In the context of the operational concept presented in Chapter V, SOF can provide a timely and accurate snapshot of national areas of interest simply through a strategy of continuous engagement. This awareness will surface in numerous ways. First, simply posturing forces forward to live in key areas of interest will provide overt and causal awareness about the surroundings/environments and attitudes of a local population. SOF's unique language and cross-cultural communications skills will enable soldiers to gain accurate, real-time and real world experience and information/intelligence that can lead the US to be proactive rather than reactive in problem solving. Second, the conduct of information/intelligence activities with or through indigenous elements (who have key access and placement) will provide additional, more specific situational awareness that otherwise could not be obtained. By operating in a

dispersed manner on a continuous basis throughout the world, SOF will act as “global scouts” who are attuned to US national interests.

- Implementers of national power: SOF not only implements the military element of national power, but can affect and influence the political, economic, and informational elements also. SOF affects the political aspect most when engaged in, or with, countries that have a military leadership. Often in these countries, the military leadership is the political leadership. Thus, SOF have access, placement, and direct interaction and influence with key foreign decision-makers.

  SOF can directly, or indirectly, affect the economic aspect by conducting FID and/or COIN operations that allow a supported government and military to establish a secure environment for future economic growth and prosperity.

  SOF affects the informational aspect by conducting civil affairs and psychological operations, deceptions and diversions, and showcasing competence. SOF can have these effects because of the high quality of the individuals who comprise SOF. The individuals in SOF have attributes that are often disregarded or scorned in conventional military units. These attributes are, but not limited to: advanced military skills, language abilities, cross-cultural awareness, maturity, flexibility/adaptability, and the ability to solve political-military problems in highly complex, unstable environments.

- Shaping the future: Special operations shape the future of individuals, populations, units and militaries through combined military and civic-military activities. During wartime, while conducting UW, SOF shapes the political-military environment for post-conflict/war activities. Other operations ranging from FID, JCETs, JCS exercises, and demining to combined activities, demonstrate the political will and commitment of the US, and the host-nation government. These

activities lay the groundwork at the political and military levels for future interaction if and when required.

- Setting conditions: Special operations set the conditions for strategic success through continuous, worldwide engagement. Providing global situational awareness, controlling escalation, shaping the future, and showcasing competence all set the conditions in case further politico-military activities are necessary in order to support and enhance US National Security Objectives/Foreign Policy. SOF provides decision-makers an instrument that expands their choice(s) as to how, where, and when particular strategic assets should be applied. SOF also set the conditions by conducting Advance Force Operations (AFO) in order to receive follow-on SOF, conventional or a mixed force ratio depending on the environment and the threat.

- Expansion of choice. Special operations expand the options available to both political and military leaders. They do so through the application of minimal, flexible force in a precise manner. SOF provides decision-makers a "one-two punch," and keeps the enemy off-guard as to a precise US response. Having a strong conventional force and a highly capable, unconventional force offers decision-makers an instrument that expands their option of choice as to how, when, and where particular strategic assets should be applied.

- Economy of force: Special operations offer national-level decision-makers an economical solution to political and military problems (either in conventional or unconventional warfare) through the use of limited forces. SOF's unique assets, attributes, and training enable an efficient and effective employment of a limited number of political-military forces in peacetime and in conflicts at any level. SOF can be employed autonomously to conduct a highly political objective or jointly to achieve strategic or military utility in support of conventional operations.

- Showcasing of competence: Special operations can demonstrate a nation's military prowess and abilities. They can serve as a tool for deterrence and/or coercion based on the reputations of the units used. The strategic utility function provided is a result of: the signal sent, an understanding by the recipient of the reputation and capabilities of SOF, and an understanding of the commitment of the signaler. Operations can range from a "show of force" to an announcement that an elite unit will be deployed to conduct operations in support of US National Security objectives.
- Control of escalation. In the game of deterrence and coercion, SOF can provide decision-makers a small-scale response to assist in the control of escalation. SOF can be used given their reputation for being able to bring force to bear. As a means of coercion, SOF can limit the scope and intensity of conflict by presenting a small-scale response and therefore allowing the enemy to respond with a similar low-level response.
- Reassurance/Morale: Special operations can reassure their stakeholders by demonstrating that something is being done; they often serve as, and support, a political statement as much (or more) than a military statement. Special operations usually raise the morale of the population and military, and can sustain the political will for various policies. They also may be conducted to raise the morale of friends and allies, while demoralizing the enemy. The media often portray SOF soldiers and units as heroic and courageous, thereby adding to their reputation and mystique.

E. CONCLUSION

SOF and other elite units were originally established to provide strategic utility and purpose; they were established to conduct specific mission sets that conventional units and other agencies could not. Over time, mission sets have become blurred between SOF and conventional forces, and there has been a hyper-conventionalization of SOF. Hyper-conventionalization

refers to the conduct of conventional operations, enhanced by technological means, and varied tactics, techniques, and procedures different from those employed by conventional units. It also applies to the morphing over time of USSOCOM's organizational focus on kinetic, direct action-type operations, rather than on UW. Raiding and reconnaissance are two examples; the focus on conducting these types of military operations has affected our ability to operate successfully in highly complex, unstable environments.

Generally, there is a lack of understanding among political and military decision-makers about SOF's capabilities and limitations, and how SOF should be utilized to maximize their strategic utility. Political and military decision-makers must first understand the strategic intent of SOF and then refocus and empower SOF to achieve their designed strategic utility functions. If SOF are not utilized properly within the framework of the strategic utility functions described above, the result will often be failure, inefficiency or ineffectiveness, the needless loss of life, or possible foreign policy disasters.

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III. A CASE STUDY ON OPERATIONS IN AFGHANISTAN[1]

A. INTRODUCTION

Afghanistan represents SOF's largest contribution to a military campaign since the Vietnam War. Many consider SOF's performance there to have been the most successful since the permanent formation of these forces, and their reorganization under USSOCOM in 1987. Although SOF executed brilliantly at times during the Afghan campaign, the organizational structure under which they operated limited their strategic utility in combating the U/IT.

This case study will demonstrate SOF's organizational shortfalls and limited strategic utility through lessons learned during the Afghan campaign. Problems and issues identified in Chapter I are examined, and highlight the inadequacies in the current organizational structure of SOF that may prevent them from being as successful as they can be in a U/ITE.

Lessons learned from Phase I (September through December 2001) can provide critical information about SOF's integration with indigenous forces in conventional warfare operations, while lessons learned from Phase II (December 2001/fall of the Taliban through today) illustrate how *not to* conduct operations when conducting fourth generation warfare.

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[1] For additional reading/reference see Major Mark Strong's, "White Paper US/Coalition Military Employment," AFG PH IV, dated October 28, 2002. In the paper, Strong infers that the US/Coalition has suffered because of their failure to recognize the situation as one that has evolved into an insurgency. Failing to recognize the situation as an insurgency, and not utilizing counterinsurgency tactics and techniques, the US/Coalition lack a comprehensive long-term strategy. Strong concludes with recommendations for success in Afghanistan, which he feels if adopted, will ultimately lead to success.

B. PURPOSE

The purpose of this case study is to identify lessons learned from operations in Afghanistan. This case study will specifically focus on the manner and inefficiency with which the US combated the U/IT during wartime, and the US military's inability to understand the fluid U/ITE. The areas of analysis utilized for this case study are: Operational Preparation of the Battlespace (OPB), strategy, Unconventional Warfare (UW) planning and operations, information and intelligence operations, command and control, and the integration of conventional operations similar to those in Operation Anaconda.

The concept of reorganizing/restructuring SOF, and conducting continuous regional engagement will serve to enhance the ability of SOF to contribute to the US effort in the "War on Terror," as described by the "Bush Doctrine" ("The Uses of American Power", 2002), and against other future threats in highly complex, unstable environments.

Future changes will assist US policy makers by establishing a meaningful strategic tool to combat the U/IT in a preemptive manner, and one that will allow for successful and continuous regional engagement as an attempt to preempt the U/IT.

C. AFGHANISTAN

Operations in Afghanistan began during September 2001. They mainly consisted of small elements infiltrating into northern Afghanistan to conduct assessments, and prepare Northern Alliance factions to directly combat the Taliban forces. During October 2001, additional elements of 5th Special Forces Group (Airborne) with attachments; including those from OGAs, trained, advised, and equipped the

Northern Alliance forces. These elements then conducted combat operations with the indigenous forces until the fall of the Taliban in December 2001.

After the fall of the Taliban, US Marines and conventional Army infantry units were deployed to Qandahar. These units became the “tip of the spear” in the fight against remaining Taliban and al-Qaeda elements. These units and their headquarters assumed overall command and control over operations in Afghanistan, and SOF became a supporting element. The following model depicts the level of threat the US/Coalition faced, and changes in US/Coalition responses.

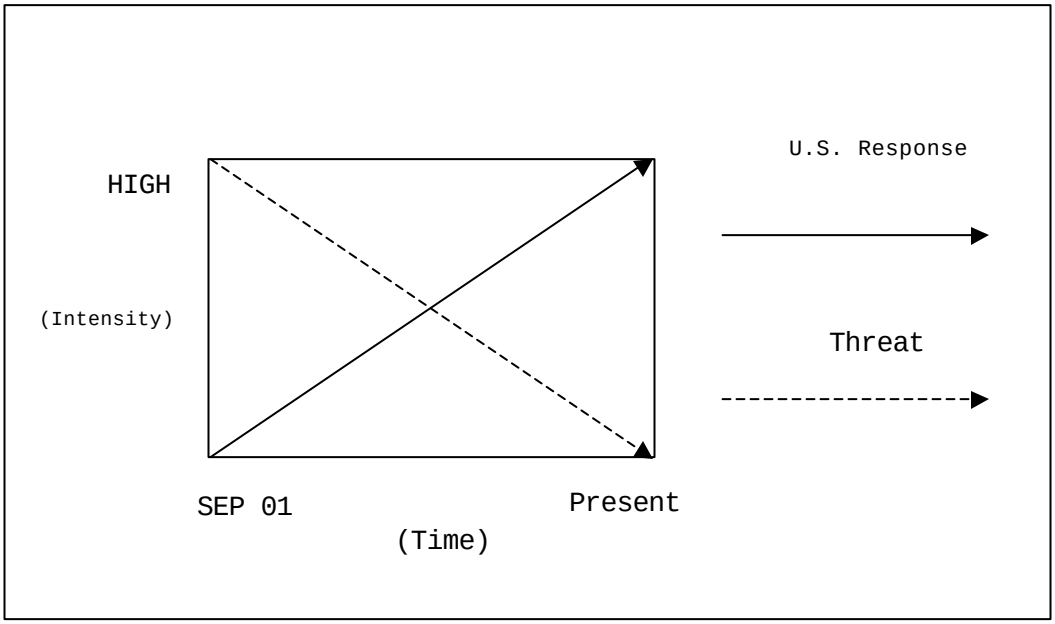

Figure 3.1. A Model of Threat to Response (McCormick, 2002).

As the above model suggests, the US/Coalition response has become more conventional over time while the enemy has become more unconventional (Smucker, 2002). This dichotomous approach to the war in Afghanistan has led to a significant reduction in operational success over time. Few believed that the fall of the Taliban, and the disruption of the al-Qaeda network, would have occurred as rapidly as they did. Having said this, though, the US/Coalition must also recognize that these events did not occur thanks to efficiency and understanding of the problems in Afghanistan, but rather, because of superiority in coordinated airpower from the ground, and the enemy's bad tactical decisions (Wilcox and Wilson, 2002). However, as Goure cautions, an over reliance on airpower in such future operations could ignore a fundamental lesson, the importance of having ground elements.

> A counterintuitive lesson of Afghanistan is the importance of ground power in future conflicts. The experience in Kosovo in the spring of 1999 seemed to some to suggest that wars could be won from the air. While the air component can certainly lead the way in many future conflicts, what Afghanistan demonstrates is that effective ground power will be even more important in the future. (Goure, 2002, p. 2)

Initial US/Coalition responses to actions in Afghanistan appeared to be conducted in a manner designed to efficiently and effectively destroy the enemy; however, actions since December 2001 have reflected an inability to adapt to a continuously changing environment, and a failure to identify and implement an appropriate response to emerging threats.

> While our foes are adapting their ways of war, operating outside the nation-state paradigm, we largely operate as a second generation military trying to fight fourth generation adversaries. We have yet to transition the American military from second generation warfare to third generation warfare-even though both the Army and Marine Corps dallied with maneuver warfare concepts in the 1980s before relapsing into the more comfortable attrition-style warfare. (Wilcox and Wilson, 2002, p. 1)

From the outset, the US/Coalition have attempted to establish a model or template for future operations in support of the war on terror. It is important to understand that although the US/Coalition response during Phase I was conducted mainly by SOF, actions often represents Coalition Support Team (CST) activities rather than "doctrinal" UW. This dichotomy even rears its ugly head in recent SOF literature. In Special Warfare Magazine, an article concerning UW in Afghanistan states,

> The success of the opposition forces not only vindicated the strategic choices made by the US national leadership, but it also demonstrated the power, liability and full spectrum utility of US Army Special Forces and the relevance of SF's role in unconventional warfare, or UW, in the 21st Century. (3/5th SFG[A], 2002, p. 34)

However, what needs to be asked whether SOF were chosen to spearhead this action due to their strategic utility, or was SOF the only option due to their ability to rapidly adapt to fluid and constantly changing environments? At a minimum, the above statement displays SOF's own of lack of understanding about UW, and ignores the differences between UW and CST.

In an U/ITE, SOF must be the force of choice. Simultaneously, SOF can provide strategic utility through

the majority of the utility functions, and prepare the battlespace for follow-on SOF or conventional forces. The conduct of Operational Preparation of the Battlespace sets the conditions for success in highly complex, unstable environments.

D. OPERATIONAL PREPARATION OF THE BATTLESPACE

Operational Preparation of the Battlespace (OPB) is defined as those activities undertaken in order to prepare all the dimensions of the space surrounding the battlefield for operational success. The battlefield is no longer a two dimensional area, but rather an area that includes the battlefield and all space that can influence or affect it. OPB includes, but is not limited to, all information, intelligence, and politico-military activities conducted to influence the battlespace and establish the conditions for success. OPB is conducted to establish an understanding of the problem, and determine what actions must be taken in order to develop the situation and solve the problem in the most efficient manner possible. OPB is the most critical aspect of the targeting process. It must be ongoing due to the changing nature of warfare, and fluidity inherent in all battlespace (Guffy, 2001).

Prior to engaging the Taliban and al-Qaeda in Afghanistan, the US and Coalition partners attempted to conduct OPB in various ways. Other Governmental Agency (OGA) elements infiltrated into Afghanistan, conducted assessments of the situation in various regions and provinces, and coordinated with warlords and key leaders for future operations.

> On the ground in Afghanistan, the CIA's highly secretive Special Activities Division, made up of teams of a half-dozen men each, entered the country on Sept. 27. The 50 officers represented the first sizable US combat force in the country. (Donnelly, 2002, p. 2)

Simultaneously, the US/Coalition gained assistance from countries surrounding Afghanistan. The attempt was made to isolate Afghanistan, and establish lodgments for the support of forces conducting future operations in-country. Actionable information and intelligence had been gathered, Intermediate Staging Bases (ISBs), and air and logistic centers, were established in surrounding countries to support operations ("Diplomatic Ups and Downs," 2001). It thus appeared that the conditions for success were established prior to engagement.

> Afghanistan is a land-locked country. Operations in Afghanistan could not happen without the cooperation from the nations in the area. Pakistan remains a steadfast ally in the fight. Pakistan has provided basing and overflight permission for U.S. and coalition forces. The country has also placed large numbers of troops on its border with Afghanistan to stop al Qaeda and Taliban terrorists from escaping. Pakistan has also shared intelligence with the United States and coalition partners. Uzbekistan – Afghanistan's neighbor to the north - has also provided basing and overflight permission. (Garamone, 2002, p. 1)

Neighboring countries continuously provided assistance to coalition and indigenous forces throughout the Operation Enduring Freedom campaign.

Although the US/Coalition had initial success in preparing the battlespace, a clearly identified problem is that concurrent Foreign Internal Defense (FID) operations were not coordinated for, or executed within, countries

such as Pakistan. Although diplomatic efforts were made in order to seal off the Afghan/Pakistan border region, combined military and law enforcement efforts should have been conducted in order to ensure mission success. Prior to engaging the Taliban and al-Qaeda, the US/Coalition should have made every effort to seal off and isolate Afghanistan by deploying SOF elements in September 2001 to Pakistan to train, advise, and assist its army and paramilitary forces in order to prevent Taliban and al-Qaeda from escaping into the country through known egress routes. From October 2001 to September 2002, the Taliban and al-Qaeda used the same routes that were used during the Soviet occupation (Hurst, 2002). The US/Coalition knew of these routes and other numerous safe havens along the Afghan/Pakistan border, and did not begin attacking them until April 2002 (Naeem, 2002). Most actions that have taken place since April 2002 have been raids against known safe havens, with immediate exfiltration upon completion of the mission (Naeem). Often, these actions offended the local Pakistanis because they view the coalition forces as invaders of their territory. If elements had been working with these people conducting continuous FID operations, it is possible that the indigenous people might be more understanding of Coalition actions, and possibly helpful in providing high resolution information and intelligence that would allow these (and future) operations to succeed.

During Operation Anaconda, Special Reconnaissance (SR) elements observed resupplies of men and materiel into the target area from Pakistan. Predators then validated these sightings, but nothing was done to strike at these points, only at the men and equipment that were coming from them.

The Coalition attacked targets rather than the supporting mechanisms in its effort to defeat the men and equipment infiltrating and exfiltrating the target area. The Coalition did not strike at these areas at the time because of a prior agreement with Pakistan concerning cross-border operations into that country (OGA Representative, 2002).

For future success, the US/Coalition must ensure that supporting operations are conducted in neighboring countries to fully allow accomplishment of regional and strategic goals. This will require a unique blending of the elements of national power. It is evident that international terrorists do not recognize borders, and operate freely in their regions of choice. International borders and other self-imposed limitations prevent the US/Coalition from establishing optimal conditions for successful operations. The enemy understands these constraints and uses them to his benefit. The enemy in Afghanistan often operated from safe havens similar to those used by the North Vietnamese in Laos and Cambodia during the Vietnam War. Future operations require the denial of safe havens to facilitate mission accomplishment.

E. STRATEGY

Initially, the US/Coalition strategy was one in which the war was fought mainly with indigenous forces, SOF, OGA assistance and overwhelming fire support from the air. Small, distributed units on the ground coordinated and synchronized the efforts of the indigenous forces which eventually led to the downfall of the Taliban regime.

> SOF personnel have proven uniquely suited for this networked, distributed warfare. Special Forces (SF) teams with the embedded Air Force air-control elements provide a tactical force

> with a broad range of skills and the maturity to *execute* mission orders without detailed oversight. They can move, shoot, and communicate while employing supporting fires from any source-land, sea, or airpower from US or coalition forces. SOF teams can do this because they are interoperable. (Jogerst, 2002, p. 1)

Although a strategic bombing campaign was initiated, it failed to achieve the desired effects. Once the Taliban were "defeated," strategy changed and conventional units were brought into theater to defeat the "last remaining pockets of resistance." What is important about this is that when the war was fought with direct confrontational tactics by both sides, there were no conventional units involved; a conventional fighting enemy was attacked by unconventional forces coordinating indigenous forces and air support from the ground, and success was achieved. At the height of US/Coalition involvement, there were approximately 250 Special Forces soldiers in Afghanistan until the fall of the Taliban (Phase I) (5th SFG[A]). Since the fall of the Taliban (Phase II), the conflict in Afghanistan appears to have changed from a war of movement (conventional) to a guerrilla war that is in the latent and incipient phases (unconventional).

Ironically, the US/Coalition have attempted to conduct an unconventional war/counterinsurgency with conventional forces and conventional commanders during Phase II. From March 2002 to September 2002, conventional forces conducted more frequent operations than indigenous forces with their Special Forces counterparts (Hurst, 2002). As of 26 September 2002, there were approximately 14,000 soldiers deployed to Afghanistan. Of these, 2,000 were SOF. Of the 2,000 SOF soldiers deployed, approximately 1,000 were

trained in Unconventional Warfare (UW) or counterinsurgency techniques (Operation Enduring Freedom, 2002). An even more revealing statistic is that, on a daily basis, fewer than 200 soldiers were conducting continuous operations (Hurst, 2002). The US/Coalition were attempting to fight an unconventional war with conventional forces, even while unconventionally trained units and their commanders were present. It seems evident that unconventional forces that have been specifically trained to conduct this type of warfare have not been used to their maximum potential. It seems fair to conclude that this is one reason why limited progress has been made during Phase II.

F. UNCONVENTIONAL WARFARE

> Unconventional Warfare encompasses a broad spectrum of military and paramilitary operations, normally of long duration, predominately conducted by indigenous or surrogate forces who are organized, trained, equipped, supported, and directed in varying degrees by an external source. It includes guerrilla warfare and other direct offensive, low visibility, covert, or clandestine operations, as well as the indirect activities of subversion, sabotage, intelligence activities, and evasion and escape. (Joint Publication 3-05.5)

The UW aspect of operations in Afghanistan has received vast amounts of media coverage. Most Americans have seen footage of SOF soldiers riding horses or in Sport Utility Vehicles attacking the Taliban with indigenous forces. These soldiers have been efficiently and effectively training, advising, equipping and assisting the Northern Alliance and other factions.

> The war in Afghanistan and the larger global war against terrorism are wars of people. The key to defeating the Taliban and al Qaeda lies in coordinating and supporting the Afghan opposition

> forces in their fight for their country. The language skills, cultural orientation, maturity, and adaptability of SOF enabled the joint force commander to effectively co-opt Afghan anti-Taliban forces and incorporate them into his campaign. Their success is a result of human action and initiative in employing an extremely wide range of hardware-from horse cavalry to joint direct attack munitions (JDAM)-to conduct the campaign. (Jogerst, 2002, p.2)

Prior to these actions, SOF elements conducted coordination and planning with the OGA to ensure that all activities were synchronized. The OGA made the initial coordination with the indigenous leaders, and then additional OGA members and SOF soldiers infiltrated their Areas of Responsibility (AOR) and initiated operations. “On September 27, one of the CIA units, drawn from the so-called Special Activities Division, established a bridgehead for the U.S. military special operations forces that followed” (Wolf, 2001, p. 1).

Initially, the AORs that these elements went into were anti-Taliban, and OGA and SOF elements were welcomed. As operations progressed, OGA and SOF elements attempted to conduct similar activities in former Taliban strongholds, and met severe resistance. These areas were mainly along the Afghan/Pakistani border, and south of Qandahar southward to the Spin Bolduc region (Hurst, 2002).

Interagency planning and preparation for operations during Phase II appear to have not been synchronized as well as those during Phase I. During Phase II, the OGA focused on the future planning and preparation for the conduct of UW. A limited area assessment was done, and then the Department of Defense (DoD) and OGA elements infiltrated the area (Hurst, 2002). Because the OGA has

the authority to conduct coordination with faction leaders and then pay them for their services and DoD does not, the OGA has been pushed to the forefront for UW planning and execution.

> One Green Beret officer, speaking on the condition of anonymity, says two or three CIA officers supplemented his unit as it aided anti-Taliban fighters. The CIA officers brought with them language proficiency, interrogation skills and Afghanistan expertise that the commandos could not match. They also had clearance to do some things the soldiers could not: hand out large satchels of cash and call in weapons drops to buy information and allegiance from Afghan fighters. (Weisman, 2002, p. 4)

OGA "Pilot Teams" infiltrated areas and conducted the assessments. Based on the pilot team's observations, decisions were made both to support or not support certain warlords in contested areas where appropriate, and to provide either lethal or non-lethal aid.

> CIA agents also have been trading favors and distributing blocks of cash in Pakistani and US currency to warlords who do their bidding, both on the battlefield and in the cities of Kandahar, Jalalabad, Mazar-e-Sharif, and Taloqan, according to US intelligence officials in Washington, Afghan warlords, and international aid officials in the region. (Donnelly, p. 1)

Once the decision was made to support the indigenous forces, Special Forces Operational Detachments Alphas (SFODAs) and attachments were infiltrated to train, advise, and assist these factions to conduct combat operations (OGA, 2002). The paradox is that while the OGA has the authority and responsibility to conduct these activities, it does not have the institutional basis or the assets to maintain these types of operations. In fact, hundreds of

SOF personnel were temporarily attached to the OGA in order for their plan to succeed. These personnel were mainly medical and communications specialists, but others were also attached due to their specific skills (Andrews, 2002). Recently, the OGA has announced that a larger paramilitary force, or "ground branch," will be established to meet the challenges of UW.

> The CT center, as it is known, began developing a much larger paramilitary force that drew upon the Defense Department's special operations forces; dozens of special operations forces were temporarily redirected for the effort. The center had fewer than 300 people before Tenet's tenure, but has grown to more than 900, including some hired after the Sept. 11 air attacks. The CIA, in all, received $1.6 billion in funds as part of the $40 billion post-attack special appropriation passed by Congress. The money will be used to hire nearly 700 new CIA employees, many of them to engage in counter terrorism. (Donnelly, 2002, p. 4)

After the completion of combat operations in various areas, and once the indigenous force(s) have completed services requested of them by the OGA, the OGA and DoD move on to do the same thing in different contested areas (OGA Representative, 2002). Until September 2002, only small areas were being concentrated on, and a continuous presence was not being maintained throughout contested regions.

One identified problem with these interagency operations is that the OGA and their SOF counterparts have different mission focuses and priorities. The OGA has its prioritized High Value Target List, while SOF elements are focused on training, advising, and assisting the indigenous forces to conduct combat operations (Wisecarver, 2002). Plans have been implemented to demobilize portions of these

local forces, and/or to incorporate them into the Afghan National Army. Training of these forces has been conducted by elements of 3d Special Forces Group (Airborne) and 19th Special Forces Group (Airborne) in the vicinity of Kabul (Sherwood, 2002).

A likely problem in the near future is that these former supported elements might well conduct operations against their local pre-war enemies. Essentially, the Afghans will resume their own internal vendettas that will recur now that the Taliban have been deposed, and these elements have been armed and equipped.

> The CIA has asked military forces to provide Afghan warlords with weapons that the Pentagon fears will inevitably be used against U.S. forces or the U.S.-backed government in Kabul. In late April, a warlord in eastern Afghanistan, Padshah Khan Zadran, whose militia has U.S. financial backing, rained rockets on the town of Gardez and killed at least 25, mainly women and children. (Weisman, 2002, p. 3)

More specifically, Afghan militias have been trained and equipped to conduct operations in all terrain and weather, which means that they are fully capable of engaging one another in a truly effective civil war.

G. INFORMATION AND INTELLIGENCE OPERATIONS

Information and intelligence operations have been mainly conducted by utilizing technological superiority. But, technology does not allow ties to be established at the “grass roots” level in order to build rapport. This, in, turn prevents the establishment of networks designed to elicit information and intelligence in order to “see” the enemy. The US/Coalition focus had been to use HUMINT to validate technological systems, rather than using trained

human resources, and then technology to validate information gathered from trained human sources (Patrick, 2002). Predator systems gathered most of the information, and then, when possible, this was vetted by human sources

During direct confrontations with the enemy, Predators conducted overflights of the battlespace, allowing the commander and other decision-makers to see “real-time” actions and possibly to identify future targets. Predator systems have also provided coverage in areas that are too difficult or risky to send SR elements into. A benefit of this system is that armed Predators have engaged numerous targets, in contrast to what occurred in the past, when these targets could not have been serviced due to the unavailability of having “real-time” information. Although this seems to be a clear advantage, occasionally targets have been engaged that were not validated as enemy targets.

> In February, an unmanned drone operated by the CIA blasted a tall man clad in a white robe thought to be bin Laden in the mountains of eastern Afghanistan. Officially, the Defense Department said the strike was justified. Privately, a U.S. official says, Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld groused that the CIA was being reckless. ‘God help anyone over 5-foot-4 in that country,’ Rumsfeld said. (Weisman, 2002, p. 2)

Predator has also conducted battle damage assessment and identified targets that needed to be reengaged.

Human intelligence (HUMINT) has been another area the US/Coalition must work to improve. Currently, the gathering of HUMINT is mainly coordinated and conducted by the OGA.

> With up to 200 operatives there at any given time, Afghanistan represents the CIA's largest on-ground military presence since Vietnam, yet it has received slight public scrutiny. The spy agency has not received much credit for successes, nor much blame for failures, because few know what it is doing. (Donnelly, 2002, p. 2)

Initially, the OGA and other coalition agencies focused on the targeting of various warlords and factions with whom they sought to conduct combined operations against the enemy. For instance, early in the war, Newsweek correspondent Douglas Waller was able to write, "more than a hundred CIA operatives are now in Afghanistan, collecting intelligence on Osama bin Laden and urging warlords to turn against the Taliban" (Waller, 2001, p. 2).

Because human assets need to be dispersed throughout contested areas to establish sources and contacts in order to build networks to "see" the enemy, it only makes sense that trained Special Forces soldiers should conduct the gathering of tactical and operational information when possible. This is one of the standard sub-missions of UW for Special Forces. The US/Coalition were not conducting these types of activities (up to September 2002), and the problems at the "grass roots" level had neither been fully identified nor resolved (Patrick, 2002). Nevertheless, once the enemy is identified, he and his networks can be targeted and eliminated. The most effective way to do this is on the ground with human resources that can gain the trust of those they are working with. This takes time and patience, and there is no technological means around it. Ideally then, human and technological assets should be used in concert, where each is used to validate the other.

In order for HUMINT to be successful, the collectors must live in and amongst the populace. Key population centers within the enemy's center of gravity must be targeted. Networks must be established to out-network the terrorists. This was being partially attempted. The problem has been that SFODAs are housed with their indigenous counterparts outside of towns in these contested areas, rather than interspersed within the populace within the areas (Hurst, 2002).

H. COMMAND STRUCTURE

The change in US/Coalition strategy from unconventional to conventional has been more than evident in the metamorphous of the command structure over time. During Phase I, Colonel John Mulholland, the 5th Special Forces Group (Airborne) commander assumed responsibility for the ground war in Afghanistan. He was the senior ranking Special Forces officer in theater, and made tactical and operational decisions as required (3/5th SFG[A], 2002). Colonel Mulholland and his approximately 250 SOF operators planned and executed a brilliant campaign that resulted in the fall of the Taliban, and set the conditions that allowed Afghan and Coalition forces to establish lodgments in Afghanistan. Once the Taliban regime fell, other more conventional, senior ranking officers were brought into Afghanistan to oversee operations. This caused the US/Coalition decision-making loop to expand, and made reaction to enemy activities slower.

Initially during Phase II (December 2001 through March 2002), the SOF command structure in Afghanistan was in a state of disarray. Prior to April 1, 2002, there were two

different task forces conducting operations. Task Force K-Bar, headquartered at Qandahar Airfield, conducted SR and Direct Action (DA) planning and execution. Task Force Dagger, headquartered in Uzbekistan and later at Bagram Airfield, planned and executed Unconventional Warfare (UW) operations (Wisecarver, 2002). Due to the fact there were two different commands, SR and DA operations could never fully support UW operations because of the inability of these headquarters to synchronize activities. Although SR and DA were supposed to be supporting efforts for UW, this was difficult to effect because of the lack of synchronization between commands (Wisecaver, 2002). These identified problems were not rectified until the establishment of a Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force-Afghanistan (CJSOTF-A). On April 1, 2002, CJSOTF-A was activated to consolidate SOF under a unified command (Sherwood, 2002).

I. OPERATION ANACONDA

> Afghan fighters joined with U.S. and allied warplanes and special forces troops to attack hundreds of suspected al-Qaeda and Taliban holdouts in eastern Afghanistan, near Gardez. The mission was bolstered by the use of a 2,000-pound "thermobaric bomb," designed to deprive caves of oxygen. One American soldier is killed and more than 16 are injured as the allied forces meet unexpectedly fierce resistance. (CNN, 2002, p. 1)

Operation Anaconda clearly highlighted the inadequacies of the SOF and conventional command structures. The operation was planned well by all units involved, and the plan was relatively simple: Coalition forces were to conduct SR, conventional forces would be deployed to establish blocking positions, and indigenous

forces with their Special Forces counterparts would clear the targeted area (Sherwood, 2002). The problem with planning was that each unit planned and prepared well for its portion of the operation, but the entire plan was never synchronized or rehearsed in any way to identify shortfalls or possible contingencies (Wisecarver, 2002).

As soon as Operation Anaconda began, indigenous forces received casualties and were forced to halt their assault. Due to their casualties and their limited ability to resupply, the indigenous forces then returned to their home bases. Leaders at all levels were consequently forced to adopt a plan in which US/Coalition conventional units, rather than the planned indigenous forces, would conduct the operation.

> U.S. ground forces take the lead in the battle as the allied fighting force grows to 2,000. Seven U.S. soldiers are killed in a firefight after enemy rocket-propelled grenade fire downs an MH-47 Chinook helicopter and forces a second to land. Seven U.S. soldiers are killed. Allied Afghan fighters encounter fierce resistance from the Taliban and al-Qaeda forces, whose number includes Arabs, Uzbeks and Chechens. (CNN, 2002, p. 2)

Also, three of four Apaches providing air support were non-mission capable due to enemy ground fire. After approximately 36 hours, friendly forces pulled away from the targeted area while air power carpet-bombed and dropped numerous Blu-82’s (daisy-cutters). Once the area was suppressed, conventional units were again inserted and ultimately completed the mission (Hurst, 2002).

Operation Anaconda was deemed a success by military leaders and the press alike due to the high "body count." But despite the body count being high, only targets rather than supporting mechanisms were attacked. It appeared that numerous enemy soldiers and supplies moved back into Pakistan to prepare for future operations against the Coalition (Hurst, 2002). In fact, almost daily since Operation Anaconda, the Special Forces camp in Khowst and other contested areas have been struck by raiding parties that move across the border, establish remote firing systems, and then depart back to their safe havens. Although limited actions have been taken to interdict these raiding parties, the local populace views the situation as one that the Afghan government and its institutions cannot effectively resolve because effective measures have not been taken to eliminate the enemy (Hurst, 2002).

J. CONCLUSION

The US/Coalition effort in Afghanistan has been successful thus far in that the Taliban regime is no longer in power, and the al-Qaeda network appears to have been disrupted.

Initially, the US/Coalition conducted the war with a low cost/high benefit plan. Minimal forces were used with indigenous forces as a force multiplier. These forces provided strategic utility through economy of force and expansion of choice for key decision-makers.

As the conflict progressed, however, strategy changed and the US/Coalition have been engaged in a high-cost/low benefit endeavor. SOF strategic utility has been minimized because plans are conducted for short-term resolutions rather than long-term effects. For operations to succeed

in similar U/ITEs, SOF must remain in charge of operations, and the US/Coalition must allow indigenous forces to conduct operations with low visibility assistance. Most importantly, simultaneous considerations and efforts to build and assist institutions that the people can rely on must occur.

In Afghanistan, there are few institutions that have been established that the Afghani people believe are credible. The US/Coalition will never be able to solve the problem if operations are not conducted with established Afghani institutions. Ultimately, too, one aim should be to strengthen the institutions' credibility, while simultaneously finding and destroying the enemy.

For example, one way in which SOF could better provide strategic utility (as of this writing) is in HUMINT operations. SOF must be dispersed throughout the population centers, and conduct information and intelligence operations as a *primary* mission in support of UW. From these information/intelligence operations, conventional force can be brought to bear when required. Special Forces soldiers are trained to do this, and could easily gain "force protection" related information. These activities would allow the enemy to be "seen," and would grant the US/Coalition, rather than the enemy, the initiative.

This would also allow the OGA and other Coalition agencies to focus on national and strategic level information and intelligence operations. A major concern in the future is once the OGA disengages from Afghanistan, the mechanisms will not be in place to continue information and intelligence operations (Patrick, 2002).

Overall, SOF has performed well during the Afghan campaign. Even with institutional and organizational deficiencies, SOF has provided limited strategic utility functions. Unfortunately though, the current organizational structure of SOF (within DoD), did not allow them to maintain control of operations in theater. Throughout Phase II, SOF had to work within and through a conventional command structure that greatly reduced SOF efficiency. "The 'Big Army' did not want a Brigadier General (SOC) in charge of operations in Afghanistan. The CFLCC Commander (Lieutenant General) did not have a problem, but was forced to have a Major General (Division Commander) in charge of operations in theater" (Hurst, 2003).

Ideally, a SOF commander would have remained in charge of operations, and would have been supported by conventional commanders/forces as required. Under the current organizational structure, this is not even an option.

Although SOF provided numerous strategic utility functions during Phase I of the conflict, they were hindered and suppressed during Phase II because of the conventional command structure and forces that were brought into country to prosecute the war. This clearly displays the US military's lack of understanding of the U/ITE and UW requirements.

The environment and the enemy must dictate the required response and command structure. Based on these factors and an understanding of capabilities and limitations, the proper force-mix ratio and command structure can be selected to provide the most efficient

means for mission accomplishment. In this case, SOF should have been in overall charge of operations in theater.

Unfortunately, it is easy to imagine a “neo-Taliban” movement attempting to regain power under the cover of a nationalist, civil, ethnic or other type of struggle within Afghanistan, or even neighboring Pakistan, since this is really where the Taliban came from. US/Coalition operations may eventually become a unifying factor for the Afghan people in that it may impel them to make every effort to rid their country of the Coalition should local conditions not improve. Indeed, it may only be a matter of time before the Afghans view the US/Coalition forces as an occupation force that must be dealt with similarly to the Soviets.

The Afghanistan Case Study highlights organizational and institutional deficiencies in SOF and DoD that hinder SOF’s ability to provide strategic utility. Because these deficiencies exist, we recommend re-engineering SOF from the ground up. Chapter IV provides a concept for mission-based units that will reduce the current mission redundancy within SOF, allows UW to become the primary mission focus, and outlines a new command structure for the employment of SOF. Chapter V will provide a concept describing the manner in which SOF should be employed. The concepts provided in Chapters IV and V, if adopted, would allow SOF to provide strategic utility, and ensure that deficiencies highlighted in this case study are negated in the future.

We believe if SOF looks and operates as exhibited in these chapters, combating the U/ITE in the future will be greatly simplified, and SOF will maintain and increase

their ability to provide the strategic utility functions described in Chapter II.

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IV. RE-ENGINEERING SOF FROM THE GROUND UP

> Joint Publication 1-02, Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms, defines concepts as "A notion or statement of an idea, expressing how something might be done or accomplished, that may lead to an accepted procedure".

A. INTRODUCTION

In order for SOF to reach their strategic apex and provide the nation with true strategic utility, SOF first must look internally to improve their organization and to capitalize on their strengths to meet the requirements of current and future national defense policies. In this chapter, we provide a concept for re-engineering SOF's internal organization based on mission units, among other things. These new mission units, combined with SOF culture, traits, and attributes, are the building blocks we use for developing our concept of a new SOF organization. We address regional commands and their AORs, the need for modular organizations, and how all of this fits together with the new mission units to yield a re-engineered organization.

Restructuring SOF in this manner represents a drastic redesign. But we believe this is needed to eliminate redundancy of effort and decrease unproductive unit rivalries. Bearing in mind that the purpose of this thesis is first to argue for making SOF a separate service, here we only focus on changes internal to SOF, while the concept of making SOF a separate service will be presented in Chapter VI.

B. SOF AND UW; GETTING BACK TO OUR ROOTS

> There is much potential work out there for a UW force, and there will continue to be a wide variety of unconventional challenges. Indeed, the number and degree of possible involvements is limited only by resources and national-policy considerations. But meeting those challenges requires a capability to conduct those poorly defined forms of engagement here termed UW, or unconventional warfare. However, this capacity does not come cheaply, and it may mean heavy expense in areas where the Pentagon prefers not to spend its money, training personnel in non-military skills. (Adams, 1998, p. 297)

Since the fall of the Berlin Wall and the collapse of the Soviet Union, the United States has been faced with ambiguous conflict situations where violence is always possible, and at times expected. These types of situations were obvious in recent interventions in the former Yugoslavia, Kosovo, and Afghanistan. These ambiguous conflict situations require forces that are trained and prepared to conduct unconventional warfare. Even though we have become embroiled in a number of these situations since 1988, lessons learned have not adjusted SOF doctrine or mission focus. "Doctrine for the conduct of unconventional warfare did not advance markedly during the 1990s and most special operations-doctrine remained firmly fixed on conventional missions" (Adams, 1998, p. 287). We believe unconventional warfare training and operations must move to the forefront of SOF roles and functions if these forces truly are going to provide strategic utility. In his article, "The New Asymmetry: Unconventional Warfare and Army Special Forces", Dr. Keith Dickson notes that "the strategic situation in which the U.S. finds itself in the

post-Cold War world has created the need for us to recast our UW capabilities to fit the requirements of asymmetric warfare" (2001, p. 17).[2]

Unfortunately, SOF has focused on a mixture of conventional and unconventional roles and functions, and this has hindered organizational abilities to deal with problems that are closer to a political condition or situation, rather than ones which require a purely military type of solution. SOF has continued to attempt to conduct a wide array of mission types. But, as Adams states, "the fact that a unit can manage to accomplish a task does not mean that it is the best suited unit or that training for peripheral tasks is the best use of its time" (1978, p. 308). Currently, most SOF elements within USSOCOM focus on similar mission sets and priorities. Defining the blurred relationship between Rangers and SF, Dr. Anna Simons writes, "The rationale begins to build for why some SF commanders have gone out of their way to encourage their teams to train harder for the Rangeresque components of warfare. Their reasoning is that they are just being practical; SF will continue to be funded so long as it proves itself useful" (1997, p.214). This ultimately causes redundancy, mission overload, and inefficiency. Furthermore, these mission sets and priorities overlap with

[2] Dr. Dickson notes that even though UW has been steadily de-emphasized since Vietnam, SF has retained an organizational structure that is composed of tactical units whose operations produce strategic effects and that SF remains best suited by organization, culture and training to adopt traditional UW concepts into tools of asymmetric warfare. Therefore, he suggests that UW becomes SF's sole mission and reason for existence. Further, he provides a new definition of UW operations and concludes this new UW could be a realistic and viable means of employing the military and political aspects of national power in pursuit of U.S. strategy.

those of the conventional forces, and actually undermine the unconventional warfare capability of SOF.

Because of the overlap of mission sets and priorities between elements of SOF and the conventional military, SOF has been marginalized to some degree and misused. According to Adams, “One obvious conclusion is that the overlap between light and SOF missions will very quickly lead to the use of SOF to fill in for the absent or very over-stressed light forces…this might give credence to the old notion that SOF is no more than light infantry with air and naval support” (1998, p. 294). This overlap resulted in the misuse of SOF in Afghanistan when national assets and other SOF elements provided reconnaissance for the 101st Airborne Division and the 10th Mountain Division during Operation Anaconda. Most of these reconnaissance missions were ones that should have been conducted by division or corps long-range surveillance units who are better trained and equipped than the majority of SOF elements for these types of missions.

Currently, the only SOF-exclusive missions are UW, counter terrorism (CT), and counter-proliferation (CP). Because of this, most decision-makers regard SOF as part of the conventional military, and the concepts presented in Chapter II on strategic utility are not even considered. Adams states, “It is far too easy to envision the Joint Chiefs, at some not too distant point, declaring that SOF are now fully integrated into all aspects of the armed forces and there is no need for an extensive separate command” (1998, p. 298). This above statement must be taken seriously because the uniqueness of SOF and their ability to provide strategic utility have been eroded over

time. Ironically, as SOF become more hyper-conventionalized they erode their own self worth in terms of strategic utility and uniqueness. SOF's becoming more hyper-conventionalized has created a blurring between SOF-specific and conventional operations, the result of which has caused SOF to move away from their unique mission sets and to become more conventional. This is, in part, because SOF has conventionalized itself in order to survive. Adams further explains,

> The more that SOF become simply an elite conventional force, the easier this argument is to make. Because of the association with 'unconventional warfare' in the past, SOF were often marginalized. By posturing themselves as part of the team, making themselves useful to the conventional forces, SOF have largely changed this perception; but in doing they also diminish the rationale for having a separate command, and especially separate funding. (1998, p. 298)

Over time, SOF has taken on just about any mission set in order to prove their worth to the conventional military, Congress, and key decision-makers. This has perpetuated the myth that there is simply no significant difference between SOF and the conventional military, and is why arguments are often made that Marines or light infantry units can conduct the same missions as SOF even when these include UW or counter-terrorism mission profiles.

In order for SOF to regain its uniqueness and provide strategic utility, mission sets must be streamlined and adjusted to the abilities of specific mission units. If this is not done, the SOF community will continue to accept almost any mission as one at which it can succeed, and will eventually marginalize itself to the point of extinction.

C. MAKING UW THE FIRST PRIORITY

> There is, and always has been, a field of military activity that can be called 'unconventional warfare.' That is, warfare that does not fit the conventional model and is not best prosecuted by force organized, train, equipped, etc. for conventional warfare. But, by the same token, current SOF missions and units do not always lend themselves to this role (Adams, 1998, pp. 301-302).

For SOF to once again provide strategic utility, their ability to conduct UW must be moved to the forefront of mission sets and priorities. Prior to September 11th 2001 UW was assigned number nine out of nine on USSOCOM's prioritized list of missions. Since then, it has only been elevated to number five behind CT, DA, SR, and CP (Maxwell, 2003). Even within SF, the US's premier UW force, "the principal SF missions have increased from five to seven. In addition to UW they are: FID; DA; SR; combating terrorism, or CBT; counterproliferation, or CP; and information operations, or IO. Increasing the number of missions is definitely taking SF down the wrong path" (Skinner, 2002, p. 20). The current mix of conventional and unconventional missions and focus, spread throughout the community, results in redundant and inefficient abilities and capabilities that force units to fall back on the conventional warfighting model in order to keep up. Currently, SOF has nine principal missions and seven collateral activities.

Figure 4.1: SOF Missions and Collateral Activities (Special Operations Forces Posture Statement 1998, pp. 3-4)

SOF Missions and Collateral Activities

- **Missions**
  - Combating Terrorism (CBT)
  - Counterproliferation (CP)
  - Direct Action (DA)
  - Special Reconnaissance (SR)
  - Unconventional Warfare (UW)
  - Foreign Internal Defense (FID)
  - Civil Affairs (CA)
  - Psychological Operations (Psyops)
  - Information Operatioans (IO)
- **Collateral Activities**
  - Coalition Support
  - Combat Search and Rescue (CSAR)
  - Counterdrug Activities (CD)
  - Countermine Activities (CM)
  - Humanitarian Assistance (HA)
  - Security Assistance (SA)
  - Special Activities

Figure 4.1. SOF Missions and Collateral Activities. From: Special Operation Forces Posture Statement 1998, pp. 3-4.

Based on these current mission sets and priorities, it is easy to conclude that the SOF community must assumes responsibility for this mixed list as representative of the effort needed to justify their existence, and remain competitive for resources vis a vis the remainder of the military. Unfortunately, UW and special activities are often shunned by most of the SOF community precisely because they are less conventional, and are thus misunderstood by most in the military, as well as by key-decision makers. But these are the very mission sets that must be treated as priorities in order for SOF to retain their expertise in the areas that only SOF are qualified to do, and to prove themselves special and unique.

> Unconventional warfare missions are those which include 'special' activities that are not part of conventional warfighting. This is what makes them 'special.' The other group of missions is those which are more-or-less conventional

> activities but which are 'special' because they are done at a very high level of proficiency and often in very difficult circumstances. (Adams, 1998, p. 304)

SOF's ability to conduct UW is what truly makes them special and unique. However, their ability to conduct hyper-conventional operations (CT, surgical strikes, airfield seizures, etc) given their unique equipment and increased proficiency when compared to conventional forces also renders SOF a strategic asset. If SOF does not do a better job of concentrating on what they alone can do, they is likely to be increasingly over-conventionalized, thus eroding their proficiency at UW.

D. MISSION-BASED UNITS

To reduce redundancy and inefficiency within SOF, we propose the following unit-to-mission realignments (See Figure 4.2: Proposed Mission Based-Units). These realignments will allow SOF units to focus on one specific mission set, thereby reducing mission redundancy and increasing specialist functions. Speaking specifically about SF, Dr. Dickson writes, "UW would have to become the sole missions of SF – the reason for its existence" suggesting this notion of unit-to-mission alignment (2001, p. 18).[3] These realignments will also grant SOF regional commanders the ability to employ a modular and flexible

[3] Dr. Dickson continues, "Achieving this would require a redirection of doctrinal concepts and a return to the ethos of the warrior as artisan. Versatile and agile, the asymmetric fighter embodied by the SF soldier must be able to employ combat skills…and to train irregular forces. But the SF soldier must be equally skilled in the political, psychological, technological, and intelligence-collection techniques that are the primary weapons of asymmetric warfare. The SF soldier must have a thorough appreciation of the roles that ethnic and nationalist ideologies play in the area of operations, so that he will be able to exploit or neutralize them. He must be able to work effectively in urban environments, either unilaterally or through surrogates, across the spectrum of conflict" (pp. 14-19).

force unilaterally or jointly in support of conventional operations(as will be addressed below). Finally, these realignments will allow the SOF community to meet its intended strategic purpose through the regional engagement concept proposed in Chapter V.

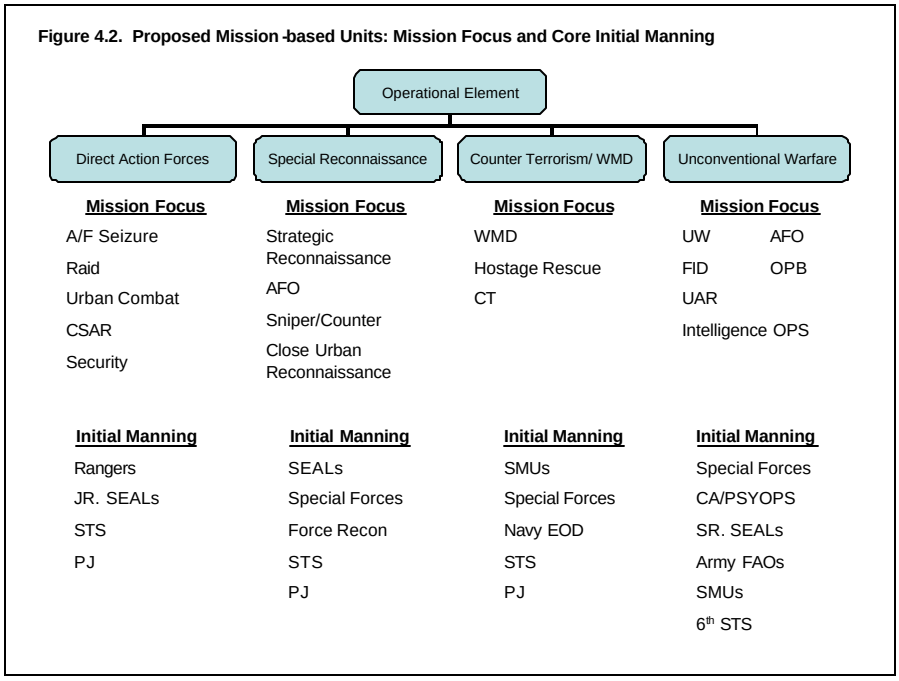


Figure 4.2. Proposed Mission-Based Units: Mission Focus and Core Initial Manning.

The realignment depicted above in Figure 4.2 can be accomplished by reshuffling our current organization, based on expertise and experiences, to create four mission-based units. This reshuffling would accomplish several things. First, the overall number of separate and distinct units within SOF would be greatly reduced from approximately thirteen to four. Second, the number of commands that support these units would be reduced as well. Third, as a product of having fewer units and fewer commands there

would be an overall reduction in actual personnel requirements. Fourth, while still maintaining *healthy* levels of inter-unit competition, mission selection will be simplified. Finally, these reductions could well result in a reduction in overall costs.

E. SOF CULTURE

> Since the Vietnam War, part of the problem is the attractiveness of DA, CT, and SR as missions. Such missions, and the resulting image of deadly resourceful fighters, are the principal reasons soldiers undergo the extraordinary hardships of special-operations training and duty. These commando-like activities are close to the conventional model of warfighting and have great appeal, and thus tend to consume a disproportionate amount of a unit's attention and training time. 'They are high visibility, immediate gratification missions, well within the comfort zone and easily identified with by most people'. (Adams, 1998, p. 307)

The attractiveness of hyper-conventional missions like DA, CT, and SR have undermined the UW capability of SOF, and have resulted in an organizational culture in which these kinds of missions are placed at the forefront and given the highest priority. Current SOF culture revolves around hyper-conventional units, that receive the highest priority and funding, and often the leaders of these units are ultimately chosen to command SOF at the highest levels. The problem with this is that the organizational culture should revolve around UW, and the leaders of SOF should be the unconventional thinkers who can solve complex problems in highly complex, unstable environments.

In addition, current mission focus results in a culture that breeds redundancy and inefficiency. Although competition is often healthy, the current duplication of

mission focus and purpose within the SOF community often results in the wrong unit being chosen for a specific mission thanks to political considerations, rather than for proficiency's sake. A prime example of this was the choice of SEAL elements to conduct the seizure of Patilla Airfield during the invasion of Panama. The choice of mission unit should have been simple: a Ranger company is deigned and trained to conduct airfield seizures via rotary wing or airborne means, and trains to an unparalleled proficiency level within the SOF community.

In order for SOF to gravitate back towards its unique mission set of UW, training and skills must focus on a combination of military, political, civil and psychological capabilities. Much less emphasis needs to be placed on the image and skills of the commando, and more emphasis placed on skills that often are not considered "military" by most conventionally minded soldiers.

Success at UW activities will lead to the success for all other SOF and conventional operations. UW and OPB operations provide "ground truth" and high-resolution information and intelligence that cannot be duplicated by technological means. When validated by technological means, these operations have an increased chance of accuracy and increase the likelihood that DA units will accomplish their missions. Within the SOF community, hyper-conventional operations should be a sequel to, or done in parallel with UW or OPB activities.

Moving UW capabilities to the forefront of operational thinking within the community will require changes in thinking at all levels. As far as Adams is concerned, these changes must occur,

> …at the national-policy level and within the SOF community and in the Department of Defense to allow SF to make the changes required for the twenty-first century. At the highest levels, it will require a change in strategic thinking and policymaking to accept UW and 'gray area' conflict as an important arena, not peripheral to national interests but one that can have serious, far reaching effects on the USA and its partners and allies. (1998, p. 309)

It is not enough for these changes to occur at the operator level:

> At the joint and service command level it means a difficult and time-consuming effort to develop systematic approaches to these conflicts, and translate those approaches into usable doctrine that will guide force development and training. It means a willingness to allocate scarce intelligence resources to the analysis of UW problems. (1998, p. 309)

Changing SOF culture to refocus on UW will not be easy. But this change is necessary for SOF to fulfill/live up to their intended strategic purpose, and ultimately provides decision-makers the most effective and efficient possible tool. By providing strategic utility, SOF will assist in the security and survivability of the nation given the increasingly complex and dangerous environment in which we live in today.

F. SOF CHARACTERISTICS, CAPABILITIES AND ATTRIBUTES

> Special operations forces were developed to solve problems that could not be resolved by a conventional military force. Special operators are selected and trained to take advantage of their independence, courage, teamwork, and refusal to be bound by conventional solutions for unconventional tasks. Since World War II special operations forces have stood slightly to one side of conventional military organizational culture. Because of what they do, they have an organizational culture, with its own values and

> mission, that is separate from conventional American military culture. Once a special operator has accepted these values and mission, upon leaving the unit, or even the military, he remains a part of the SOF community. (Marquis, 1997, p. 57)

Although SOF is considered special and unique due to their mission sets and culture, what truly sets them apart from the conventional military and OGAs are their characteristics, capabilities, and attributes. These three factors allow individuals and units to operate and be successful in highly complex, unstable, and ambiguous threat environments.

The Special Operations Forces Posture Statement 1998 lists the following SOF characteristics and capabilities:

- Mature professionals with leadership abilities
- Specialized skills, equipment, and tactics
- Regional focus
- Language skills
- Political and cultural sensitivity
- Small, flexible, joint-force structure

It further states SOF can:

- Be tasked to organize quickly and deploy rapidly to provide tailored responses to many different situations.
- Gain access to hostile or denied areas.
- Provide limited security and medical support for themselves and those they support.
- Communicate worldwide with unit equipment.
- Live in austere, harsh environments without extensive support
- Survey and assess local situations and report these assessments rapidly.

- Work closely with regional military and civilian authorities and populations.
- Organize indigenous people into working teams to solve local problems.
- Deploy at low cost, with a low profile and les intrusive presence than larger conventional forces.
- In order for individuals and units to acquire these characteristics and capabilities, they must undergo training in areas that are often considered non-military. In other words, in order to be successful, special operators, both individuals and teams, need to be trained in skills and in areas that emphasize non-traditional conventional military skills. First and foremost though, special operators must be schooled and competent in conventional US tactics, techniques, procedures, and doctrine prior to engaging in the mastery of non-traditional skills. Among the non-traditional skills/training required are the following (“Regional Engagement: A Concept Paper,” 1999, pp. 40-41):
- Regional orientation
- Cross-cultural communications
- Sustained operations in austere environments
- Sustained operations in isolation from other U.S. personnel or forces
- Organization, capabilities, and procedures of OGAs
- Expertise in the organization, capabilities, and procedures of NGOs, PVOs, and international organizations (e.g. the United Nations and regional security organizations)
- Civil-military skills such as advanced medical capabilities, civil engineering skills related to Third World infrastructure, and civil administration
- Political sensitivity (aware of both U.S. and indigenous political environment)

- Operations in low-tech/no-tech environments
- Urban Operations (specifically urban UW and Foreign Internal Defense)
- Intensive intelligence training
- Language proficiency
- Negotiation skills
- IO

The individuals and their attributes (working in concert, in well organized small units, such as ODAs) are the underlying factors that make SOF truly special and unique.

> SOF organizational culture has also been maintained through the inculcation of organizational values through selection, assessment, and training. Special operations training attempts to find and develop within individuals an extraordinary inner strength and an ability to think and innovate. At the same time, training emphasizes the sanctity and necessity of small teams, the unit that undertakes most operations. Only through belief in the team and trust among its members will special operators be successful. (Marquis, 1997, p. 264)

"Regional Engagement: A Concept Paper" (1999, p. 46) lists the following traits that individuals should exhibit, prior to, during, and throughout their involvement in the SOF community:

- Above average intelligence
- Language aptitude
- Acceptance of other cultures
- Tolerance of ambiguity
- Problem-solving skills
- Tolerance for austere living conditions

- Ability to function both in groups and in isolation
- Emotional and mental stability
- Tolerance for stress
- Self-discipline
- Flexibility

Although these traits are required for the initial screening, assessment, and selection of special operators, soldiers should be tested and monitored to ensure that they maintain these traits while serving in any capacity within SOF.

SOF characteristics, capabilities, and attributes are what truly set SOF apart from the conventional military. Individual and organizational attributes need to be grown and fostered in environments that allow for unconventional thinking and problem solving. These three factors are the underlying basis for SOF success or failure, and their ability to provide strategic utility by providing unconventional solutions to non-standard problems. For example, SOF's initial involvement in Afghanistan where small, dispersed SOF elements linked up with Northern Alliance forces to conduct what is, in essence, coalition support displays how individual characteristics,

capabilities, and attributes enable a SOF soldier to cope with highly complex and unstable environments.[4]

G. REGIONAL COMMANDS AND AORS

Now that we have described the core building blocks of SOF reorganization (unit-to-mission realignment, and SOF's culture, capabilities, and attributes) it is time to address command structure and how these reconfigured forces will be packaged for employment. Currently, all SOF located within the US (CONUS) fall under the operational control (OPCON) and administrative control (ADCON) of USSOCOM, while SOF that are forward deployed (OCONUS) are OPCON to the theater Special Operations Command or (SOC) who is additionally OPCON to the theater combatant commander. For instance, SOF forces in the EUCOM Theater are OPCON to the theater SOC, and in turn, the SOC is OPCON to the EUCOM commander.

This command structure poses several problems. First, all SOF commands have a "home station" in the US, and at any given time they can have forces located in both CONUS and OCONUS locations. When these forces move OCONUS there is a transfer of OPCON authority from USSOCOM to the theater SOC. This arrangement is problematic because it allows one organic unit to have a portion of its

[4] Dr. Anna Simons echoes these points in her book *The Company They Keep* when she writes about the uniqueness of a Special Forces Operational Detachment. "Thanks to their design, teams can be flexible. With so much redundancy and duplication built in, teams can be swift and mercurial, hard to pin down in the woods, hard for the enemy to grasp, able to regroup instantaneously, then fall back apart and be equally effective. Hands down, a team is smarter than any smart weapon. Teams can guide themselves if they have to; they can improvise, survive unsupported, fail and still succeed. And though one might think SF soldiers deserve credit for much of this, all good teams are greater than the sum of their parts. Indeed, no design could be more effective. The interchangeability of teams keeps all teams jostling to be the best, while their closed nature twists relentless inter-team competition into unremitting internal pressure" (p. 225).

operational elements OPCON to two different theater combatant commands (TCC). For example, the 10th Special Forces Group's home station is located at Fort Carson, Colorado. It has two battalions permanently stationed there and one battalion forward deployed in the EUCOM Theater, OPCON to the theater SOC. The issue here is that the theater SOC is providing guidance and directives that support the combatant commander's theater engagement plan, while the CONUS-based portion of the unit is receiving guidance and directives that are disconnected from the theater SOC's direction. Furthermore, while OPCON is split between two commands, ADCON remains the responsibility of the supporting command. While making these arrangements often simply requires coordination, the true underlying problem is that when CONUS-based forces are deployed into their assigned AOR they have to be reoriented toward the theater engagement plan. Because most SOF are regionally-oriented it would make sense to have all regionally assigned forces focused on the directives and guidance of the supported regional SOC no matter what their physical location.

Second, in the above example, the theater SOC is limited in the number of personnel assets he can employ to meet theater objectives without requesting additional support from USSOCOM. We would submit that the regional SOC should have ADCON and OPCON of all regionally aligned assets.

Finally, regional SOCs are aligned with the Theater Combatant Command's AOR. Because of this set AOR alignment, many 'turf' problems occur, especially in theater border regions when it comes to assigning missions.

These theater boundaries work well when dealing with conventional warfare, military assistance, and a general US presence. However, the usefulness of these boundaries becomes less clear when resolving conflict of an unconventional or irregular nature. A good example of this is the boundary between EUCOM's and CENTCOM's AOR in the country of Turkey. Turkey, for historical reasons, has an established relationship with Europe and is a NATO country. However, there are many cultural, ethnic, and religious reasons why Turkey could just as easily fall in the CENTCOM AOR, as we have seen most recently in the tussle over stationing troops there to deploy into Iraq, a CENTCOM country, and into Kurdistan more specifically.

SOF requires AORs that are rooted in specific regional ground truths, and which are flexible and overlapping in order to successfully deal with conflicts that cross theater commands. Overlap gives two or more SOF regional commands the ability to engage, increase their AOR expertise, and develop established interagency networks. Not only should these SOF AORs be overlapping with one another, but they should be allowed to expand and contract as required by regional events. The bottom line here is that permanent and fixed boundaries are problematic when it comes to understanding the underlying conditions of conflict and actual conflict resolution in U/ITEs.

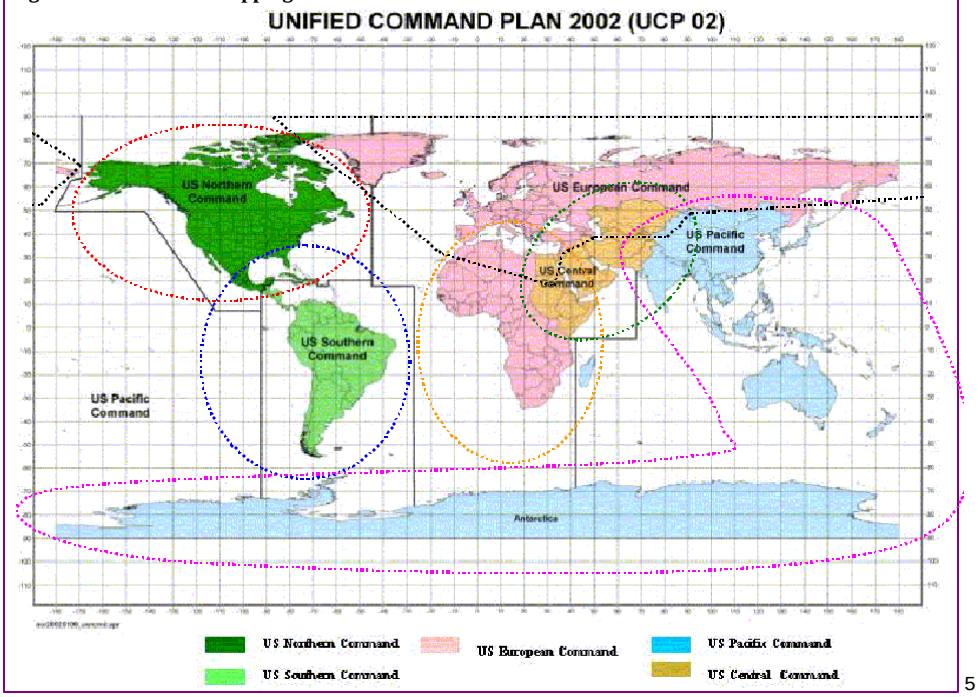
This leads us to our next organizational change within SOF: which is the development of overlapping Regional Special Operations Commands (RSOC) that have a parallel, but not subordinate relationship with the Theater Combatant Commands, and who have OPCON of all assigned regional forces regardless of their location. At this point in our

discussion it is important for the reader to assume that SOF is its own service in order to conceptualize what follows.

If readers accept the creation of RSOC and Special Operations Areas of Responsibility (SOAOR), this would mean that SOCs would no longer belong to the TCCs and that instead they would be assigned regionally orientated SOAORs. Second, the RSOC would have both ADCON and OPCON of all assigned regional forces regardless of their location, except in areas of overlap where another RSOC has tactical control for purposes of ongoing operations. By doing this, the RSOC would have greater flexibility and control over his assigned regional forces and greatly facilitate implementation of the regional engagement plan. Third, this would allow each RSOC to forward deploy a modular force that would be tailored to meet current and future engagement needs, without needing to request these forces from USSOCOM. Additionally, this streamlined chain of command would allow the RSOCs to focus all assigned regional forces to meet their engagement plans. Finally, these separate RSOCs would give the US a more U/IT oriented focus at levels that cannot be generated in the current TCCs

Figure 4.3 depicts the proposed CONUS and OCUNUS RSOC AORs. Note that the actual shaded countries represent the current Unified Command Plan and that the RSOC SOAOR overlaps in areas that have unique ground-truths spread over adjacent commands. Figure 4.4 depicts the operational structure of the five OCONUS-based RSOCs. And Figure 4.5 depicts RSOC-North.

Figure 4.3: RSOC Overlapping SOAOR



[5]

Figure 4.3. RSOC Overlapping SOAOR.

[5] Modified from: Defenselink (2003), "Unified Command Plan Map," [HTTP://www.defenselink.mil/news/apr2002/020417-D-6570-003.jpg], retrieved May 09, 2003.

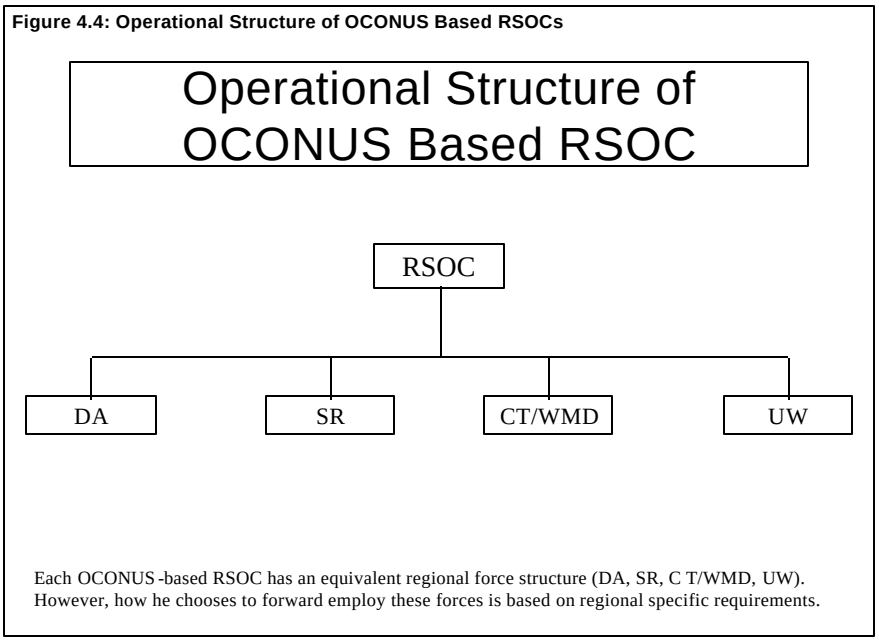


Figure 4.4. Operational Structure of OCONUS Based RSOCs.

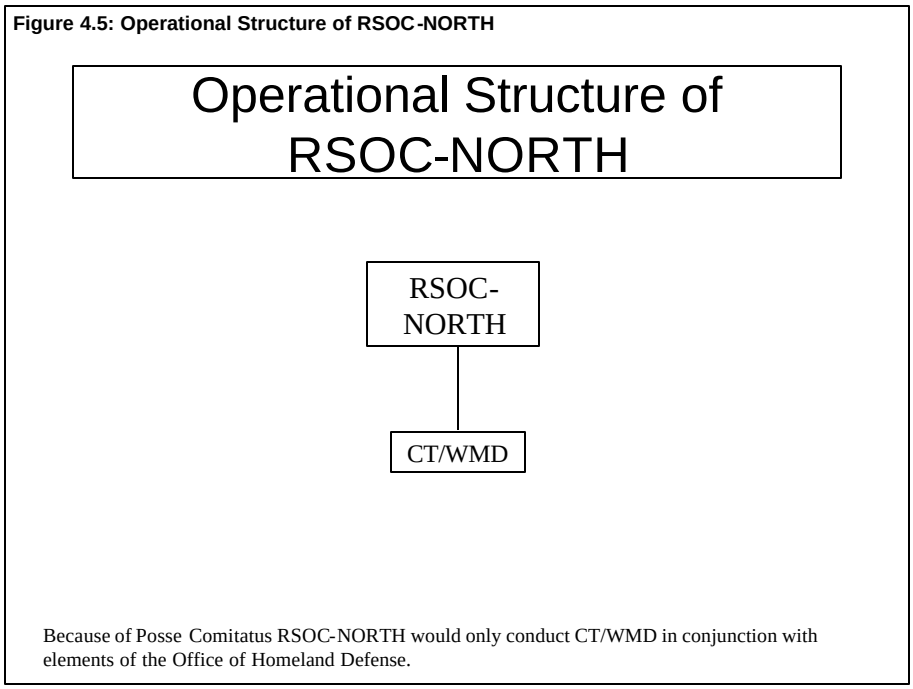


Figure 4.5. Operational Structure of RSOC-North.

H. CONCLUSION

This re-engineering of SOF's organizational structure, combined with SOF-unique characteristics, capabilities, and attributes are the necessary infrastructure changes required for the implementation of a SOF specific worldwide engagement plan. By freeing SOF engagement activities from those of the TCCs, SOF would be uniquely positioned to conduct proactive operations either in a unilateral, joint, or combined manner in areas where U/ITs originate and foster prior to having the ability to affect US national interests, whether at home or abroad. Given this foundation, we will provide a new concept for employment of the new organization in Chapter V.

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V. CONCEPT OF EMPLOYMENT

> By definition, most regional engagement activities are accomplished by, through, or at least with the cooperation of, surrogates, host nationals, and other third parties. While some activities are unilateral, they are nearly universally directed at modifying the attitudes or behaviors of an interested party to accommodate U.S. interests. ("Regional Engagement Force: A Concept Paper," 1999, p. 14)

A. INTRODUCTION

In a world of U/ITs, where superior information will be key to conflict prevention and resolution, engagement is the foundation on which all future conflict-scenarios will draw for intelligence, access, placement, and situational awareness. While the concepts presented in Chapter IV make SOF more capable of providing strategic utility, it is the concept of holistic engagement that will enable SOF to attain their strategic utility. The term holistic is used frequently throughout this thesis because it is synonymous with understanding SOF and their strategic usefulness. Because of SOF's unique culture and service members' characteristics and attributes, SOF are the only military units that are holistic in their approach to employment. Whereas an infantry or artillery battalion works to accomplish the commander's intent two levels up, SOF (from the individual to the JTF) are capable of achieving objectives that range in nature from tactical to strategic, and are able to act as surgical tools in various roles ranging from warrior to diplomat.

This chapter will be based on a bold assumption that our governmental system (as it relates to the Office of

Homeland Security, DoD, the Department of State (DoS), and the intelligence community) is also capable of working in a holistic manner. This means that these organizations can, and ideally will, become more integrated and mutually supporting in order to be effective in the complex world of U/ITs. By doing so the net gain to the nation will be a proactive and preventive governmental system that can ensure the security of its population for years to come. Figure 5.1 offers one graphic illustration of this holistic and integrated vision.

Figure 5.1: The holistic Engagement Process

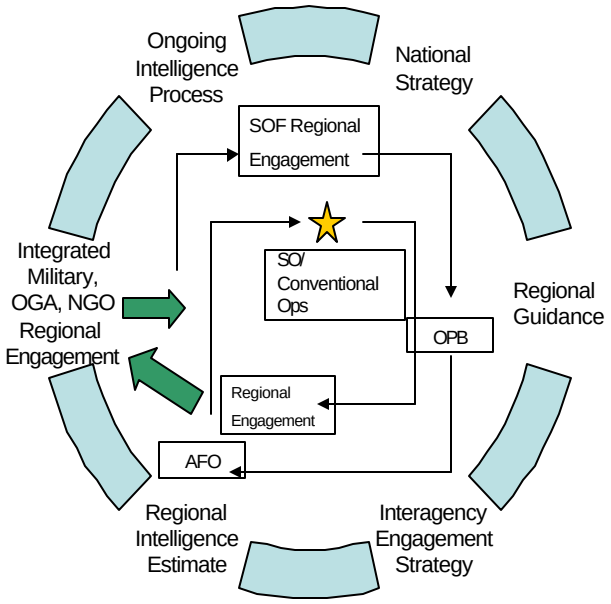


Figure 5.1. The Holistic Engagement Process.

The outer circle depicted in Figure 5.1 represents the flow of information, and the networked coordination required for the system to be holistic, while the inner portion of the graphic illustrates SOF regional engagement lifecycles in support of the National Strategy. In order to transition back to the focus of this chapter we will quickly describe what is depicted in the outer ring of Figure 5.1, and then focus the remainder of the chapter on the inner portion.

Ideally, the flow of information would work as follows: First, the key decision-makers would determine national policy and directives in the form of a National Strategy. The President, working through the four aforementioned governmental organizations, would implement this strategy utilizing the elements of national power. To accomplish this, regional guidance would be provided to TCCs, RSOCs, related DoS representatives, and the intelligence community that would specify US goals, objectives, and intent for specific regions, countries, and governments. This regional guidance would provide general, and some very specific, intent for each of the governmental agencies involved. At this point, these regional authorities would conduct coordinated and mutually supportive planning (strategies to meet intent) to develop an interagency regional engagement strategy. This process would occur worldwide, in all AORs. This would in turn mean that each organization would then conduct both unilateral and joint activities to accomplish the regional engagement strategy, and they would do so in a networked and coordinated manner.

Simply stated, all regional authorities would be interactive in order to work in unison and create a product that would be greater than the sum of its parts. Based on the requirements of the interagency regional engagement strategy, the TCCs, RSOCs, and OGAs would produce an intelligence estimate from which separate, distinct, but well coordinated and synchronized engagement plans are formed. The execution of these engagement plans would produce high-resolution, region-specific intelligence. This information/intelligence could then be used to adjust ongoing and future engagement activities in order for the US to be proactive, and even preempt conflict, control escalation, and allow for a detailed understanding of particular ground truths involving, for instance, ethnic or cultural differences. Ultimately, these engagement activities would provide decision-makers the insight required to make sound and informed decisions regarding the use of any instrument of national power. There are three keys to success in implementing this outer ring. First, flows of information must be multi-directional. Second, networking between agencies is imperative; compartmentalization and "turf battles" are counterproductive in achieving national goals. Third, this multi-directional approach would be a continuous and ongoing process. All involved parties must remain flexible and be holistic in their approach.

Of course, we recognize that what we have just described is the way things would work in an ideal world. Clearly, this is not how DoD and other government agencies routinely do business today. Whether holism and interdependence can be better institutionalized is beyond

the scope of this thesis, but the need for greater synergy does appear to be receiving increased attention among policy makers and politicians in Washington, particularly by those who consider September 11, 2001 to have been an intelligence failure. Still, we recognize that we are a long way away from developing the kind of working relationships we have outlined above. As this process unfolds, though, SOF have a key role to play. That is what we address below, bearing in mind that whether greater integration occurs sooner or later, it makes sense for SOF to be made their own service in order to provide the nation with strategic utility, and fit into whatever holistic engagement process is developed.

B. REGIONAL ENGAGEMENT CHARACTERISTICS

First and foremost, larger elements of SOF must be postured forward to truly implement an effective regional engagement strategy. In order for regional engagement activities to be effective, they should be continuously "vetted" against the regional engagement characteristics described below. These characteristics provide a framework for engagement planning, operations, assessments, and activities.

Forward presence alone, of course, will not result in productive regional engagement or the ultimate goal of providing strategic utility. Engagement that provides access, placement, and allows forces to create conditions for furthering US interests is what is most important. But, proactive and continuous engagement can be accomplished by accepting the changes to SOF's organization and structure that were presented in Chapter IV *and* by positioning large portions of these forces in their AOR.

These forces would then be in a position, both literally and figuratively, to preempt and/or control escalation as required. The document, “Regional Engagement Force: A Concept Paper,” 1999, lists the following applicable regional engagement characteristics:

- Plans must be focused on US national policy objectives, and designed to create conditions favorable to the US. Regional engagement planning must be cyclical, and constantly evaluated from the top down and bottom up to ensure the correct conditions and perceptions are being established (p. 13). Prior to the implementation of plans, interagency agreement should acknowledge that these actions are being done in the interest of US national policy. This coordination and agreement must occur at the highest political levels, and through the interagency, embassy (country team), and the executors to ensure execution is meeting intent.
- Operations must be proactive and offensive in nature. They cannot be an afterthought or “knee-jerk” reactions to an occurring or impending contingency. In regions where there are inaccessible areas or countries, they cannot be disregarded. They must be focused on, penetrated, and not given attention when it is too late (Afghanistan, and probably in the near future, the Horn of Africa). Although we are focusing on the military aspect of engagement, all elements of national power influence the varied regional engagement plans depending on the environment in which they are executed (p. 13).
- Plans must be operationally offensive. They should be conducted to seize the initiative before, or instead of, escalation to war. Operational plans for engagement must rely on intelligence. Threats must be identified, evaluated, prioritized, and regional engagement planning should revolve around the intelligence process. Plans must contain tactical and operational objectives that fully support overall strategic-level planning (p. 13). Plans must not only support the mil-to-mil aspects, they must

focus on the establishment of information and intelligence networks in order to set the conditions in case of hostilities. For example, when an SFODA is conducting a JCET, secondary taskings or missions, at a minimum, should be to validate the embassy's emergency plan of action, NEO plan, and establish sources and contacts that may be used in case the need arises for unconventional assisted recovery (contacts, routes, safe houses, clandestine communications means, etc.).

- Engagement must be continuous in both planning and execution. Unlike warplans, regional engagement activities must be continuous and ongoing. While some or all elements of national power will dictate additions and/or changes to this cyclical process, these activities must be in some state of planning and execution at all times. "The basis for its (Regional Engagement) conduct is a time-driven political-operational tempo rather than a warfighting event-driven tempo" (p. 13). In order to receive benefit from engagement, executors of the plan must maintain contact through host-nation nationals, expatriates, surrogates or others, or physically maintain a presence themselves. This will allow current information and intelligence to be reevaluated, the plans adjusted if need be, and future concepts and planning to occur based on ground truth.

- Planning and operations must be synchronized in order to ensure they ultimately advance and protect US national interests. The planning and conduct of engagement activities must support planning elements of a non-military sort, as well as the overall warfighting elements of a possible future campaign plan. In order to be fully synchronized, efforts of DoS, OGAs, etc, must be incorporated into planning and operations. Also, both planners and executors must understand warfighting plans to ensure engagement activities are truly supporting US national interests (p. 14). Interagency coordination is vital. Execution of plans should not hinder any other agency's program(s). Any engagement that focuses on information and intelligence gathering must be

coordinated with all other intelligence agencies, the country team, and products should be focused on assisting DoS when required.

- Planning and execution will require joint capabilities from all services. As engagement activities become more complex with greater requirements, activities may require service-specific expertise for planning and execution in a joint manner (p. 14). Institutional barriers must be broken. When another service contains the expertise within its ranks, that service must be coordinated with and joint planning must occur from the outset for maximum efficiency in the execution of plans.

- The majority of engagement activities must be conducted/accomplished through surrogates, host nationals, and other third parties. Although some activities are unilateral, most are conducted through surrogates to influence allies, neutrals, and adversaries through the use of military force to accommodate US interests (p. 14). Activities conducted through surrogates, host nationals, and other third parties provide greater access and placement for intelligence and information gathering, and when required, can provide certain degrees of plausible deniability.

- Engagement activities are inherently interagency, and often result in the military's participation in another agency's plan. Often, DoS rather that DoD will design a regional engagement operation that requires elements from the military to support execution of its plan. Continuous interagency coordination will be required to ensure all elements of national power are fully exercised, and programs can be maximized with additional ideas or procedures that were not incorporated in original planning (pp. 14-15). A recent example of this is Operation Focus Relief in Nigeria, where elements of 3rd Special Forces Group (Airborne), trained, advised, assisted, and equipped Nigerian forces to conduct combat operations in Sierra Leone, as part of a DoS engagement operation. Throughout execution of

this program, there was interagency coordination in order to provide flexibility when changes were required.

- Engagement activities are access-dependent. Military activities often give soldiers access to people, facilities, and locations that are not normally accessible to other assets. “The mutual bonds of professionalism that normally exist between militaries, and the ability of selected military forces to operate in remote, austere, and high threat environments facilitate this access” (p. 16). The ability to have access to the host nation’s people, facilities, and locations, can also increase the likelihood that through the use of surrogates, neighboring countries (whether inaccessible or “rogue”) may be accessed (p. 15). This aspect of engagement has been greatly overlooked in the past. Only after in-extremis situations (NEOs in Sierra Leone and Liberia), has this aspect of engagement been highlighted. This portion of engagement must be focused on and exploited to assist SOF in providing strategic utility by setting the conditions when employed.

- Engagement activities must be human factors dominated. In the majority of regional engagement activities, human factors will be important and will often dominate technological factors. Inter-personal relationships will be focused upon in order to properly execute and operate at the “grass roots” level. Carefully selected, well-prepared soldiers and leaders who understand human factors and considerations, and how they affect intrastate relations are required for these types of activities (p. 16). Unfortunately, the majority of budget requirements and requests focus only on improving the technological aspects of warfighting. Future monies must be focused on non-standard military skills that enhance this aspect (i.e. language training, AOR immersion, and other programs that improve cross-cultural and inter-personal factors).

- Engagement activities must be economical (in terms of both personnel and costs). When done properly, regional engagement activities require a smaller amount of human resources because the majority of activities will be conducted through surrogates, host-nation personnel, and other third parties. The number of personnel currently engaged may stay the same or even decline, but by focusing on economy of force measures, activities in various locations may actually rise. Regional engagement activities must provide a high return on investment and strategic utility (p. 16). Activities can be done from the individual level on up. In order to maintain engagement, individuals, buddy-teams, or split-teams should be used whenever possible. In other words, the mindset that an entire detachment, platoon, company, etc, must deploy to accomplish a mission must be looked at hard. Often, more can be done with less.

C. HOLISTIC ENGAGEMENT

Currently, CONUS-based SOF is utilized to conduct the majority of regional engagement activities. This is true for the wide array of current SOF missions, and other JCS-directed exercises. These CONUS-based forces are expected to be experts in their AOR, but often only deploy to them once or twice per fiscal year. With turnover, required schooling, and other training opportunities, members of SFODAs and SEAL platoons may only spend limited time in their AOR every few years, and on some occasions, may never be exposed to their AOR until time of conflict. It is true that some members within these units study their AOR, update country assessments, area studies, etc, but they are not exposed to, or immersed in, their AOR enough to truly become experts. In order for SOF to provide strategic utility, the majority of these forces must be based OCONUS, OPCON to their RSOC, and experience day-to-day living in their AOR to gain a better understanding of all the

intricacies associated with being immersed in a different culture and/or environment. Currently, forces that are positioned forward are often only used in-extremis situations, and these make up only a small percentage of engagement activities.

Today, the role of SOF in information and intelligence operations is slim to none. Information gathered is usually the result of a post-deployment debrief, and contains little or no focus on the operational aspects of intelligence. Elements of SOF are not tasked or given priority intelligence requirements prior to deployment. Thus, all information provided in the post-deployment debrief was passively gathered and is sketchy at best. Finally, the information that is gathered is placed in a large database that is difficult to access, thus providing little or no information for follow-on deployments to the same area or region.

Intelligence and operations cannot and should not be split. Both the intelligence and regional engagement processes must be cyclical and mutually supporting. Current intelligence would have to drive the initial implementation of strategy, but information and intelligence gathered through regional engagement would assist present and future intelligence estimates, and allow for adjustments to be made to further US policy objectives.

By giving SOF elements tasks related to gathering information and intelligence, the forces conducting regional engagement would be able to confirm or deny current intelligence, and identify possible intelligence estimates and pitfalls, and would be able to provide additional and continuous information or intelligence based

on pre-designated indicators, for future coercive or deterrent actions and effects. The situational awareness and intelligence gained from conducting engagement operations would not only provide key information for military courses of action, but could also have an affect on actions and reactions by all the other elements of national power (i.e. political and/or economic sanctions could be imposed or lifted, based on information/intelligence gathered).

The following hypothetical example describes how a RSOC and his staff might choose to utilize forces for regional engagement. The scenario is conceptual, focuses on small unit actions, and assumes that operations would be required in a country currently inaccessible. For the purposes of this example, country "X" is friendly (or accessible), country "Y" is rogue (or inaccessible), and they share a common boundary.

The RSOC's staff would have an established list of prioritized countries for engagement. This list would run the gamut of countries from those, which we have, habitual military contacts, to inaccessible countries or rogue states. Knowing that country "X" is accessible and country "Y" is inaccessible, and information and intelligence must be gathered on activities occurring in both countries (setting the conditions/OPB), the RSOC's staff decides to engage in country "X", while simultaneously penetrating country "Y" to meet national security objectives. The UW force would be the initial force of choice. This force would deploy to country "X" and conduct activities similar to those that are ongoing today (JCETs, FID, etc.).

While deployed in country “X”, this force would also conduct additional activities (OPB) to prepare the battlespace for possible future interdiction operations in either country. These activities would be covert or clandestine in nature (when required), and would include intelligence and information gathering, validation of emergency plans of action, establishing unconventional assisted recovery mechanisms, establishing counter-proliferation and counter-terrorist networks, etc. In country “X”, the forces themselves would conduct these activities and, when necessary, would do so in conjunction with surrogates, host-nation personnel, and other third parties. These same activities would also be conducted in country “Y” through surrogates, host-nation personnel, other third parties, and unilaterally (via cross-border operations) if feasible and required.

The primary focus for these forces would be to conduct OPB (under the guise of another mission) if there exists current, possible, probable, or emerging threats in the AOR. These forces would validate pre-designated intelligence indicators, provide additional information/intelligence, and set the conditions for future interdiction operations (or provide information for political, economic, informational, etc., actions) in both countries. Once this force has finished its tasks, either the entire element, or parts of it, would remain in place for continuity, validation purposes, and to serve in its global scout role to report changes in the environment. The assessment of the environment would never stop in either country. In other words, these elements would

remain engaged continuously from peacetime through post-conflict.

The special activities conducted by the UW force from an accessible country or location to penetrate an inaccessible or rogue state can be done through various classified tactics, techniques, and procedures, and would allow information and intelligence gathering at the lowest levels. These activities would provide the RSOC and his staff supplementary information that is received from OGAs, and would be synchronized with everything else that is being done by the intelligence community to ensure efficiency and effectiveness.

In countries where there were suspected or known threats (possibly both countries “X” and “Y”), the UW force unilaterally, with host nation personnel or through surrogates, would conduct actions to reduce or eliminate the threat(s). In instances where the threat could not be dealt with in this manner, the UW force would already have prepared the battlespace (established intelligence networks, mechanisms for UAR, conducted reconnaissance, marked HLZs/DZs, etc.) for the introduction of follow-on SOF or conventional forces, and would prepare to conduct AFO either unilaterally, with host-nation personnel, or through surrogates in either country. Since these forces have prepared the battlespace, additional forces could interdict targets from country “X” or conduct “forced entry” operations into country “Y”, with the added information and intelligence gathered by the UW force and its surrogates.

Because the RSOC already has other SOF elements positioned forward in the AOR, the decision-making loop as to how, when, and where to interdict is much tighter. Time sensitive targets (targets of opportunity) could be developed and acted upon in a much more rapid manner with varying degrees of force, in a manner not feasible by today's standards.

Based on information and intelligence gathered from the UW force, the RSOC would be able to employ his other forces in conjunction with the UW force in country "Y", or unilaterally in another area within the AOR. Other mission-based units would also be utilized in the AOR to conduct activities similar to JCS exercises, and would be prepared to strike/raid targets validated through engagement. For example, once the UW force has validated that targets do in fact exist in country "Y", exercises may be conducted in country "X" in order to "close the distance." Where these forces would be positioned would be based on information and intelligence gathered from the UW force and OGAs. Not only would this simultaneously improve the military-to-military contacts and relationships with host nation forces, but these activities would also provide AOR expertise to other mission-based units. Ultimately, this would increase and improve their ability to operate effectively and efficiently in areas or regions where they may have to conduct "forced entry" activities in the future.

Holistic regional engagement must be conducted by forces that are positioned within their AOR, and through activities that are mutually supporting of one another's mission-based capabilities. By adopting this concept, SOF

can provide the following strategic utility functions: increased global situational awareness, implement national power, shape the future, set conditions, expand choice, economize force, control escalation, showcase competence, and boost morale after reassurance (See Chapter II for further explanation). Simply stated, SOF must be positioned forward, engage continuously, and finally be allowed to conduct a full spectrum of information and intelligence activities, which they cannot right now.

D. CONTINGENCY OPERATIONS AND WAR

Even though the holistic engagement process described above will help advance US policies and objectives, it will undoubtedly be unable to prevent all conflicts. Contingencies will arise, such as the need to deal with terrorist activities or participate in major theater war, like the recent war with Iraq. But here is where the intelligence and operational groundwork undertaken as a product of holistic engagement will prove critical. Intelligence, information, established contacts and information networks, pre-positioned forces, and a clear picture of ground truth will allow the US to conduct these operations in a more rapid and informed manner.

Ideally, the conduct of these operations would depend on the actual task at hand. This means that top-level decision-makers would have to analyze the problem and determine the best response, which comes down to one of three choices. First, they might elect to install what, today, seems to be the default solution: a JTF or CJSOTF assigned to the Theater Combatant Command in whose AOR the conflict is occurring. This, though, usually leads to a conventional response with conventional commanders, where

SOF assets are subordinate. Second, they could elect the inverse, which would be to assign a CJSOTF to the RSOC in whose AOR the conflict is occurring. In this instance, the conventional forces would be play a supporting role to the RSOC. And third, they could elect a purely unilateral SOF solution whereby the RSOC conducts the operation with his assigned forces.

The main point we are trying to make is the necessity for building in flexibility so that the appropriate force will be utilized based on the given situation. If the threat is unconventional in nature (Afghanistan) then SOF should take the lead. Likewise, if the threat is more conventional in nature (Iraq), then conventional commanders should have the lead. In today's construct of TCCs with subordinate SOCs, this kind of response to conflict resolution is next to impossible because of the institutionalization described in Chapter I. By adopting the changes suggested in Chapter IV, this institutionalized approach to resolving conflict can be overcome. Likewise, this approach to conflict will have an enhanced effect on the outcome of conflict, perceptions of US actions, and world opinion.

E. POST-CONFLICT

Given SOF's characteristics and attributes, SOF should be the primary assistants/executors of US national policy in a post-conflict environment. With forward deployed SOF and mission-based units, post-conflict operations would be simplified because of elements' area expertise, experience, and immersion in their AOR. The primary SOF missions in this interagency environment would most likely be Foreign Internal Defense (FID) in order to train, advise, and

assist host nation military and paramilitary forces in the establishment of a secure environment. SOF might also be required to support host-nation counterinsurgency (COIN) efforts. These efforts may occur within or outside of the host-nation, and may be done either unilaterally or with host nation personnel. During the conduct of FID and COIN operations, portions of all SOF mission-based units would be employed to meet the RSOC's engagement strategy. Simply stated, even though the forces may have adjusted their mission focus based on the environment, the concepts of engagement presented earlier apply throughout the spectrum of peace and conflict.

SOF can also assist national policy and US security interests in the post-conflict environment because non-military aspects often apply more than do standardized military operations. SOF trains and prepares to conduct operations in these complex unstable environments where no clearly defined enemy or battlefield exists.

FID is a joint and interagency activity of the US government, and SOF assist all elements of national power in the conduct of these operations. Through their actions, SOF assist with the building of host-nation institutions in order to create stability for the populace and fulfill the general needs of a society. The primary objective of SOF during FID operations is to provide support to the host-nation government, rather than assuming the role themselves as primary executors.

The capabilities that SOF employs to conduct FID operations are inherent to the UW mission-based units. The following are operations that SOF can be expected to

perform in support of FID and during the post-conflict phase of engagement (FM 31-20, 1990, pp. 10-2 to 10-6).

- Training Assistance. SOF may develop, establish, and conduct varying degrees of training programs. These programs may focus from individual to group/unit skills, up to specialized advanced skills. The overall goal of these programs is to establish a cadre base for the host-nation, and eventually have host-nation personnel conduct all training activities with minimal SOF/interagency supervision (p. 10-2).
- Advisory Assistance. SOF can serve in an advisory role to host-nation military and paramilitary elements. SOF elements are the best suited to do these types of operations because of language and cross-cultural communications skills. Regional engagement will allow SOF to perform this function in a more efficient manner because SOF will be immersed in their AOR, and have a better understanding of the sociological, psychological, and political factors that will affect them in this role (p. 10-2).
- Intelligence Operations. SOF can conduct effective information and intelligence operations in order to penetrate and affect an insurgency. These operations not only establish the various types of information, intelligence, unassisted recovery mechanisms, etc., but also provide information and intelligence about the environment and the enemy's mode of operation as it pertains to subverting and sabotaging the host-nation's institutions (p. 10-3).
- Psychological Operations (PSYOPs). PSYOPs must be an integral part of overall FID operations. PSYOPs are used to support the host-nation government and its institutions, and to attempt to convince the insurgents that their cause is hopeless. SOF assist the host-nation in developing, implementing and conducting effective PSYOPs activities (p. 10-3).

- Civil-Military Operations (CMO). SOF advisors assist host-nation military forces with CMO to develop and establish programs to mobilize civilian popular support of host-nation programs and institutions (p. 10-3).
- Populace and Resources Control. SOF assist host-nation military forces, paramilitaries, or police forces with the development of programs, policies, and measures to mobilize the human and material resources of the host-nation, and to protect them from being threatened. Host-nation personnel must enforce these operations with only limited participation by SOF. Legitimacy will be ruined if these programs are not perceived as being established and conducted by host-nation personnel and institutions (p. 10-3).
- Tactical Operations. SOF can assist host-nation forces with tactical operations. The objectives of these operations must be to assist the host-nation with establishing a stable and secure environment so development can occur. Tactical operations must incorporate CMO and PSYOPs, and be a synchronized sub-element of the overall FID effort (p. 10-4).

During post-conflict operations, SOF can have simultaneously offensive, defensive, preventive, and deterrent roles. The primary role of SOF in this environment would fall under FID, and would provide “nation building” assistance to host-nation governments and institutions. SOF capabilities and attributes assist to further US national interests in this role, and deter hostile entities from further acts of internal and/or external aggression towards the host-nation. In the post-conflict environment, SOF demonstrates US resolve by providing a stabilizing factor and establishing/maintaining presence. SOF-unique capabilities and attributes allow these missions to be undertaken, ultimately providing decision-makers another facet of national power.

F. CONCLUSION

In this chapter, we focused on regional engagement characteristics, holistic engagement, contingency operations and war, and post-conflict operations. In order for SOF to provide the strategic utility described in Chapter II, and make the organizational and structural changes to adopt mission-based units and adopt the efficient and effective RSOC concept and holistic engagement we set out in this chapter, we argue that SOF must become a separate service.

The current organizational structure of SOF does not allow a SOF commander to be the overall commander during major regional conflicts. Under today's organization, SOF and their commanders are subordinate to conventional commanders no matter what the operational environment looks like. Based on our proposals, the overall command in Afghanistan would have been SOF, and would have been supported by conventional commands as required. Yet, in Iraq, the overall command was conventional and supported by SOF commands, as it should have been. It is apparent that what works well one way (SOF supporting conventional commands), does not work well the other way (conventional commands supporting SOF). With the proposed changes presented in this chapter and throughout the thesis, we will finally have the capability to have a SOF commander supported by conventional commands in the U/ITE, or have the SOF commander support conventional commands during mostly conventional-type conflicts when this is called for. This flexibility in response and in force packaging is necessary for our nation to be able to cope with whatever future threats are thrown at us.

By making SOF a separate service, our nation will finally have the capability to conduct regional engagement with tactical, operational, and strategic effects, and the ability to apply unconventional solutions to unconventional problems, as well as conventional problems when required.

VI. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

> As I have watched the revitalization of our special operations capability proceed over the last few years, I have become convinced that the readiness enhancements and force structure increases now under way, while essential, are, in reality, treating the symptoms but not the disease. The heart of the matter lies not in the forces themselves, but the way in which they were integrated into the national security structure. (Daniel, 1985, p. 70)

A. INTRODUCTION

The above statement by Representative Dan Daniel is as relevant today as it was in 1985. His statement was used to support the argument for the revitalization and reorganization of SOF in order to provide the US with strong special operations capabilities, and to grant SOF the ability to provide strategic utility. Representative Daniel further argued that, if SOF were not unified as a separate command or service, the result would be abuse, misuse, and ultimately, the forces would not be able to provide the special operations capability and utility they were designed to provide (supported by historical failures in the past: the Mayaguez operation, the Iranian hostage crisis, and Grenada). After years of interagency and legislative conflict, changes were finally made to provide SOF a “home”. The first step in the legislative process was passing of the Goldwater-Nichols Defense Reorganization bill in 1986. This bill identified shortfalls in SOF budgeting and organization that needed to be fixed.

Although the Goldwater-Nichols bill did not enact legislative change to affect problems inherent to SOF budgeting and reorganization, it brought to light numerous problems that had been affecting the forces. Additionally, the bill paved the way for additional legislative changes. Representative Daniel was one of many strong SOF advocates who vocalized numerous arguments for reform. Daniel argued at the time, "special operations forces are organizationally a part of the U.S. Army, U.S. Air Force, and U.S. Navy, 'SOF [has] never been [a] truly institutional part of those Services" (Marquis, 1997, pp. 121-122). Daniel further stated:

> Special operations run counter to the conventional view of how wars are fought; training and equipment for SOF are distinct from that required for conventional soldiers, sailors, and airmen; secrecy is essential and elitism is unavoidable; and SOF is most often effective during peacetime. Essentially, SOF has never 'fit in' with the conventional forces because SOF operations do not square with the core imperatives of the individual Services and are, in fact, so different that there is little basis for understanding…They are viewed as secretive, elitist, and worst of all, a political time bomb. (Daniel, 1985, p. 72)

Because of these problems, Daniels argued that the only way SOF could provide their ultimate potential and strategic utility was by being unified and consolidated as a separate service or agency.

Daniel's arguments were viewed by his contemporaries and others as being "too hard to do" and were too radical at the time to be considered or embraced. Eventually, additional legislative changes came in the form of the Nunn-Cohen bill. In fact, the current organizational

structure of SOF is mainly a result of the Nunn-Cohen Amendment to the 1986 Defense Reorganization Act. In 1986, Senators William Cohen and Sam Nunn introduced a bill to force DoD to reorganize and restructure SOF. In their bill, Cohen and Nunn listed the following reasons why Congress should get involved in SOF reform[6]:

- The threat to the United States and its allies from unconventional warfare, including terrorism, is rising;
- Since the conclusion of the Korean conflict, the use of force by the United States had been primarily in response to guerrilla insurgencies and terrorist attacks. This will continue to be the most likely use of force in the foreseeable future;
- The capabilities needed to respond to unconventional warfare are not those traditionally fostered by the Armed Forces of the United States and the planning and preparation emphasis within the Defense Department has been overwhelming[ly] on fighting a large-scale war;
- The Department of Defense has not given sufficient attention to the tactics, doctrines, and strategies associated with those combat missions most likely to be required of the Armed Forces of the United States in the future;
- Problems of command and control repeatedly beset [the] military of the United States engaged in counterterrorist and counterinsurgency operations, as was evident with the *Mayaguez* incident, the Iranian hostage rescue mission; and the Grenada operation (Marquis, 1997, pp. 134-135).

Although there were dramatic changes with the passage of these two legislative acts, the above-mentioned problems are still affecting DoD and SOF today. Yes, it is true,

[6] See James Locher's book, Victory on the Potomac, 2002, for further information. Also, Armed Forces Journal contained numerous articles during the 1985-1986 time period debating the future of SOF, and how the forces should be organized.

that SOF became a unified command. But, as described throughout this thesis, SOF are still being hindered in their ability to provide strategic utility, to exert command and control in an U/ITE, and to act as the supported command when required. The Goldwater-Nichols and Nunn-Cohen bills accomplished amazing things sixteen years ago, but in today's world they are not enough. Clearly stated, additional legislation and reform are required in order for SOF to maximize their potential.

The purpose of this chapter is two-fold. First, we will finalize the argument for making SOF a separate service, and second, we will suggest aspects for future research, study, and implementation.

B. CONCLUSION: MAKING SOF A SEPARATE SERVICE

> …it is difficult to convince a skeptical audience of the value of SOF. We can prove 'scientifically' what a 1,000-lb bomb will do to 12 in of reinforced concrete…The impact of a four-man Mobile Training Team teaching our friends in the third world in peacetime or a 12-man Special Forces A-detachment operating in an enemy's rear in wartime is not susceptible to such analysis, nor is it intuitively obvious. (Daniel, 1985, pp. 71-72)

In order for SOF to maximize their potential, they must become a separate service. As we have identified in Chapter III, SOF currently provide much military utility, but are limited in their ability to provide strategic utility. Failure to achieve strategic utility results from institutional constraints, organizational focus, and reactive employment rather than pro-active engagement.

From our point of view, making SOF a separate service is a zero sum game; either one accepts the ideas and concepts described in this thesis and recognizes that the

only way to implement them is by creating a separate organization, or one does not, in which case SOF will continue to be squandered as an organization. Although changes have been made since the inception of USSOCOM, they have been minimal, and fit into the overarching conventional military structure and mindset. Essentially, SOF have been attempting to fit themselves-or, to use a metaphor-like a square peg into a round hole since 1987. Organizational changes that have occurred in the past have only been treating the symptoms rather than the disease. If the status quo continues, SOF will become so hyper-conventionalized, that it would be difficult to argue that the forces *should not* be incorporated back into the conventional military.

The first step in understanding why SOF should become a separate service is to acknowledge that SOF are a strategic asset and exist to provide strategic utility. By doing so, it becomes apparent that the organization, as it exists today, provides only limited strategic utility at best. This fact leads to two questions that must be answered in order to improve SOF. First, why are SOF unable to provide the level of strategic utility they were designed to provide? And second, what changes must occur in order for SOF to finally fulfill their strategic intent?

Chapters I and III offered insight in answer to question one, and highlighted the institutional problems currently associated with the employment of SOF. SOF have been misused often and have failed to achieve maximum strategic results. As Chapter IV described, not all problems associated with SOF's failure to achieve strategic utility are external. SOFs' internal organization and

mission focus are just as problematic. Finally, Chapter V suggested that current SOF organization and employment lack the required focus and orientation to achieve pro-active/pre-emptive effects in the U/ITE.

In our view, to provide strategic utility, SOF must become a separate service. They must adopt the mission-based unit concept, and conduct holistic and continuous engagement. By removing SOF from the highly institutionalized environment of the conventional military (and current SOF mission unit alignment within DoD), SOF would become less constrained. This change would allow unconventional thinking to permeate the organization and culture, eventually growing the unconventional leadership and mindset required to initiate pro-active and pre-emptive solutions to U/ITs. Second, the establishment of mission-based units, separate SOF AORs, and a streamlined SOF chain of command, would allow SOF to become completely independent of the parent services. This would focus individual units on specific mission sets, thus greatly reducing redundancy while increasing efficiency. Finally, Chapter V demonstrates how this new organization can be employed in a pre-emptive, proactive, holistic, and networked manner, thus giving the organization key access and placement, allowing the force to set the conditions whereby we can address problem areas by using any of the four elements of national power, singly, or in combination. This access and placement would also produce high-resolution information and intelligence that would enable key decision-makers to more effectively blend the elements of national power and produce situation-specific results

that would be in the best strategic interests of US national policy and objectives.

C. RECOMMENDATIONS

The following are recommendations that we believe are essential to the formation and success of SOF as a separate service. Of course, these recommendations are not all-inclusive, and additional in-depth study is required to ensure the end product fully meets the desired intent.

1. Legislative Changes

Legislative changes must occur in order to establish SOF as a separate service. The following additional changes in legislation are also required to allow the service to provide its intended strategic utility: support civilian representation (OSD-level) positions established, a seat on the Joint Chiefs of Staff, service-internal supporting commands (RSOCs), empowered RSOCs with authority, responsibility, and positioning in locations deemed necessary, and finally, alter budget and procurement mechanisms. The elements/forces of special operations would have to be formalized (mission-based units), as would their mission focuses and activities. In order to fully support UW, information and intelligence portions of the existing Title 10 and Title 50 laws must be reviewed and amended in order to allow the conduct of full spectrum information and intelligence activities to support and execute UW, OPB, and AFO missions. The changes in Title 10 and Title 50 legislation must prevent the delineation and separation of intelligence from UW, as it currently exists today (i.e. CIA authority and responsibility versus DoD's for the conduct of UW).

2. Unconventional Warfare Advisor to the President

The service must have an Unconventional Warfare advisor to the President. The principal duties of this position would include: advisor to the President for UW, and overall supervision (including oversight of policy and resources) of special operations and low-intensity conflict activities. Civilian and military personnel working in the OSD would be primary staff, and liaison elements for the UW advisor. Most importantly, the UW advisor must have access to key decision-makers (to include the President himself), similar to the access that the Director of the CIA has. In other words, the person in this position would be able to directly access the President when required, and do this either unilaterally, or with other inter-agency leaders.

3. Interagency Networking

The service not only has to be networked with US departments and agencies, but also with Foreign Governmental Agencies (FGAs). FGAs must be incorporated into the networking process to allow information and intelligence mechanisms to identify, track, isolate, and target threats that are not constrained by boundaries. These networks would pass information as required, take actions when necessary, and through overlapping processes, would ensure adversaries are not lost in gray areas (borders, ethnic boundaries, etc.). Networking would allow uninterrupted information flows, and validate that “the right hand knows what the left hand is doing.” The organizational design of SOF has to make use of advanced communications systems, and be well integrated at all levels through “fusion cells” to ensure information, intelligence, planning, coordination and execution processes are maximized. Key to efficient networking is

organizational design, to include flexibility and a uniform understanding regarding purpose, policy, and intent.

4. Regional Interagency Coordinators (RICs)

This would require the creation of a number of new positions, probably in the DoS. These RICs would, in conceptual terms, be individuals who have a vast amount of experience with the DoS and in their assigned region of the world. The role of the RIC would be to provide oversight and coordination with and between all regional embassy staffs, the TCC, associated RSOCs, OGAs, NGOs and FGAs. This concept returns us to the idea of holistic engagement, the intent being that regional guidance would be analyzed in a joint interagency setting, from which coordinated and synchronized regional engagements strategies could be developed that mutually support one another and all of which support the US national strategy. Figure 6.1 below depicts this process where all regional authorities must coordinate and network information to holistically accomplish national strategy, policy, and objectives.

5. Staff Organization for a RSOC

We recommend the following three modifications to a normal SOC staff. First, because engagement will be a continuous process (regardless of other ongoing contingency operations or war), we recommend that each RSOC have two parallel staffs (see Figure 6.2). For lack of better terms, the war fighting staff would plan, coordinate, and execute contingency operations and war, while the engagement staff would provide continuous planning and coordination for ongoing and future engagement plans. These two parallel staffs, while able to operate separately from one another, and would be closely coordinated and synchronized in order to maximize their effects.

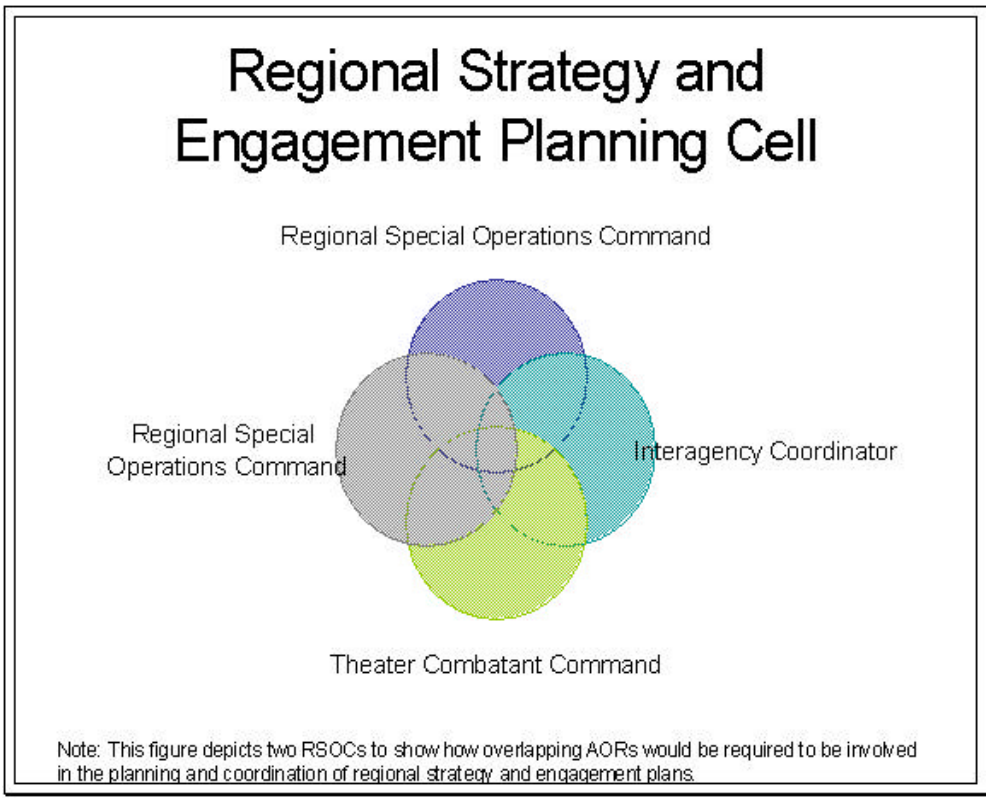


Figure 6.1. Regional Strategy and Engagement Planning Cell.

Second, the new RSOC staff should include a regional studies group. This organization's purpose would be to provide historic, current and ongoing region-specific information that can be used to gain an in-depth understanding of local, ethnic, religious, etc., backgrounds. We feel this is an important function for being able to truly develop effective engagement plans or provide ground truth solutions for conflict resolution. Information gleaned from engagement activities, combined with the in-depth knowledge of the regional studies group, would enable decision-makers to appropriately address

regional problems, and allow for the modification and additional development of intelligence indicators. Additionally, we envision the regional studies group being comprised of mostly non-military regional/country specific experts that may include, but are not limited to: anthropologists, sociologists, historians, economists, expatriates, exiles, and host-nation internal assets.

Third, we recommend an interagency staff section that acts as a fusion cell between the RSOC and others, such as TCC, DoS, OGAs, FGAs, and NGOs when possible. This staff section's primary function will be to act as a "networking agent" in order to efficiently coordinate information between these different organizations.

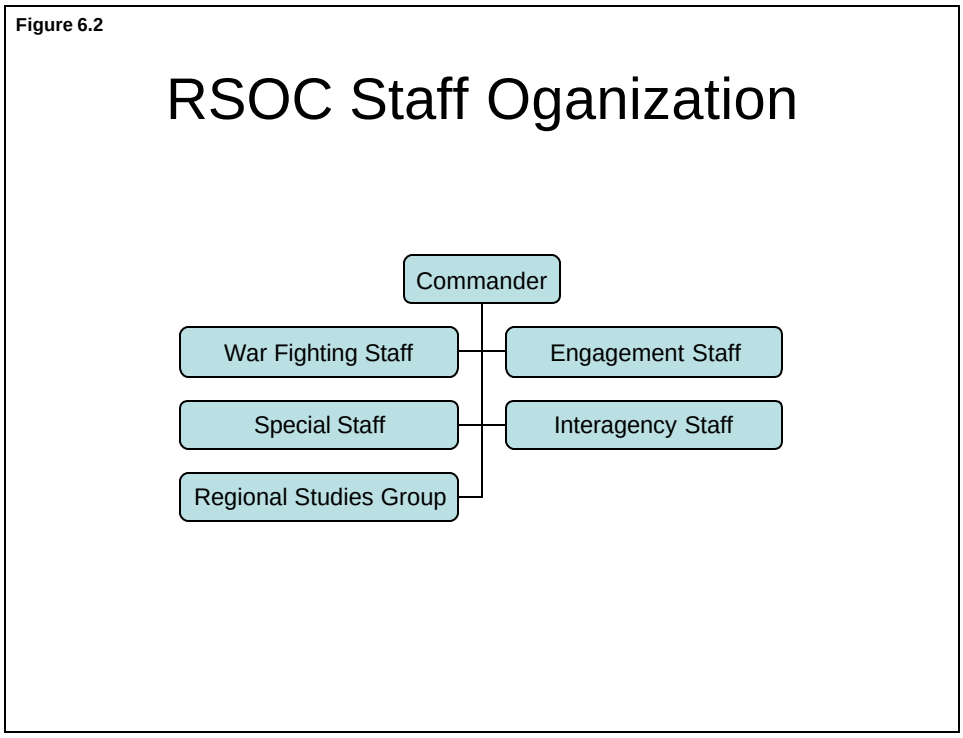


Figure 6.2. RSOC Staff Organization.

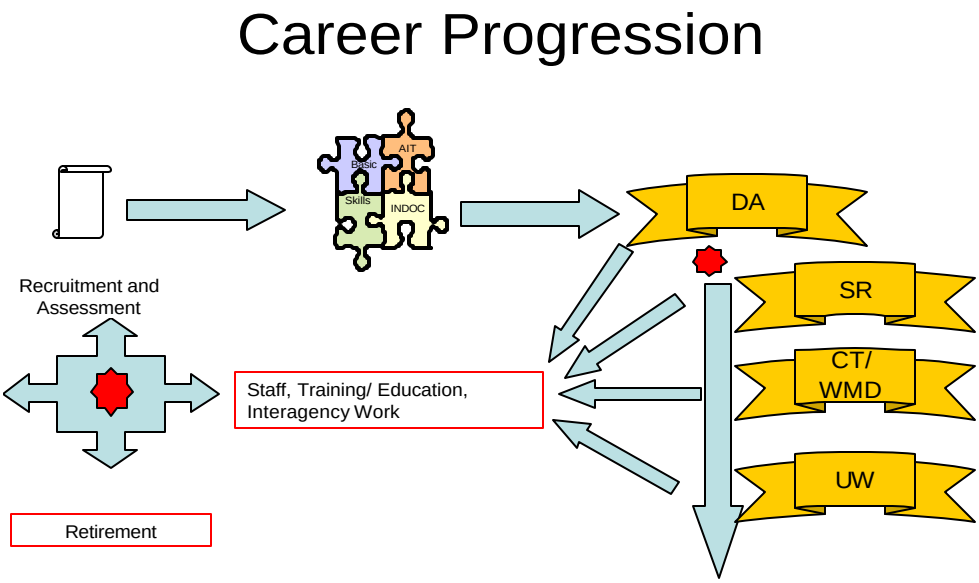
6. Career Progression and Promotions

This concept is meant to make the best possible fit between personnel and job skills, while increasing retention. The idea is to reward individuals for their performance/service regardless of their desire to progress horizontally (change specialist functions) or vertically (achieve higher rank and more responsibility). For instance, this system would allow an NCO, who may be a demolitions expert by trade, to determine the type of unit in which he wants to serve. The system would enable him to stay in a position as long as he wants (so long as his performance is on par), to accept any additional promotions for rank/responsibility, or to decline a promotion and be rewarded for his expertise with some other incentives. This system of promotions versus specialist functions is especially attractive to officers and senior NCOs who want to remain at the tactical level as opposed to being promoted to jobs and levels of authority they do not desire in the first place. By allowing an individual to determine his own career path, all service members would have the opportunity to do what they joined the military to do, and thus increase job satisfaction and retention. The British military system offers a good model for how such a system may work.

Figure 6.3 below depicts hypothetical career cycles within the SOF service. Note that all new recruits (officer and enlisted alike) would start out going through the same core building blocks and assignment to the DA unit. The purpose of this is to establish basic fundamentals, take advantage of the mental and physical traits of youth, and develop esprit de corps and a warrior

ethos. Once a service member has demonstrated an appreciation for the basics, he would be able to receive advanced training and seek assignment in any of the other units within the service. Additionally, Figure 6.3 shows how it would be possible to transfer between units and provides opportunities for non-operational time (due to injury or personal needs) by filling staff positions or serving as instructors. Finally, retirees would have the ability to stay involved in the community by serving as evaluators and participating in planning cells.

Figure 6.3



Note: Advanced skills and individual training/ education is on g oing through out career.

Figure 6.3. Career Progression.

- **SOF Education:** Advanced education would be a necessary requirement to bring together all the key aspects outlined in this thesis. The nature of engagement and UW will require SOF to adopt an

education system that provides instruction in, but should not be limited to: basic civics; economics; sociology; psychology; political science/ international relations; interagency schooling (to attain familiarity with the CIA, FBI, DoS, immigrations, DoE); regional studies; and language and cultural training. This type of in-depth non-military education must be developed throughout all ranks.

- **Rewards and Incentives:** This thesis implies that SOF personnel would be deployed more frequently, in many different capacities, and with greater responsibilities and authority than in the past. In doing so, this would undoubtedly place greater stress on individuals and their families. Therefore, it is imperative that SOF personnel have a rewards and incentives program that is commensurate with the sacrifices we ask these service members to make. We have no doubt that these service members would make greater sacrifices and take greater risks than the run of the mill personnel clerk, supply sergeant, or even the common infantryman, and therefore we feel they should be compensated to the same degree. The biggest incentive for the types of men who do this kind of work has already been discussed-being able to do what they were trained to do! This, however, is not enough. The same type of man it takes to do this line of work will also place job satisfaction ahead of any other priority in life, to include his family. Therefore, it is imperative that there is an incentives package that benefits both the service member *and* his family. Appropriate pay, housing, medical care, and choice of assignment are the types of incentives that will make both the soldier and his family happier and therefore more willing to continue to make tremendous sacrifices in the future.

D. CLOSING THOUGHTS

A different strategy-making process must be employed, and it will not rely on traditional military thinking…it will rely on closer assessments of the adversary's objectives and his willingness to pay the price for achieving them; it will rely on the political, social and

> economic circumstances obtained in the environment in which the conflict takes place. (Koch, 1984)

The strategy-making process must incorporate all the elements of national power. Once a strategy is chosen, it must be flexible, and the executors must understand its importance in terms of our nation's security. SOF are the only military forces that can truly affect all elements of national power through standard and non-standard military action, during peace and war. In order for SOF to provide strategic utility and for feasible strategies to be developed and implemented, the forces must be positioned forward and be regionally engaged to provide ground truth. Holistic engagement would allow our nation to continue to develop and implement strategies that are effective, that incorporate the elements of national power, and that provide decision-makers with diverse options in the future to further enhance US objectives.

A second revolution in SOF military affairs, similar (but greater) than that associated with the creation of USSOCOM must occur for the US to receive efficient strategic utility from SOF. Unnecessary institutional and organizational constraints affect SOF's ability to maximize their potential, and ultimately conduct warfare against U/ITs in complex and unstable environments. Prior to the approval of the Nunn-Cohen bill, James Locher replied to a contemporary's statement that the SOF budget had increased 7,000 percent over time, "7,000 percent worth of progress is pretty small if you have to go 70,000 percent to solve the problem" (Marquis, 1997, p. 141). Today, we would estimate that we are at approximately the halfway point to the solution. SOF has improved since the mid to late

1980s, but additional changes, either in the form of additional amendments to existing legislation, or outright new legislation, are necessary for SOF to provide strategic utility, and realize their ultimate potential.

In 1985, Major General Richard Secord warned that, “if we don’t wake up to the great threat of ‘low-intensity conflict’…we will surely pay a devastating price” (Marquis, 1997, p. 121). The terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001 were a result of our nation’s failure to engage in areas and countries in support of national security objectives. Unfortunately, the terrorist attacks of that day may actually be a blessing in disguise; key decision-makers, the military, and our population better understand the asymmetrical threats that threaten our way of life and the things we value. These terrorist actions have alerted us to why we need to embrace pre-emptive strategies to ensure that similar, or more devastating events, do not happen in the future.

The events of September 11, 2001 may have been unavoidable. Life in a liberal democracy allows freedoms that can be exploited, and ultimately result in our adversaries taking actions that may subvert and sabotage our freedom. Chance and hope are not courses of action. We must vigorously pursue a pre-emptive strategy, and continuously engage worldwide to reduce the possibility that we are caught by surprise again. These actions will allow us to live as we have in the past, while significantly reducing the threats from our adversaries.

Within this new world order, SOF must be able to live up to their maximum potential. In order to do this, reorganization and restructuring that allows interagency

coordination and the elements of national power to be incorporated in the right mix must occur. SOF must become a separate service to accomplish these tasks, and provide strategic utility. SOF must engage continuously, be the supported command in U/ITEs, support conventional commands in conventional warfare, and strive to increase our nation's effectiveness at blending the elements of national power. The changes recommended are not only meant to achieve this in the immediate future, but also should serve this purpose against all future irregular threats. SOF are a national treasure that are expected to provide this service to our nation, and they cannot be squandered.

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