

ROLE OF SPECIAL FORCES LIAISON ELEMENTS IN  
FUTURE MULTINATIONAL OPERATIONS

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## ABSTRACT

### ROLE OF SPECIAL FORCES LIAISON ELEMENTS IN FUTURE MULTINATIONAL OPERATIONS by Major Bruce R. Swatek, 100 pages.

This thesis examines how might Special Forces liaison elements (SFLEs) improve interoperability between US forces, allies, and coalition partners from now until 2020. Given the history and current nature of US national security interests and defense strategy, it appears that the military will continue to conduct future operations within a multinational framework. It is also likely that in future operations, US commanders will continue to share the responsibility of leading such diverse organizations and face situations involving an equal or greater number of variables than those experienced during the Gulf War and subsequent combined operations. Thus, US commanders will require a conduit, such as SFLEs, also referred to as coalition support teams (CSTs) or liaison coordination elements (LCEs), to achieve the full synergistic effects of unified combat power. The study concludes that to ensure SFLEs remain capable and flexible to the emerging needs of US forces as well as multinational partners, SFLEs must as a minimum have compatible communication systems with US forces, enhanced regional expertise that includes vast knowledge of traditional as well as arcane languages and cultures, and an improved understanding of Joint and Army procedures and equipment at the operational levels.

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## ABBREVIATIONS

C2	Command and Control
C4I	Command, Control, Communications, Computers and Intelligence
C4ISR	Command, Control, Communications, Computers, Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance
CARICOM	Caribbean Command
CJSOTF	Combined Joint Special Operation Task Force
CST	Coalition Support Team
DTLOMS	Doctrine, Training, Leader Development, Organization, Materiel and Soldiers
FAO	Foreign Area Officer
FM	Field Manual
FID	Foreign Internal Defense
FOB	Forward Operating Base
IFOR	Implementation Force
KFOR	Kosovo Force
JCAS	Joint Close Air Support
JP	Joint Publication
LCE	Liaison Coordination Element
LNO	Liaison Officer
MND	Multinational Division
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NBC	Nuclear, Biological, and Chemical
NCO	Noncommissioned Officer
SASO	Stability and Support Operations

SFLE	Special Forces Liaison Element
SFODA	Special Forces Operational Detachment A
SOCCE	Special Operations Command and Control
SOCIFOR	Special Operations Command Implementation Force
SOF	Special Operations Forces
TCN	Troop Contributing Nation
UN	United Nations
US	United States
USASOC	US Army Special Operations Command
USSOCOM	US Special Operations Command
UW	Unconventional Warfare

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## CHAPTER 1

### OVERVIEW

Recalling Clausewitz' analogy of a military force as an intricate machine, ample liaison parties, properly manned and equipped, may be viewed as a lubricant that helps keep that machine working smoothly. (JP 1 2000b, 4)

Joint Pub 1, *Joint Warfare of the Armed Forces of the United States*

#### Introduction

The year is 2012 and the African Crisis Response Initiative, a program initiative pushed by the United States (US) State Department in the late 1990s, reacts to a deadly civil war plagued by genocide and starvation in Zaire by moving an all-African peace enforcement force into the country. The force--comprising twelve thousand soldiers from Senegal, Uganda, Malawi, Ghana, and Mali--attempts to establish a zone of separation between feuding ethnic factions; however, the force experiences numerous interoperability problems early in the mission and consequently requests support from the international community. After months of diplomacy, organized by the United Kingdom along with the US and France, the factions agree to a peace accord and cessation of fighting. The sponsoring nations of the accord agree to establish a military presence--Zaire Force--to enforce the accord and provide humanitarian relief. The US prepares to deploy an infantry brigade headquarters along with two battalions to lead one of the three multinational brigade sectors. Infantry battalions from Uganda and Mali are assigned to the US sector. An initial report from a US military assessment team indicates the African units will require additional training and equipment to accomplish the peace enforcement mission. Furthermore, the Zaire Force commander determines that to meet the timeline

directed by the accord, he must figure out a coherent way to rapidly integrate the African Crisis Response Initiative units into the command and intelligence structure of the force.

Although the scenario depicted above was fictitious, recent challenges to the international security environment and the widening gap in military capabilities between the US and other nations indicate that the US will find itself in a similar situation in the near future. Since the end of the Cold War, the US military has taken part in over forty multinational operations. An analysis of these multinational operations prepared for the Office of the Secretary of Defense by the RAND National Defense Research Institute reveals that the US military must be ready to operate within multinational forces of varying compositions and dispositions (Hura 2000, 184). With the exception of Operation Allied Force in Kosovo during 1999, recent multinational operations required the US military to operate alongside relatively unfamiliar forces. Significant interoperability problems developed during the operations because of language and cultural differences as well as incompatible force structure, doctrine, and equipment. Undoubtedly, synchronization of a force's activities is fundamental to successful military operations. Thus, the ability of the US military to operate effectively with allies and future partners is a challenging issue. The aim of this study is to provide a recommendation for US commanders to consider when selecting assets to facilitate integration and interoperability during combined operations.

This study focuses on the emerging role of US Army Special Forces in liaison coordination activities by looking at how might Special Forces liaison elements (SFLEs) improve interoperability between US forces and multinational partners during future combined operations. Prior to proceeding, it is helpful to clarify the nature of such

improvement. By definition, “improve” means to enhance in quality, make better, and provide useful additions or amendments (*Webster's Third New International Dictionary* 2002, 917). This study considers improvements within the context of the research question as simply meaning actions taken by a third party to facilitate interoperability among other parties. In other words, an SFLE helps to mitigate “coalition warfare inhibitors,” such as language, cultural, doctrinal, and technological asymmetries that typically prevent multinational partners from becoming a unified force (Beattie 2002). Generally, Special Forces performs this role when other instruments, such as organic liaison officers (LNOs), are not readily available. This basic interpretation meets the special operations mission criteria outlined in FM 3-05.30, *Special Forces Operations*, which stipulates that Special Operations Forces (SOF) resources are in such short demand that they need not be used for operations whenever conventional assets can accomplish the mission.

Since 1990, the US military has often relied on SFLEs to facilitate its effort in transitioning diverse multinational forces into integrated and synchronized organizations. SFLEs, also referred to as coalition support teams (CSTs) or liaison coordination elements (LCEs), were essential during the Gulf War and have been employed in subsequent multinational operations involving ground forces. Special Forces provide conventional military commanders a flexible capability because of their unique functional skills, foreign languages, cultural awareness, and advanced communications. For the most part, SFLEs accomplish their mission by training allies and coalition partners on common tactics and techniques, assisting with communications connectivity, and establishing liaison to coordinate for combat support and combat service support

functions throughout the entire spectrum of military operations (FM 3-05.20 2001, 2-21). To be a unique and relevant enabler in future multinational operations and not just a short-term “workaround” to integration problems, SFLEs will have to acquire enhanced talents as the US military transforms and modernizes its war-fighting capabilities beyond those of other nations.

### Background

US military doctrine commonly refers to a multinational operation as a military action conducted by forces of two or more nations, typically within the structure of an alliance or coalition. An alliance, such as the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), is the result of formal agreements between two or more nations for broad, long term objectives, whereas a coalition is an ad hoc arrangement between two or more nations for common action, such as the one formed to defeat Iraqi forces in the Gulf War (FM 3.0 2001, 2-14). One of the critical aspects of multinational operations is the need for interoperability amongst the various organizations, and this requires the exchange of information. Even with compatible technology, which is extremely rare during combined operations, there remains a requirement for personnel to physically serve in the capacity of LNOs because they can assure both the perception and the reality of unity of effort (JP 3-07.3 1999, I-16).

Ongoing operations in the Balkans and Afghanistan reveal that most nations are not equipped with the digital technology fielded by the US military. Few nations can keep pace with the US military’s research and development efforts or even afford the technological advances. Referring to the widening military capability gap between the US military and its allies, NATO Secretary General George Robertson recently called

NATO's European members and Canada "a group of nations that are rapidly becoming military pygmies" (Melloan 2002, 15). The US currently outspends NATO allies in the areas of military modernization by a ratio of roughly two to one (Nichiporuk 2000, 25). With this in mind, it is plausible that the US military will in the near future be unable to talk to any of its allies or coalition partners. Thus, the employment of LNOs that can perform standard liaison duties, as well as provide communications connectivity and assess forces for US use, will be essential.

Normally during multinational operations, foreign contingents dispatch organic LNOs. They represent the interests of their commander to a higher commander and staff, but their real value is in their ability to significantly enhance the understanding of the commander's intent at both headquarters (Scales 1998, 4). This requires an LNO who can build and maintain rapport in order to earn the trust of the supported commander and staff. During combined operations, liaison interaction is critical because existing language barriers and cultural difference will create confusion in timing and purpose, which could be the cause for unsynchronized operations. For the most part, operations are planned and directed by the combined headquarters with approval of national authority. Responsibilities are assigned based on the capabilities of each contingent or based on political priorities and agendas. To achieve the "full synergistic effects of combined combat power" requires strong liaison channels to closely monitor activities and to assist staff processes and ensure interaction occurs between contingents (RisCassi 1997, 2). An LNO with an appreciation for cultural awareness and an ability to foster partnership is vital:

Culture is the single most dominant influence on people, and therefore, on coalitions. In nearly all cases where alliances have failed, the cause can be traced to basic ignorance of the other's cultural values. Conversely, successful coalitions are bred through empathetic communication and through profound understanding of socio-political environments. (Fenzel, 1993, 4)

Previous combined operations clearly demonstrate that the liaison function is vital to command and control (C2) and it is beneficial to exchange competent LNOs at the earliest opportunity to ensure mutual understanding and unity of effort. During World War II, General Dwight Eisenhower learned that unity of command is very difficult to achieve and that "earnest cooperation" and "mutual confidence" are the deciding factors in making an allied command work because alliances have often done no more than name a common foe (FM 100-8 1997,1-4). Eisenhower's success during the war was due largely to his persistence on integration and cohesion within his headquarters staff (Scales 1998, 1). This practice permitted uninterrupted flow of information and exchange of ideas amongst the allies. Additionally, Eisenhower sensed that "patience, tolerance, frankness, absolute honesty in all dealings, particularly with all persons of the opposite nationality, and firmness, [were] absolutely essential" in combined operations (FM 3.0 2001, 2-15). British Field Marshal Bernard Montgomery employed another means of liaison. He selected a small group of combat-tested staff officers to serve as his "directed telescope" (Griffin 1991, 30). These officers visited tactical units and sent "ground truth" reports directly back to Montgomery. Their ability to obtain immediate and unfiltered information from commanders on the fluid battlefield severely reduced the ambiguity that Carl von Clausewitz, the renowned military theorist, referred to as the "friction in war." The following passage translated from an undisclosed foreign nation's after-action report at a US combat training center reiterates this point:

The LNO must be ruthless in his quest for information and, while observing protocol, must attempt to accompany the American commander to as many high level meetings as possible. At this stage, the LNO can get inside the American thought process, which is invaluable to his own commander. (FM 100-8, 1997, 21)

### Significance of the Study

Given the history and current nature of US national security interests and defense strategy, it is apparent that the US military will continue to conduct future operations within a multinational framework. It is also reasonable to believe that in future multinational operations, US commanders will continue to share the responsibility of leading such forces and face situations involving an equal or greater number of variables than those experienced in past combined operations. For these reasons, US commanders will require a means--such as SFLEs, organic LNOs, Foreign Area Officers (FAOs), or technical command, control, communications, computer, and intelligence (C4I) systems--to create mutual understanding and unity of effort within these diverse organizations. What exactly this conduit will look like in the future remains to be determined. This thesis will attempt to prove that SFLEs will continue to be the choice for US commanders when selecting assets to facilitate integration and interoperability.

### Primary Research Question

How might SFLEs improve interoperability during multinational operations from now through the 2020 time frame?

### Subordinate Research Questions

1. How does an SFLE improve the interaction and interoperability of US forces and multinational partners?

2. Will SFLEs perform the same role in every case or will it vary by mission? In other words, is working with Canadians the same as with Russians, is working at the operational level the same as at the tactical level, and is working with combat units the same as working with combat support units?

3. What areas of change in Special Forces doctrine, training, leader development, organization, materiel and soldiers (DTLOMS) need to be made to improve liaison coordination activities in a multinational environment?

### Assumptions

To maintain feasibility the thesis will make four assumptions. The first assumption is that Special Forces will continue to be a viable force in supporting US political and military interests from now through the next two decades. The second assumption is that the US military will continue to fight along side its allies and coalition partners in future operations. The third assumption is that a conduit will continue to be necessary to facilitate integration and interoperability during combined operations. Lastly, this thesis assumes that joint, SOF, and Army SOF vision statements and concepts are valid material to be used as a framework for future operations.

### Limitations and Delimitations

The scope of this thesis will cover SFLE activities conducted in support of allies or coalition partners since the development of the Special Forces collateral activity “coalition support” in 1990. Specifically, this thesis will cover SFLE activities conducted in the Gulf War, Somalia, Haiti, Bosnia, Kosovo, and Afghanistan. This paper will not discuss any classified activities. Nor will this paper address liaison missions performed

with other government agencies, civilian organizations, belligerents, or former warring factions. Although equally important to the success of combat operations as well as stability and support operations (SASO), these liaison missions fall outside the scope of this thesis, which concentrates on the integration and interoperability of simply foreign military forces operating alongside joint and Army forces.

This thesis will not be able to address every aspect of the Special Forces liaison activities conducted in Kosovo and Afghanistan, since these are ongoing operations and the majority of official military material pertaining to these operations is restricted for dissemination. However, enough useful information from unclassified sources is available to make these two operations valid for research and included in the analysis of historical employments. Although the liaison work performed by Special Forces with anti-Taliban groups in Afghanistan does not match the SFLE profile used in previous multinational operations, it is vital to include this work in the analysis because it deals with an emergent aspect of coalition support activities in an unconventional warfare (UW) environment. Moreover, the US and its allies resolve to be engaged in a long-term, sustained global effort to fight terrorism increases the possibility that this type of liaison work will be employed again in the near future. Based on a recent UW study conducted by the US Army John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School, “Coalition forces trained, organized, equipped, advised, and led in varying degrees by Special Forces represent the newest evolution in UW-related surrogate forces” (2001, 12).

Answering the primary research question relies heavily on the ability to predict the operational and threat environments for the US military from now until the 2020. As a framework for future combined operations, the paper will use material in the form of

vision statements, conceptual templates, and briefings published from the US Joint Forces Command, US Special Operations Command (USSOCOM), US Army Training and Doctrine Command, and US Army Special Operations Command (USASOC). Lastly, the research material used for this study will be limited to works published before 1 March 2002.

### Research Methodology

This section discusses the course of action taken to analyze and support the primary research question. The thesis will use deductive reasoning to examine both positive and negative aspects of historical SFLE employments. Specifically, this portion of the research will differentiate past and present understandings for liaison activities in support multinational forces. The thesis will also use an explorative research approach to determine what relevant adjustments need to be made to Special Forces DTLOMS to ensure SFLE activities transform in accordance with the emerging requirements of US and ally conventional forces from now until 2020.

This introductory chapter will establish the purpose and significance of the thesis in addition to providing an initial understanding of the liaison activities conducted to support multinational forces.

The second and third chapters provide the overall groundwork for research. The second chapter will examine current attitudes and understandings on the topic by reviewing literature available in the areas of Special Forces doctrine, liaison activities, interoperability within multinational forces, and future concepts for operations from now until 2020. The third chapter will provide background information on Special Forces

overall role, detailed descriptions of liaison experiences during six recent combined operations, and an illustration of a typical mission profile.

The fourth chapter will consist of a two-part analysis. Part one analyzes the current understandings of liaison activities as well as historical SFLE employments in order to determine logical trends. This analysis will answer the first two subordinate research questions. Part two of the analysis will apply the data and conclusions from part one against future SFLE employment scenarios derived from US Joint Forces Command Battle Lab, US Army Training and Doctrine Command, and US Army Special Operations Battle Lab. This analysis will answer the final subordinate research question.

The fifth chapter will draw conclusions concerning the SFLE's role in improving future multinational operations and will make recommendations to enhance current doctrine and future operations regarding the employment of liaisons. Additionally, this chapter will make recommendations for further research on the topic and other areas that were uncovered but fell outside the scope of this thesis.

### Conclusion

In addition to establishing the purpose and significance of the thesis, this chapter provided an initial understanding of the role liaison plays in multinational operations. Given the widening military capability gap between the US and the emerging requirement to establish coalitions with new partners, it is evident that the liaison function will continue to be a vital part of transforming multinational forces into integrated and synchronized organizations. As the next chapter will show, a number of works have been written on the topic of Special Forces liaison activities, multinational operations, and conceptual templates for future operations.

## CHAPTER 2

### CURRENT UNDERSTANDINGS

We don't feel real unilateral . . . just about everything we do deals with an ally or a partner of some kind. (Loeb 2002, 18)

Admiral Dennis C. Blair  
Commander-in-Chief US Pacific Command

#### Introduction

To provide the overall groundwork for research this chapter examines current understandings of SFLE activities and operational constructs designed for the year 2020. Literature available that examines these areas includes Joint, Army, and Special Forces doctrine; recent books on Special Forces; articles on coalition warfare and liaison missions; published and unpublished works on multinational operations; and vision statements and conceptual templates. The objective of this chapter is to show that a number of relevant works have been written on the research topic.

#### Doctrine

##### Joint Doctrine

The reality of contemporary warfare suggests that future military operations will not only consist of joint endeavors but also multinational ones. For this reason, military doctrine and related tactics, techniques, and procedures focus on providing a common framework for the military to project its power as part of both a joint and combined force. According to JP 1, *Joint Warfare of the Armed Forces of the US*, doctrine “offers a common perspective from which to plan and operate, and fundamentally shapes the way we think about and train for war” (1995, vi). Although doctrine is authoritative, anyone

familiar with combined operations knows that executing missions as part of a multinational force requires fundamental principles that are adaptable and take into account the diversity of participating units.

The majority of joint publications does not address SFLEs in particular, but discusses in general terms liaison activities and coalition support missions conducted by the SOF community as a means for overcoming multinational differences. JP 3-05, *Joint Special Operations*, states that: “SOF are resourceful units capable of deploying in a timely manner and providing a full range of support by maximizing their inherent characteristics of mobility, communications, self-protection capability, and training” (1998, II-11). Additionally, JP 3-16, *Joint Doctrine for Multinational Operations*, states, “SOF provide critical US C4I links to coalition partners not trained in interoperability with US forces” (2000c, II-13). The operational units assigned to USASOC, Air Force Special Operations Command, and Naval Special Warfare Command are responsible for training and working with allies and potential coalition partners. Coalition support activities performed by SOF often provide the multinational force commander with his only means of vertical and horizontal communications on the battlefield. JP 3-07.3, *Joint Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures for Peace Operations*, strongly suggests using Special Forces to integrate contingents because very few conventional forces possess the core competencies that allow Special Forces to coordinate between a contingent and its multinational force headquarters, international agencies, nongovernmental organizations, and private volunteer organizations. Multinational operations planning should take into account the following considerations: political agendas, language barriers, cultural

backgrounds, military capabilities and training, equipment interoperability, and logistic support system coordination (JP 3-07 1995, 45).

### Army Doctrine

FM 100-8, *The Army in Multinational Operations*, provides constructive information on the subject of command structures used during multinational operations that can directly influence the role an SFLE plays within a force. Fundamentally, unity of command is not realistic during a combined operation, and the best a force commander can hope for is unity of effort, sometimes more commonly perceived to be a compromise among the majority of participating units. Normally, but not necessarily in all cases, the parallel or lead-nation command structure is used for coalitions, and the integrated command structure is used for alliances. A parallel command exists when a nation retains control of its deployed forces and when it “tends to feature relatively slow decision making processes” that are not well suited for multinational forces in hostile threat environments (Nichiporuk 2000, 42). Conversely, a lead-nation command is more flexible, because the nation providing the majority of forces and resources supplies the force commander. In both parallel and lead-nation command structures, SFLEs play a useful role in assessing and integrating forces until relationships and C2 structures mature. Under an integrated command structure with a designated nation providing the force commander, the SFLE role may be diminished, since members of an alliance attempt to field compatible C4I systems and to develop operational plans to meet potential threats in an integrated manner (FM 3.0 2001, 2-15).

FM 3.0, *Operations*, defines the command and support relationships that apply to SFLEs supporting a coalition. This relationship determines the degree of control and

responsibility a commander has for units assigned to him (Findlay 1998, 10). During unilateral operations, US forces operate under the following command and support relationships: combatant command, operational control, tactical control, direct support, or general support. During combined operations, command and support relationships will vary on the particular mission. Additionally, different terminology may be used to accommodate political and military policies of participating members (FM 100-8 1997, 2-7).

### Special Forces Doctrine

The recently released FM 3-05.20, *Special Forces Operations Doctrine*, attempts to standardize and group all liaison coordination activities with US, allies, or coalition under the doctrinal term of SFLE activities. The manual abandons the terms CST and LCE in favor of SFLE. This is the first time that a Special Forces publication discusses the SFLE term and recognizes it as an activity under the umbrella of coalition support. The publication states, “Liaison coordination activities consist of key aspects from several functional areas, ranging from standard LNO responsibilities to UW and foreign internal defense (FID) tasks” (2001, C-1). The majority of Special Forces soldiers who have performed the CST and LCE missions would agree that they are well suited for carrying out the mission and supporting a multinational force because of their inherent UW and FID skills. Despite the similarity of the tasks performed for UW, FID and coalition support, a difference does exist in the overall goal for each mission. In the case of UW or FID, Special Forces are trying to help an organization help itself--whether it is an insurgency or host-nation military force. Whereas in coalition support, Special Forces are trying to help allies and coalition partners help the multinational force headquarters

achieve its objectives (FM 31-20-3 1994, 1-24). The basic functions of an SFLE as outlined in FM 3-05.20, *Special Forces Operations Doctrine*, are: (1) monitor the operations of the multinational force and the impact of those operations on the supported unit, as well as the supported unit's impact on the multinational force, (2) coordinate the synchronization of the supported unit's and other component's plans and operations to create a synergistic effect, (3) advise the multinational force commander and staff on the supported unit's capabilities and limitations, while advising the supported unit on joint procedures, and (4) assist staff processes to make sure multinational interaction occurs. Accomplishing these functions requires comprehensive knowledge of US and foreign conventional forces' command structures and the relationships between differing units and capabilities.

One of the most important sections of FM 3-05.20, *Special Forces Operations Doctrine*, is the area that addresses rapport building. By definition, rapport literally means harmonious relationship. According to ARTEP 31-807-33, *Mission Training Plan for FID*, rapport has the connotation of a relationship built on mutual trust and affinity. Special Forces soldiers cannot accomplish their mission of training, advising, and assisting indigenous, surrogate, or multinational forces without establishing rapport. Additionally, FM 31-30-3, *FID Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures for Special Forces*, and FM 90-41, *JTF Liaison Handbook*, reiterate the value in establishing a relationship built on mutual trust, understanding, and respect. FM 3-05.20, *Special Forces Operations Doctrine*, recommends that Special Forces soldiers study FM 22-100, *Military Leadership*, which provides the basic leadership knowledge needed to understand human behavior and motivation.

The aim of establishing effective rapport is “consensus building.” Simply put, the SFLE commander must obtain positive results without coercion, and this is accomplished by advising and coaching counterparts, setting the example, and seeking a compromise when necessary (FM 3-05.20 2001, C-9). The SFLE commander must convey to his counterpart, the supported unit commander, that “he is sincerely interested in him, his nation, and its cause” (FM 3-20.05 2001, C-10). Additionally, the SFLE commander must demonstrate that he is a competent professional who can help the supported unit commander achieve his goals. The SFLE commander gains the respect of the supported unit commander by demonstrating the core values that guide all Special Forces soldiers. These core values--warrior ethos, professionalism, innovation, versatility, cohesion, character, and cultural awareness--are nonnegotiable.

#### Literature on SFLEs Activities

A search for published material dealing directly with SFLE activities shows that there is limited material available. The latest books written about Special Forces include *US Special Operations Forces in Action: The Challenge of Unconventional Warfare* by Thomas K. Adams, *Special Forces: A Guided Tour of U.S. Army Special Forces* by Tom Clancy and John Gresham, and *Shadow Warriors* by Tom Clancy and retired General Carl Stiner. Although these books do not go into depth about SFLEs, the authors provide current information on Special Forces role within the armed forces and observations on how Special Forces is perceived by people outside the SOF community. Overall, the perception of Special Forces appears to be a positive one due to their versatility. Information from Adams, Clancy, Gresham, and Stiner was constructive in verifying background material obtained from military publications and unpublished sources.

## CSTs during the Gulf War.

*Special Warfare*, an official quarterly of the US Army John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School, has a number of articles that offer useful information on coalition warfare and its origin. Major John Fenzel's "Five Imperatives of Coalition Warfare" offers valuable lessons on the employment of CSTs and addresses a set of five working guidelines used for coalition warfare in the early 1990s. Fenzel recommends cultivating intense political and cultural awareness, developing rapport, synchronizing activities, maximizing doctrine and innovation to overcome problems, and simplifying the plan. Major David Johnson's "Cross Cultural Communications in Coalition Warfare" recommends methods for establishing strong workable ties with coalition partners. Johnson, a Special Forces officer who served as an Special Forces Operational Detachment A (SFODA) commander in the Gulf War and a battalion operations officer in Operation Restore Hope, states, "[A] coalition partner's desire to maintain credibility by keeping the Americans happy can sometimes result in wasted effort and resources" (1993, 11). Another article, "Interview: Lieutenant Colonel Daniel Brownlee, commander of 1st Battalion, 5th Special Forces Group," outlines the coalition support activities conducted by 5th Special Forces Group during the Gulf War. Brownlee emphasized that Special Forces peculiar skills were necessary for taking on the role of assessing and training units during coalition warfare--the term used by SOF in the early 1990s to describe support to coalition partners during combat operations. In the case of the Gulf War, it was essential that the CSTs were competent in the skills, tactics, and equipment of the coalition--armor and mechanized units to the battalion level. Thus, 5th Special Forces Group ensured the CSTs included personnel who had previous experience or attended

armor and mechanized courses. Brownlee rejects the idea that US conventional forces, such as the 82nd Airborne Division and the US Marine Corps, had the resources, experience, and interpersonal skills to be successful in providing support and integrating the Arab-Islamic coalition. Another point made by Brownlee in this 1993 article is that coalition support is a logical extension of Special Forces FID capability, and it will continue to be a key mission:

It will be the primary collateral activity for us in the future. . . . It's not a new mission, it's not something that requires us to reinvent the wheel. We are already doing it, have been doing it, and will continue to do it. (1993, 44)

#### LCEs in Bosnia

Captain Chadwick W. Storlie's article "The Liaison Coordination Element: Force Multiplier for Coalition" in *Special Warfare* provides a story line of the LCE mission and task organization based on his multiple deployments to Bosnia supporting the Romanian Engineering Battalion and the Independent Russian Airborne Brigade. He discusses the requirement for using two types of LCEs--the static-position element and multiple-position element. When the supported unit has reasonable tactical skills but requires support in C2 functions at the operational level, a static-position LCE consisting of four personnel usually suffices to accomplish the mission. When the supported unit requires both support at the tactical level and at the higher headquarters, a mobile-position LCE, consisting of twelve personnel, receives the mission and deploys in three-to-four-man mobile teams to accomplish the tactical support requirements. Captain Joseph B. King's article "Foreign Area Officer and Special Forces: Synergy in Combined Peacekeeping Operations" in *Center for Army Lessons Learned (CALL): News from the Front* describes his personal experience as a FAO working alongside the LCE with the Independent

Russian Airborne Brigade in Bosnia. From King's perspective, the LCE was very productive as a mobile-position LCE performing tactical level tasks. However, King felt that the static-position LCE providing support at the operational level requires augmentation in the form of a FAO. According to King, the majority of the LCE members lacks adequate training in foreign staff processes at the operational level and above; thus, they were not able to facilitate operational planning.

An interview with Lieutenant Colonel Taylor V. Beattie, special operations command and control element (SOCCE) commander for the US-led Task Force Eagle in Bosnia from December 1995 to March 1996, revealed that the most important function of an LCE might be "tactical liaison," because this function is usually the most difficult task for conventional force LNOs. Beattie's definition of "tactical liaison" refers to the function of interpreting the orders, concept of operations, and commander's intent for subordinate units of dissimilar origins, doctrines, and operational methodologies. In his paper titled "The Special Forces Liaison Coordination Element (SFLCE) in Operation Joint Endeavor: One Team One Mission," Beattie discusses some general LCE operational concepts and methodologies developed during his unit's deployment. The selection criteria for personnel included language proficiency, cultural perspective, and prior experience working with the supported nationality. As far as the motto "one team one mission," Beattie explains that the success or failure of an LCE can be measured by the performance of its supported unit. Thus, an LCE and its supported unit must have common goals and objectives.

## SFODAs in Afghanistan

Offering insight on Special Forces role in Afghanistan are several newspaper and magazine articles. The *Washington Post's* article "And His U.S. Partners: Wounded Army Captain Details Offensive Against Taliban" by Peter Finn familiarizes readers with the liaison activities performed by Special Forces with anti-Taliban groups during the initial stages of Operation Enduring Freedom. The article focuses on Special Forces liaison and advisory role with the Pashtun group in southern Afghanistan. Tasks performed by the SFODAs ranged from organizing and equipping the anti-Taliban military forces to directing US air strikes against targets. In *USA Today*, "Green Berets Outfought, Outthought the Taliban," Kirk Spitzer tells the story of an SFODA successfully communicating with Northern Alliance troops using gestures and pantomime because the detachment members fluent in Arabic did not speak Dari, the prevalent language of the Northern Alliance. Another article in *Newsweek* magazine, "The Green Berets Up Close" by Donatella Lorch provides insight on another SFODA's resourcefulness. At an initial meeting with Atta Mohammed, a Northern Alliance commander, the SFODA encountered a similar language barrier but was able to adapt to the situation in a different manner:

Accomplished linguist, everyone on the team spoke Arabic and at least two other languages. One spoke French, another Chinese. No luck. At last, the team commander, tried Russian, and one of Atta's men answered him. They found their translator. (Lorch 2001, 2)

### Literature on Multinational Operations

There is adequate literature available on the challenges of conducting multinational operations. Although this literature does not specifically address SFLE

activities, it is relevant to the study because it provides insight on integration and interoperability problems within multinational forces. Key articles include Efrat Elron's article "Why Don't They Fight Each Other? Cultural Diversity and Operational Unity in Multinational Forces" in *Armed Forces & Society* and Robert Scales' article "Trust Not Technology, Sustains Coalitions" in *Parameters: US Army War College*. Both individuals address the human factor and how it can affect coalition building. Overlooking things such as respect, patience, and knowledge of the coalition partner can cause severe operational difficulties for senior commanders. Robert RisCassi's article "Doctrine for Joint Operations in a Combined Environment: A Necessity" in *Military Review* promotes the use of LNOs to overcome language barriers, thus increasing the battle command tempo:

Its difficult to sustain a rapid decision cycle in combined operations. . . . Even the most common tasks, such as sharing intelligence, must await translation before data can be passed through the command. This, in turn, slows the other elements of the decision cycle. (1997, 112)

RAND--a contraction of the term research and development--is a nonprofit "think tank" that has produced several studies of interest pertaining to future multinational force compatibility. Two studies in particular--*Interoperability: A Continuing Challenge in Coalition Operations* and *Improving Army Planning for Future Multinational Coalition Operations*--address trends in twenty-six recent multinational operations and forecast the effects the US military's modernization efforts will have on other nations' ability to conduct combined operations with the US. The studies, which focus on command, control, communications, computer, intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (C4ISR) systems, found that problems occurred because of incompatible communications

and different planning and execution systems. The research focused on the concept of multinational force compatibility versus the concept of interoperability because “it allowed for a broader analysis that included the political and operational implications of technological development as well as the purely technical ones” (Zanini 2000,4). The findings concluded that long-term solutions are not always attainable and policy or procedural “workarounds” may be necessary to circumvent incompatibilities.

*The Army and Multinational Force Compatibility and Forecasting the Effects of Army XXI Design Upon Multinational Force Compatibility*, prepared by the Strategy, Doctrine, and Resources Program of the RAND Arroyo Center, predict that a capabilities gap will likely emerge in 2005 to 2010. The findings also predict that only with significant time for distribution of equipment and user familiarization training would the US Army be able to fill communications shortfalls and serve as the “underlying information backbone” for a combined force. To deal directly with the compatibility problem, the findings recommend that the Army forecast who would be the most likely coalition partners and target specific combined training efforts at those militaries. Long-term engagement activities, such as using forward-deployed liaison teams, will be key.

Additional literature covering different aspects of multinational operations was beneficial in verifying the importance of using liaison elements during joint and combined operations. Works focusing on Special Forces’ roles in multinational operations included Colonel Peter J. Gustaitis’ research paper “Coalition Special Operations: An Operational-Level View,” Major Jonathan White’s monograph “Doctrine for Special Forces Operations in Stability and Support Operation,” and Major Peter E. Davis’ thesis “United States Army Special Forces Coalition Support Operations: Mission

or Collateral Activity.” Literature addressing technological asymmetries include Major James W. Danna’s monograph “Integrating Digitalization in Multinational Operations” and Major Michael B. Black’s thesis “Coalition Command, Control, Communications, Computer, and Intelligence Systems Interoperability: A Necessity or Wishful Thinking?” The latter two studies promote early transfer of C4I systems accompanied with experienced personnel to assist coalition partners with essential training, doctrine, and force structure to properly employ the technology. Another document, a congressional statement by Christopher K. Mellon, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense, reports the lack of foreign language capabilities and area expertise within today’s US military and how these deficiencies are affecting coalition building, peacekeeping, and war-fighting missions. The testimony reports that the military is experiencing shortfalls in less commonly taught and hard-to-learn languages. Additionally, Mellon advises, “Communicating in languages other than English and understanding or accepting cultural and societal differences is vital to success of peacetime and wartime military operations” (2000, 3).

Other material, monographs by Major Douglas M. Chalmers and Lieutenant Colonel Michael Findlay, provide pertinent information on the multinational operational environment in Bosnia. Chalmers’ “Faction Liaison Teams: A Peacekeeping Multiplier” studies the British liaison structures used to work with belligerents in Bosnia between 1992 to 1996. Findlay’s “Special Forces Integration with MND-North in Bosnia” examines the integration of Special Forces elements assigned to the US-led multinational division (MND) between 1995 to 1997. Figure 1 depicts the special operations command structure used during Operation Joint Endeavor. The commander of Special Operations

Command Europe served as the commander of the Special Operations Command Implementation Force (SOCIFOR) and exercised operational control of Special Forces through a Special Forces battalion headquarters, configured as a forward operating base (FOB). Control of the LCEs was exercised through a company headquarters configured as a SOCCE and located at each MND headquarters. The British-led combined joint special operations task force (CJSOTF) exercised NATO tactical control of the FOB and each MND headquarters exercised NATO tactical control of its attached SOCCE.

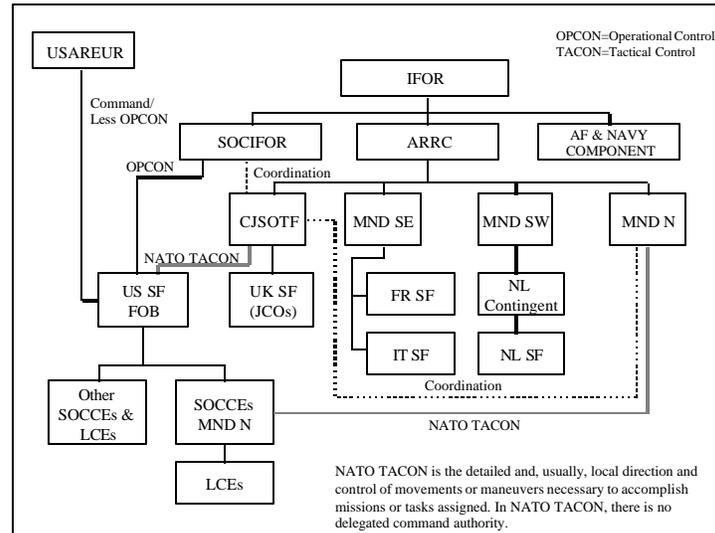


Figure 1. Special Operations Command Structure during Operation Joint Endeavor. *Source*: Findlay 1998, 25.

### Transformation Material

The vision statements and future concepts used in this thesis were influenced in part by the operational and threat environments forecasted by the US Commission on National Security/21st Century, also referred to as the Hart-Rudman Commission, which

was chaired by former US senators Gary Hart and Warren Rudman. The commission was created by the US Congress to conduct a review of potential US national security requirements. Hart-Rudman determined that the US will face an increased threat from terrorism in the next twenty years and will be forced to conduct military operations other than war, such as those in Haiti, Kosovo, and East Timor (Myers 2001, A-7).

Additionally, the commission identified the importance of alliances and concluded that the US must adapt “alliances and other regional mechanisms to a new era in which America’s partners seek greater autonomy and responsibility” (Krepinevich 2000, 8).

### Vision Statements

Today’s Special Forces along with the rest of military are in a period of transformation and focusing on implementing changes that will affect how it operates in the year 2020. The latest vision statements--*Joint Vision 2020*, *SOF Vision 2020*, *Army Vision 2010*, and *ARSOF Vision 2010*--attempt to keep Special Forces on azimuth for integration. These statements endorse the need for “seamless interoperability” and recognize the crucial role SOF, in particular Special Forces, will play in support of conventional forces during peacetime activities and combat operations. Under *Joint Vision 2020*, SOF will operate and fight as part of a joint and often combined force. *The Army Vision* advocates that the Army will transform by 2010 from its current “Legacy Force” condition to an “Objective Force” capable of conducting full-spectrum operations:

The spectrum of likely operations describes a need for land forces in joint, combined, and multinational formations for a variety of missions extending from humanitarian assistance and disaster relief to peacekeeping and peacemaking to major theater wars. (2001, 2)

The chief-of-staff of the Army, General Eric K. Shinseki, advocates that the Army needs to transform quickly to remain an applicable force: “An Objective Force before the end of the decade is achievable and an Objective Force in 2020 will be irrelevant” (2002). Furthermore, *The Army Vision* challenges Special Forces to transform by developing new capabilities and enhancing their responsiveness, deployability, agility, versatility, lethality, survivability, and sustainability (Basehart 2001, 2). The SOF and Army SOF vision statements promote Special Forces as “global scouts” with worldwide access and actively executing theater engagement plans, thus establishing closer ties with potential allies and coalition partners. Furthermore, these vision statements uphold the “SOF Truths”--humans are more important than hardware, quality is better than quantity, SOF cannot be massed produced, and component SOF cannot be created after emergencies arise.

### Future Concepts

Regrettably, the events of 11September corroborate the view that the US military is less likely to “go it alone” accepting most or all of the risks, and most likely to embrace the concept of “multilateralism” in future endeavors (Lewis 1994, 28). Accordingly, the US military must be prepared to conduct integrated and synchronized combined operations. Several conceptual templates address this pressing requirement. The US Joint Forces Command’s *Rapid Decisive Operations* concept focuses at a high end, small-scale contingency. Additionally, TRADOC Pamphlet 525-5, *Advanced Full Spectrum Operations*, concept describes how Army combat, combat support, and combat service support units will fight in the future operations as an Objective Force. Both concepts address the need for a flexible joint force capable of fighting as part of a combined team

in decisive operations. The *Rapid Decisive Operations* concept seeks “joint or combined military operations characterized by rapid, intense, focused attack of an adversary’s strategic and operational vulnerabilities, centers of gravity, and decisive points anywhere in the battlespace . . . without a protracted campaign” (US Joint Forces Command 2001, 6). The *Advanced Full Spectrum Operations* describes the Army’s Objective Force in unified action--part of a force that includes multinational partners and interagency elements--however, it does not articulate the particulars about integration or compatibility of allies and coalition partners with the modernized and digitally enhanced Objective Force, which will be equipped with extremely advanced C4ISR systems (Szayna 2001, 39).

To prepare for the uncertain future, USSOCOM has established a futures concepts working group “to develop a comprehensive process for new concept development, validation, and long range-range planning process designed to facilitate development of new concepts into SOF future capabilities” (US Special Operations Command 2001, 36). This process focuses on “purposeful change” and implements the guidance outlined in *SOF Vision 2020* and *The Way Ahead* concept. Out of the desired capabilities being looked at by the futures concepts working group, only two capabilities--improved information avenues, improved recruitment, and leader development--pertain to facilitating future SFLE activities.

In early September 2001, US Army Special Forces Command sponsored a brainstorming session to analyze the requirements for Special Forces transformation. One of the issues discussed was an interim table of organization and equipment to be used in the short-term until the development and fielding of the Objective Force Special Forces.

There were three objectives of the session: (1) redesign the current legacy organization in order to ensure Special Forces continued standing as the nation's premier low-end unconventional warfare, counterinsurgency, and foreign internal defense operators, (2) ensure Special Forces ability to provide information and targeting data to the new Army, and (3) improve organic combat service support capability at lower echelons of the force (Rosengard 2001, 4). Although the results of the session have not been published yet, a draft version of the proposed courses of action indicates that Special Forces will incorporate new technologies to enhance intelligence collection capabilities, communications connectivity, and mobility.

In keeping pace with the Army's transformation into an Objective Force, the Army Special Operations Battle Lab formed an integrating concept team to settle on which core competencies (war fighting, intercultural communications, problem solving, clandestine infiltration and exfiltration, interagency and combined operations, political awareness, austere or hostile environments, and advanced technology) would be affected by future concepts. To describe the proposed Objective Force Special Forces, the integrating concept team prepared two documents--*Special Forces Integrating Operational Concept* and *Special Forces Operational and Organizational Plan*. The integrating concept team looked at the *Rapid Decisive Operations* and *Advanced Full Spectrum Operations* concepts to ensure Army SOF changes corresponded with Joint and Army transformation plans (Basehart 2001, 3).

The *Special Forces Integrating Operational Concept*, which focuses on future activities and operations, proposes that UW is the foundation of Special Forces and suggests "unconventional operations" as an umbrella term to describe the uniqueness of

Special Forces capabilities. Table 1 depicts the activities and operations that fall under unconventional operations for the Objective Force Special Forces. Subcomponents of unconventional operations are UW, FID, and US unilateral missions. Coalition support falls under the category of UW activities and operations. Worth mentioning is the fact that some analysts believe the “most likely use of military force in the next five to ten years will be in the nontraditional category or unconventional combat” (Bubik 1997, 1).

Table 1. Future Special Forces Activities and Operations

Unconventional Operations				
Unconventional Warfare Through, with or by indigenous, surrogates, or coalition partners		Foreign Internal Defense Through, with or by indigenous, surrogates, or coalition partners		US Unilateral Missions
Guerrilla Warfare	Personnel Recovery	Security Assistance	Humanitarian Assistance	Direct Action
Subversion	Sabotage	Non-Combatant Evacuation Operations	Humanitarian Demining Operations	Counter-Terrorism
Coalition Support				Sabotage
Direct Action	Special Reconnaissance	Counter-Narcotics	Anti-Terrorism	Personnel Recovery
Counter-Terrorism		Training Assistance	Counter-Terrorism	Special Reconnaissance
Other missions as required		Other missions as required	Counter Insurgency Operations	Non-Combatant Evacuation Operations
				Other missions as required

Source: Basehart 2001, 4.

The *Special Forces Operational and Organizational Plan* proposes the organization of the Objective Force Special Forces. The Objective Force SFODA retains the twelve-man organization of the Legacy Force SFODA but with enhanced skills in the areas of personal lethality, fire coordination, and C4ISR. Additionally, the plan discusses the requirement for “regional scholars” with enhanced cultural and language skills. This “micro-regional expertise” will require enhanced theater engagement plans focusing on increased opportunities for Special Forces to gain in-depth knowledge and experience in assigned areas of responsibility. Both the *Special Forces Integrating Operational*

*Concept* and *Special Forces Operational and Organizational Plan* reveal that the Army Special Operations Battle Lab embraces SFLE participation in future combined operations, but what exactly that role will be from now through the 2020 time frame requires further development and implementation. From the perspective of the Army Special Operations Battle Lab:

SFLE missions will continue in importance well into 2020. The role will not diminish. However, in the future, we will provide more than communications connectivity and liaison. We will also provide the digital equipment to ensure coalition forces have the same common relevant operational picture that US forces have. What exactly this looks like remains to be seen. (Russell 2001, 1)

In October 2001, a Special Forces transformation war game was conducted to assess the proposed Objective Force Special Forces operational concepts, capabilities, and organizations. The war game's *Initial Impressions Report* reveals that "the measure of success for Special Forces will be its ability to achieve US objectives by working through, with, and by indigenous and surrogate forces; by conducting US unilateral operations; and its ability to integrate coalition and US conventional force operations" (Basehart 2001, 4). Additionally, the war game validated that UW is the foundation of Special Forces--"the trunk of a tree from which all other missions and capabilities come" (Basehart 2001, 4). The war game consisted of four operational situations or moves designed to examine future issues at the strategic, operational, and tactical levels and to test the ability of Special Forces to operate in the 2010 to 2015 environment as part of an Army Objective Force and Joint *Rapid Decisive Operations* force. The fourth move of the war game placed Special Forces in a 2015 crisis response situation where SFLEs integrated and synchronized coalition war-fighting plans and operations. The SFLEs--equipped with compatible technology of US conventional forces and SOF peculiar

advanced digital systems--ensured US and coalition forces had the same common relevant operational picture.

### Conclusion

A thorough review of primary and secondary source material--obtained from the Fort Leavenworth Combined Arms Research Library, CALL database, USSOCOM archives, and the Internet--reveals that over fifty works pertain to Special Forces liaison activities, multinational operations, and conceptual templates for future operations. Despite such a wide range of interest in the subject matter, none of the literature reviewed in this chapter answers the primary research question. Thus, an innovative and comprehensive analysis of the research topic will serve as a significant contribution to Special Forces as well as the entire military profession. The next chapter will discuss the overall role of Special Forces, provide a detailed examination of past and present SFLE activities, and outline a typical SFLE mission profile.

## CHAPTER 3

### SPECIAL FORCES LIAISON ELEMENT ACTIVITIES

Liaison is a vital tool and key to the successful execution of operations. . . . [F]ailure to liaise risks misunderstanding. (Joint Warfare Pub 3-50, 7-12)

*Peace Support Operations*  
United Kingdom Joint Warfare Pub 3-50

#### Introduction

To fully comprehend the liaison activities of the SFLEs, it is necessary for the reader to have a general idea of Special Forces structure, missions, and functions. The majority of this chapter focuses on the SFODA and its members since they are the ones responsible for conducting SFLE missions. Additionally, this chapter provides detailed descriptions of previous liaison experiences and delineates a typical mission profile. The most relevant material for the study of previous SFLE missions comes in the form of raw data such as unit operation orders, command briefing slides, after action reports, message traffic, personal notes from key participants, and interviews conducted by unit historians as well as interviews and e-mail exchanges conducted by the author with members of Special Forces.

#### An Overview of Special Forces Role

The fundamental principles of Special Forces depend on high-quality personnel, specialized training, advanced technology, forward-looking doctrine, and versatile force structure (Stiner 1992, 10). Special Forces, comprised of around ten thousand men, is part of the USASOC, which is responsible to USSOCOM for the readiness and worldwide

deployment of Special Forces, Rangers, special operations aviation, civil affairs, and psychological operations units. US Army Special Forces Command, a subordinate command of USASOC, has the specific mission to train, validate and prepare the five active component Special Forces groups and two National Guard Special Forces groups. Each Special Forces group is regionally oriented to a particular part of the world and possesses language and cultural awareness for that region. Table 2 identifies the base locations and areas of responsibility for the groups. If required, a group may be tasked to perform operations outside its designated area of responsibility. Over the last decade, all of the groups have maintained a high tempo of operations. On any given day, Special Forces conduct an average of 61 missions in 39 different countries, employing over 750 people (Boyatt 2001, 7).

Table 2. Base Locations and Areas of Responsibility

Unit	Component	Location	Area of Responsibility
1st Special Forces Group 1st Battalion	Active	Fort Lewis, WA Okinawa, Japan	USPACOM
3rd Special Forces Group	Active	Fort Bragg, NC	USEUCOM
5th Special Forces Group	Active	Fort Campbell, KY	USCENTCOM
7th Special Forces Group (-) C Company, 3rd Battalion	Active	Fort Bragg, NC Roosevelt Roads, PR	USSOUTHCOM
10th Special Forces Group (-) 1st Battalion	Active	Fort Carson, CO Stuttgart, GE	USEUCOM
19th Special Forces Group	National Guard	Draper, Utah	USPACOM USCENTCOM
20th Special Forces Group	National Guard	Birmingham, AL	USSOUTHCOM

Source: JP 3-33 2001.

Each group has three battalions, each made up of three operational companies and a support company. Each operational company is composed of six SFODAs and a

headquarters, also referred to as an SFODB. The basis of all Special Forces operations is the twelve man SFODA comprised of mature, highly skilled soldiers who have demonstrated their self-reliance by successfully completing a demanding assessment and selection process, a branch-specific qualification course, a basic military language course, and additional training in advanced warfighting skills. Figure 2 depicts the grade and military occupational specialty for each member of the SFODA. Specialties for the noncommissioned officers (NCOs) include operations and intelligence, heavy and light weapons, engineering, medical, and communications. Most SFODA members are crossed trained in more than one specialty and possess functional fluency in at least one foreign language. Foreign languages taught to Special Forces soldiers include Arabic, Czech, French, Korean, Persian, Polish, Portuguese, Russian, Serbo-Croatian, Tagalog, and Thai (US Army Special Operations Command 2002, 10) .

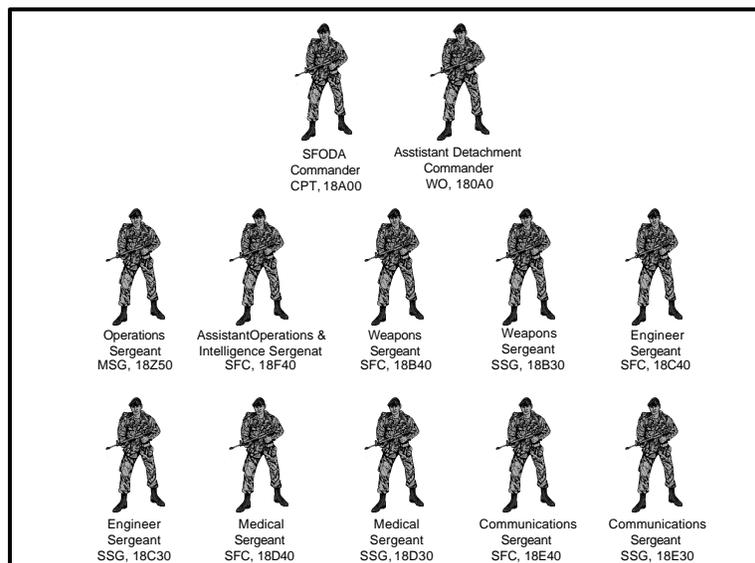


Figure 2. Composition of SFODA. *Source*: FM 3-20.5 2001.

Special Forces conduct full-spectrum operations based upon a theater geographic combatant commander's engagement plan. Special Forces commanders apply specific special operations mission criteria to determine the feasibility, suitability, and acceptability of proposed SFODA operations (FM 3-30.5 2001, 1-22). SFODAs are capable of conducting split-team operations and "serve as a manpower tool from which higher can organize a tailored composite team to perform a specific mission" (FM 31-20 1990, 4-13). Special Forces principal missions are UW, FID, direct action, special reconnaissance, information operation, counter-proliferation, and combating terrorism (FM 3-05.20 2001, 2-1). SFODAs are best employed as "diplomat warriors" because their foreign language capability and cultural awareness allows them to promote US national interests by training, advising, and assisting indigenous or surrogate forces in a variety of conventional and UW techniques. Additionally, Special Forces soldiers are trained to constantly assess the political implications of their missions to ensure they support the political and nonmilitary objectives (ARTEP 31-807-33 MTP 1990, 1-6).

Special Forces inherent capabilities permit them to execute a variety of collateral activities. Unlike the principal missions, the manner in which collateral activities are executed may fluctuate due to changes in national security policy, national military strategy, or global or regional social structure (FM 3-05.20 2001, 2-1). Currently, these activities include coalition support, combat search and rescue, counter drug activities, humanitarian demining activities, foreign humanitarian assistance, security assistance, and special activities. To achieve mission success, collateral activities usually require an integrated effort with conventional military forces, other government agencies, or nongovernmental organizations.

Operating in conjunction with conventional forces has not always been an easy process for Special Forces. The post-Vietnam military establishment did not trust SOF and felt these so-called elite organizations took limited resources away from the rest of the force structure. They associated SOF simply with UW and the “old special-ops bugaboo of poor command and control and lack of coordination” that was displayed during Desert One, the failed Iranian hostage rescue mission in 1980 (Adams 1998, 166). Furthermore, conventional commanders believed that SOF conducted unilateral operations and could not work directly with or for conventional forces. For the most part, senior officers, especially in the Army, felt SOF had to become more “doctrinally established” because this was the way the military fought contemporary battles (Adams 1998, 10). In 1987, the division between the conventional military and SOF was so evident that former Joint Chief of Staff Chairman Admiral William Crowe challenged USSOCOM “to break down the wall that [had] more or less come between special operations and the other parts of the military . . . by integrating SOF efforts into the full spectrum of military capabilities” (Clancy and Stiner 2002, 511).

### Past and Present SFLE Missions

#### Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm

The integration of SOF and conventional forces ironically emerged when General Norman Schwarzkopf--at the time not a strong advocate of SOF--employed Special Forces to served as his “eyes and ears” by assessing the readiness levels of Arab-Islamic ground forces during Operations Desert Shield and Storm. From the start of Desert Shield in 1990, the build-up phase of the war, CSTs provided “ground truth” information to General Schwarzkopf, commander-in-chief US Central Command (USCINCENT). The

“ground truth” included “accurately reporting the combat power, location, equipment, capabilities, and activities of the division, brigade, and battalion-sized units, while also providing effective adjacent unit coordination and close-air support to the same forces” (Johnson 1996, 54).

The 5th Special Forces Group employed CSTs--comprised of three to four men per team--to primarily train and advise Saudi Arabia’s five mechanized and armored brigades but as other Arab-Islamic nations joined the coalition, CSTs were assigned to their ground forces as well (Adams 2001 238). Troop contributing nations included Egypt, Bahrain, Oman, Qatar, and Syria. Additionally, Kuwait’s military in exile reconstituted into four mechanized brigades and one Special Forces battalion (Zanini 2000, 50). The Arab-Islamic nations were organized into two corps and led by a Saudi general. The CSTs developed rapport with all of the units down to battalion level, which allowed them to advise, assist, and train the forces in standard defensive and offensive military tactics as well as other skills. Some of the units were not comfortable operating in larger than brigade size and required additional maneuver training. A high priority for the units was to receive training in nuclear, biological, and chemical (NBC) protective measures (Fulghum 1991, 23). NBC equipment and capabilities of the units varied from sophisticated to rudimentary to none at all (Brownlee 1993, 41). In addition to training the Arab-Islamic ground forces, CSTs worked with units from France, Bangladesh, Senegal, and Czechoslovakia. The CSTs used the following guidelines that consequently translated into increased unit cohesion and soldier confidence amongst the coalition forces: (1) Observe and evaluate, (2) Begin with the basics and set achievable standards and objectives, (4) Task organize to fit the mission and capabilities of the force,

(5) Ensure the existence of a good communications plan, (6) Coordinate the plan and maintain focus through close liaison, (7) Conduct realistic training and rehearsals with coalition counterparts, and (8) Train during the day and at night (Fenzel 1993, 6).

Throughout Desert Storm, the combat phase of the war, CSTs of varying size continued the advisory role by accompanying over one hundred coalition units across the Saudi border into Kuwait and Iraq. One of the major responsibilities of the CSTs was to prevent fratricide amongst the coalition and US maneuver forces. In his overall assessment of Desert Shield and Desert Storm, General Schwarzkopf praised Special Forces by referring to their efforts as the glue that held the coalition together (FM 3-05.20, 2001, 1-5). According to a former 5th Special Forces Group operations officer that oversaw the missions:

[The CSTs] provided communication linkages, ground truth, adjacent unit coordination, close-air-support, and generally, was an American, English-speaking voice to the American, English-speaking chain-of-command . . . and one simply cannot put a value price tag on a service as meaningful as that. (Johnson 1996, 54)

Since the end of Desert Storm, Special Forces have conducted a variety of liaison missions across the operational continuum in support of allies and coalition partners. In Kuwait, Special Operations Command Central maintains a forward presence with a SOCCE and subordinate SOF elements, in particular CSTs from 5th Special Forces Group, that sustain a coalition warfare training program with the Kuwaiti brigades. In Korea, another forward presence Special Forces liaison mission has been ongoing under the operational control of Special Operations Command Korea. Special Forces Detachment Korea, referred to as SFD-K, facilitates interoperability between Republic of Korea and US SOF during special operations planning, exercises, and missions in support

of Republic of Korea/US Combined Forces Command. SFD-K accomplishes its mission by assigning one Special Forces NCO to work on a long-term basis with each of the Korean Special Forces Brigades. Additional cases in which SFLEs have been employed include the ongoing war in Afghanistan as well as past and present SASO missions in Somalia, Haiti, Bosnia, and Kosovo. Despite minor integration problems in Somalia and Haiti, SFLEs generally performed well throughout these operations. The next sections provide a brief description of these missions.

### Operation Restore Hope

During the planning phase of Operation Restore Hope, Colonel Jesse Johnson, commander of Special Operations Command Central, proposed employing CSTs to facilitate necessary coordination and communications with each of the allied forces in Somalia under the Unified Task Force. In early December 1992, CSTs from several Special Forces groups deployed to support Canadian, Botswanan, French, Italian, Pakistani, Saudi, Moroccan, and Belgium units. Generally, each team consisted of five Special Forces personnel capable of facilitating command, control, communications and intelligence (Johnson 1992, 1). The majority of the CSTs spent only a month on the ground even though Colonel Johnson's proposal recommended leaving them in place throughout the duration of the peace operation (1992, 1).

Unlike the Gulf War where CSTs provided access to NATO close air support and critical training in mechanized tactics and NBC procedures, this was not the case in Somalia. According to Dr. Richard Stewart of the Center of Military History, former historian for USASOC:

The allies did not relish having spies, ground truth teams--pick your term based on your perspective, in their midst. . . . [F]rankly when the allies saw no combat, they felt they had no need for watchers. (2001, 1)

Hence, the CSTs were redeployed. Presumably, the decision to withdraw the teams resulted in the loss of reliable communications amongst the diverse coalition forces and weakened an already challenged C2 system (Allard 1995, 77). This breakdown would become more apparent during the US Task Force Ranger raid to capture Somalia General Mohamed Farah Aideed and his key lieutenants on October 3, 1993. With reference to the CSTs withdrawal and the Task Force Ranger raid, Susan Marquis made the following assertion based on an interview with General Wayne Downing, then commander-in-chief USSOCOM:

The [Special Forces] teams were sent back by the conventional commanders after a few weeks. Had those teams been in place during the October raid, Malaysian and Pakistani support to the Quick Reaction Force would have been quicker and less chaotic. The same conventional commanders allowed the liaison teams back in Mogadishu in the weeks following the October 3 raid. (1997, 254)

#### Operations Uphold Democracy and Maintain Democracy

Between 1993 to 1997, over forty SFODAs from 3rd Special Forces Group conducted an unconventional style of peacekeeping throughout the countryside of Haiti and helped to restore normalcy in the nation as a US-led multinational force, later replaced by the United Nations (UN) Mission in Haiti, reinstated President Jean-Bertrand Aristide's democratic government (Boyatt 1996). Although not highly publicized, other SFODAs organized as CSTs to assist the Caribbean Command (CARICOM) battalion and other forces from Nepal, Guatemala, Pakistani, Bangladesh, and Netherlands. The CSTs supported the newly forming contingents as they joined the peace operation by facilitating operational and logistical coordination with higher. One of their significant

tasks was to ease the communications shortfalls caused by the technological disparity amongst contingents. The CSTs operated all the systems “necessary to maintain secure encrypted communications connectivity between headquarters and the coalition partners” (Zanini 2000, 59).

The use of CSTs in this SASO environment demonstrated that there are no cookie-cutter solutions to liaison challenges, and there are no shortcuts to success during multinational operations. Postdeployment reports indicated that the responsibilities, composition and disposition of each CST must be based on the religion, culture, competence, and operational mission of the supported contingent (Center for Army Lessons Learned 1995, 133). Figure 3 depicts the organization of the CARICOM CST, which proved invaluable in supporting the formation of CARICOM, a conglomeration of soldiers from seven Caribbean nations. The CST’s ability to facilitate the CARICOM’s interoperability was due largely to early integration within the battalion. The CST accompanied CARICOM throughout the entire duration of the mission to include a three-week predeployment train-up in Puerto Rico.

In comparison to CARICOM, the Bangladesh contingent experienced an assortment of suitability problems that could not be resolved by the attached CST. The unit’s leadership and soldiers lacked “mission enthusiasm,” which made the job of its CST very challenging (Peak 1994, 2). During liaison coordination activities there must be “an established indicator of when the CST has reached the limit of its effectiveness” because “the removal of the CST from a contingent may be as critical as its employment” (Center for Army Lessons Learned 1995, 134). The following observation made by a 1st

Special Forces Group officer operating with the Bangladesh provides insight to the predicament:

The one thing that should not be done by a CST, or asked of a CST, is to do the job of the foreign chain-of-command. Once the CST starts doing the chain-of-commands duties, then we are no longer in the CST business, but we are in the train, advise and lead business. A CST has the capability to take over the chain-of-command, but the CST elements are only to ensure the integration of foreign units into a US doctrinal system not replace the leadership. (Carr 1994, 1)

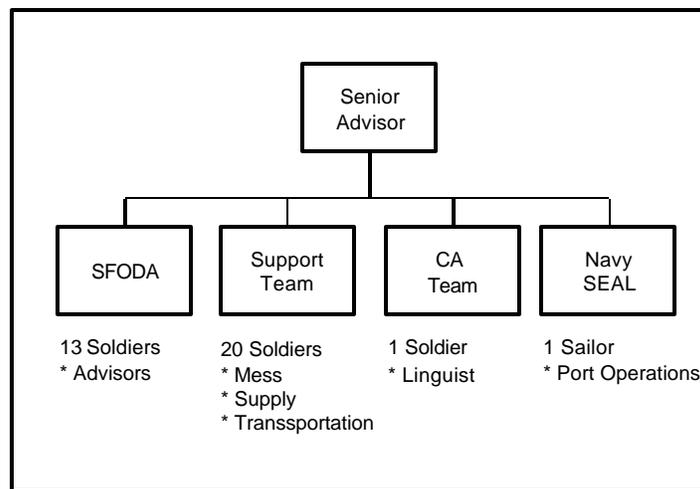


Figure 3. CARICOM CST Task Organization. *Source:* Center for Army Lessons Learned 1995, 134.

### Operations Joint Endeavor and Joint Guard

In late 1995, the US military once again called upon SFLEs to facilitate its effort in transitioning a diverse peace enforcement unit into an integrated and synchronized organization in Bosnia during Operation Joint Endeavor. The call for SFLEs came when the Allied Command Europe Rapid Reaction Corps identified the requirement for a liaison element to facilitate the transfer of authority from the UN Protection Force to the NATO IFOR. Worth mentioning is the fact that some of the failures of UN Protection

Force, a hodgepodge of forty-four nations, were associated with its inability to overcome cultural and political differences and establish a common approach to the peace operation in Bosnia from 1992 to 1995 (Elron 1999, 3). Noting the similarities of the Allied Command Europe Rapid Reaction Corps's liaison element requirement to past Special Forces advisory roles, Brigadier General Mike Canavan, commander of Special Operations Command Europe, recommended that Special Forces assume the role (US Special Operations Command History and Research Office 1998, 4). Upon approval from Lieutenant General Sir Michael Walker, commander of the Allied Command Europe Rapid Reaction Corps, Special Forces prepared over a dozen LCEs to link up with NATO and non-NATO military organizations within Bosnia's three MND sectors.

At the outset, the LCEs were employed with units of UN Protection Force to assist in their redeployment or integration into IFOR. Later, additional LCEs were employed with other troop contributing nations (TCNs). The TCNs supported by LCEs included Canada, Czech Republic, Egypt, Hungary, Malaysia, Norway, Pakistan, Poland, Romania, Russia, Turkey, and Ukraine. The LCE mission was to facilitate a foreign contingent's challenged communications and intelligence connectivity with IFOR headquarters (Grosso 1996, 2). Although the composition of some LCEs were modified to the specific nature of their supported unit, generally each element consisted of six Special Forces personnel and one US Air Force special operations tactical air controller (figure 4). The LCEs faced varying degrees of problems depending on the TCN being supported. The language proficiency of LCE members was critical to the mission because it allowed the LCE to serve as a focal point between the TCNs and outside organizations (Zanini 1996, 85). The LCE operating with the 2nd Canadian Multinational Brigade had

one member fluent in Czech, who essentially served as the conduit between the 6th Czech Mechanized Battalion and the British 3rd Division as forces deployed into the MND southwest sector over a six week period. Brigadier General Canavan's original intent was to put all of the LCEs in place until supported units were fully integrated into the NATO systems and could dispatch organic LNOs. However, the benefit of the LCE to interoperability forced the supported Russian, Hungarian, and Romanian units to keep the elements for a longer period as the mission transitioned to a Stabilization Force during Operation Joint Guard in 1997. Today, one LCE remains active in Bosnia supporting the Russian contingent.

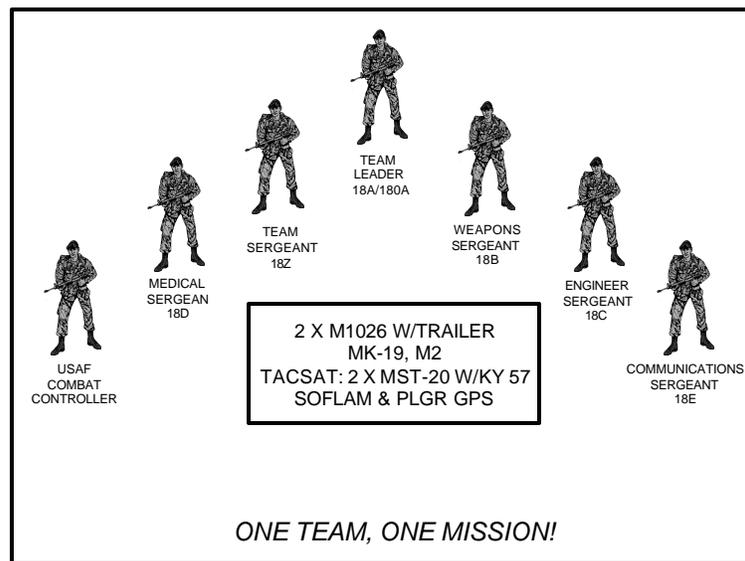


Figure 4. Composition and Equipment of LCEs. *Source:* Beattie 1996, 7.

## Operation Joint Guardian

Needless to say, the LCE mission in the Balkans has evolved from a simple enabler that provided connectivity for non-English speaking military organizations under IFOR to a fully integrated force multiplier that currently serves as the “extended telescope” for US conventional military commanders in the Kosovo Force (KFOR). LCEs from various Special Forces groups have supported the Russian 13th Task Group, Polish 18th Air Assault Battalion, Greek 501st Mechanized Battalion and the United Arab Emirates Special Forces contingent conducting peace-enforcement missions under KFOR as part of Operation Joint Guardian. Based on a statement made by General Rupert Smith, the first commander of KFOR, the LCE mission appears to be a valid tasking because the multinational force in Kosovo is the “biggest marvel of a command and control arrangement. . . . [I]t’s the masses of different arrangements, units there on national authorities with unofficial relationships” (Clark 2001, 349).

The operation in Kosovo requires the LCEs to be more mobile than the ones that operated in Bosnia and were for the most part restricted to TCN headquarters (Cleveland 2001). The KFOR LCEs operate at both the operational and tactical levels and perform traditional enabling tasks as well as unilateral and combined missions when directed by the KFOR or US-led Task Force Falcon headquarters. According to Major Rick Angle, who operated as an LCE commander in both Bosnia and Kosovo, the KFOR LCEs are more active and “executed a myriad of missions--everything from ninety-six hour dismounted combat reconnaissance patrols with Spetnaz soldiers to helicopter insertion sweeps and cordon and searches with airborne soldiers” (2001, 1). In July 1999, the LCE working with the Russian 13th Task Group called in artillery in support of Russian

activities. This single act is worth mentioning because it was the first time since World War II that US soldiers made a call for fire in support of the Russian military (Partin 2000, 1). The Polish and Ukrainian Battalion LCE performed another significant act in February 2001. In response to a riot of more than one thousand hostile civilians, the LCE received orders from the US-led Task Force Falcon commander to execute a non-combatant evacuation operation of eight UN civilian employees (Nix 2001, 2). A post-deployment memo noted “these successful operations demonstrate how tactical success can influence the strategic environment . . . helping to build better relationships” (Partin 2000, 2).

### Operation Enduring Freedom

Presently, Special Forces are engaged in a variety of missions in support of Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan. Early on in the operation, SFODAs from 5th Special Forces Group infiltrated Afghanistan by helicopter to link-up with and establish liaison with anti-Taliban groups that served as the ground component for the combat portion of the operation. A statement made by General Tommy Franks, USCINCENT, during the initial phase of the operation revealed that an important aspect of Enduring Freedom entailed liaison with the opposition forces fighting the Taliban regime and Osama Bin Ladin’s Al Qaeda terrorist network:

We have small numbers of liaison elements working with people of like mind inside Afghanistan today. We are establishing contact with these opposition groups so we can determine where we have common goals and where we can see a way ahead that will be satisfying to both of us. (*Los Angeles Times* 2001, A-1)

After establishing contact with the opposition group fighters, the SFODAs continued their advisory role supporting Northern Alliance forces and directing US air

strikes, which were pivotal in the operation. One SFODA, whose primary mission was to direct air strikes against the Taliban's positions, was credited with killing more than 1,300 Taliban fighters (Spitzer 2002, 1). In addition to aiding the Northern Alliance, Special Forces as well as other SOF elements infiltrated into southern Afghanistan to expand the fight. SFODAs operated alongside opposition groups of the Pashtun tribes. One SFODA worked closely with Pashtun tribal leader Hamid Karzai, who became head of Afghanistan's post-war interim government on 22 December 2001. This SFODA served as a conduit between Karzai and the US military and it helped to organize and equip his force (Finn 2001, A-1). Other SFODAs, coupled with air support, played a decisive role in the opposition force's overall success in defeating the Taliban regime. Parts of a declassified Special Forces situation report provides an illustration of the asymmetric operational environment:

I am advising a man on how to best employ light infantry and horse cavalry in the attack against Taliban T-55s [tanks], mortars, artillery, personnel carriers, and machine guns. . . . We have witnessed the horse cavalry bounding overwatch from spur to spur to attack Taliban strong points. (Garamone 2002, 1)

As military activities in Afghanistan progressed to include SASO, the Karzai interim government and a UN-mandated International Security Assistance Force, comprised of almost five thousand soldiers from twelve nations, attempt to secure peace amongst various factions and create a stable nation where terrorists cannot take refuge. While some SFODAs assist with the nation building efforts, the majority continue to work alongside the indigenous forces and coalition partners rooting out remnant pockets of Taliban and Al Qaeda fighters. On 27 January 2002, Pashtun troops along with Special Forces soldiers conducted a successful raid on members of the Al Qaeda network holding

up at a hospital in the city of Kandahar. According to Major Christopher Miller of 5th Special Forces Group, the Special Forces soldiers that participated in the combined raid strictly played an “advise and assist role for the Afghan assault troops who had been training for about a week for the operation” (Myrie 2002, 1).

### Typical Mission Profile

As depicted in chapter 2, doctrine identifies three fundamental tasks for coalition support operations--training allies and coalition partners on common tactics and procedures, providing communications connectivity to integrate partners into the multinational command and intelligence structures, and establishing liaison to coordinate for combat support and combat service support (FM100-25 1999, 2-13). Additionally, doctrine offers a generic mission essential task list (METL) for liaison coordination activities. Worth mentioning is the fact that a METL serves as an unconstrained statement of tasks required to accomplish missions derived from theater engagement plans and external directives (FM 25-101 2002, 2-1). With that said, it is vital for Special Forces to develop METLs at the lowest operational level to avoid having an organization comprised of “Jacks of all trades, masters of none.” Although Special Forces doctrine promotes seven principal missions and an assortment of collateral activities, it is not practical to expect every SFODA to be fully prepared to execute all of these functions. Normally, each SFODA receives a mission guidance letter from its higher headquarters. The letter provides focus in such a manner that it directs an SFODA to concentrate its planning, training, and other preparations on a limited number of missions and collateral activities. As a result, an SFODA can concentrate on tasks that require mastering. For liaison coordination activities, FM 3-05.20, *Special Forces Operations*, recommends

eight tasks. It is useful to discuss these METL tasks because it allows the reader to systematically envision the construct of a typical SFLE mission profile especially when using relevant examples from previous missions.

### Deploy to Area of Operations

Pre-deployment activities for SFLEs entail time-sensitive Special Forces mission-planning procedures conducted in an isolation facility located at either home station or an intermediate staging base. Isolation is part of the mission preparation for every Special Forces mission. The rationale for isolating an SFLE is so that they can “plan their mission with a minimum of outside influence and interference” (Clancy and Gresham 2000, 85). While in isolation, SFLEs conduct detailed mission analysis using available information on the supported unit and operational environment. Prior relationships with a supported unit--developed through peacetime military engagement--as well as updated area studies on the operational environment ease mission planning and preparations. An SFLE, depending on its size and composition, uses commercial transport, military airlift, or a combination to deploy. Generally, an SFLE processes through an intermediate or forward staging base before linking up with the supported unit. At this base, an SFLE receives further mission guidance, conducts final coordination and rehearsals, and secures mission essential equipment (FM 3-05.20 2001, 5-1). During Operation Uphold Democracy, the SFLE assigned to the CARICOM battalion deployed to an intermediate staging base located at Camp Santiago, a US Army National Guard training facility in Puerto Rico, to conduct a train-up before deploying forward to Haiti (Center for Army Lessons Learned 1995, 133). For Operation Enduring Freedom, SFODAs processed through a military air

base located in southern Uzbekistan to finalize plans at a Special Forces FOB before infiltrating into Afghanistan (Goodman 2002, 60).

### Conduct Linkup

The SFLE conducts linkup with a contingent at its home station, in the area of operations, or at a third location. For Operation Restore Democracy, the SFLE assigned to the Nepalese contingent conducted linkup with the 400-man battalion in Katmandu. According to Lieutenant Colonel Jim Dunn, then Army attaché to Nepal, the SFLE provided briefings on the rules of engagement and operational environment “so the Nepalese soldiers would be ready for action upon arrival in Haiti” (Orluskie 1994, 1). During Operation Joint Endeavor, a planning team led by a Special Forces major linked up with the British 3rd Armored Division headquarters in the United Kingdom before going into Bosnia in order to discuss how SFLEs would be employed in the MND’s sector (Bowers 2001, 1).

The linkup is probably the most crucial aspect of the deployment because right away the SFLE must establish initial rapport and demonstrate credibility with its foreign counterparts. Normally, an SFLE conducts an initial meeting with the supported unit commander and staff “to establish a cooperative relationship, assess the host unit’s situation, and define the SFLE’s capabilities and mission” (FM 3-05.20 2001, C-7). At the conclusion of linkup, the SFLE is expected to begin executing its enabling tasks. The SFLE relies on C2 mechanisms such as a SOCCE or FOB operating with the multinational force headquarters for day-to-day guidance and coordination.

An example of a unique C2 structure was that of the elements working in the British sector during Operation Joint Endeavor. This arrangement consisted of six layers:

(1) SFLEs with the Czech and Pakistani battalions, (2) SFLE with the Canadian-led multinational brigade, (3) SOCCE with the British-led MND, (4) FOB with the British-led CJSOTF, (5) SOCIFOR, and (6) COMIFOR. According to the SOCCE commander, this command structure was responsive to the multinational partners (Bowers 2001).

Canadian Brigadier N. B. Jefferies, a 1980 graduate of the US Army Command and General Staff College, echoed this assessment in a letter to SOCIFOR:

The two LCE teams [SFLEs] provided reliable communications, intelligence connectivity and liaison capability between my Headquarters and 6 Mechanized Battalion (CZ). In addition, the LCE teams assisted greatly in integrating 6 Mechanized Battalion (CZ) into the MND SW CASEEVAC and MEDEVAC systems and in the training and certification of the Battalion's Forward Air Controllers . . . during the initial stages of the Brigade's deployment. They are highly trained soldiers who were valuable members of the 2 Brigade team. (Jefferies 1996, 1)

Conversely, retired Brigadier General Stan Cherry, former assistant commander of the US-led MND headquarters, believed this type of command structure was not responsive in the US sector: "This concept of having some SOF guy sitting in a ground commander's sector taking orders from some astronomical SOF headquarters level doesn't make any sense" (Findlay 1998, 40). In Haiti, the SFLEs fell under a similar C2 arrangement as the one employed in Bosnia, but with no reported command-related problems between the SFLEs and the multinational force headquarters. According to a postdeployment report filed by an Army lieutenant colonel in charge of the US 10th Mountain Division's coalition coordination element: "TF Mountain staff worked closely with the CSTs [SFLEs] during all phases of coalition force deployment, employment, and unit rotation" (Steuber 1995, 2).

## Conduct Assessment

An SFLE answers the multinational force commander's critical information requirements concerning the area of operations and, most importantly, the supported unit's capabilities and limitations. Assessments of the supported unit need to be conducted in a professional manner and all gathered information should be handled as sensitive material. To avoid being labeled as "watchers," an SFLE must make every effort to keep the supported unit commander and staff informed on all core capability assessments being forwarded to the multinational force headquarters whether positive or negative in nature. These "ground truth" reports need to be constructive and not designed to embarrass a contingent commander. A disparaging report can result in animosity towards an SFLE, as was the case for the CST working with the Bangladeshi contingent in Haiti (Carr 1994, 1). Therefore, an adept SFLE commander finds a diplomatic solution to this predicament and ensures the needs of both the contingent and US force commanders are met. At times, the diplomatic solution may entail not informing the supported unit of a negative report. Ultimately, an SFLE's first responsibility is to their chain of command by giving accurate assessments.

A look at SFLE missions conducted in the Gulf War shows that information derived from capability assessments influenced the courses of action chosen by the combatant commander (Johnson 1996, 98). A key function of the reporting is to provide credible information on a contingent's C2, communications, operations, intelligence, fire support, security, civil affairs and psychological operations, medical, logistics capabilities. If necessary, an SFLE develops and implements a plan to provide the supported unit training in areas that require improvement. The amount of training

administered by past SFLEs varied based on adequate resources, time available, and the willingness of contingent commanders.

### Provide Liaison

A critical aspect of liaison activities is interpreting the intent and mission orders of both the supported unit and the US conventional force commanders. Using linguistic skills and cultural awareness, an SFLE excels at this task by establishing a personal relationship with foreign counterparts based on respect, trust, and the ability to compromise. Without trust, an SFLE cannot get in the mind of the supported unit commander and staff and thus never really appreciate what they are thinking. A good example of an SFLE's ability to establish and maintain trust is the work performed by the SFLE attached to the Russian Independent Airborne Brigade in Bosnia. Although Brigadier General Canavan's intent in 1995 was to employ SFLEs in Bosnia until supported units were fully integrated into the NATO systems, the Russian contingent enjoyed the value of having both an SFLE and conventional LNOs who incidentally had difficulties establishing initial rapport with the Russians (Beattie 2002). Consequently, six years later, the Russian contingent maintains an SFLE to liaise with the US-led MND headquarters. Most Special Forces officers would argue that this SFLE failed to "work itself out of a job" in an enabler mission that was intended to last for a short period. However, it is important to consider the political ramifications of this operation. For the Russian military to participate in a NATO-led peacekeeping operation required a unanimous vote by the Russian parliament and special C2 arrangements between the Russian unit and COMIFOR (NATO Update 2002, 1). Thus, if it takes an SFLE to keep the Russian commander content then this unique support is worth it. Overall, the

Russians appear comfortable working with an SFLE because this is the same arrangement they requested for the mission in Kosovo.

In most of the missions presented in chapter 2, the supported units and US conventional forces exchanged organic LNOs once operations settled into a routine tempo and in some cases other instruments such as FAOs and liaison coordination centers were utilized as well. To avoid redundancy or being employed on an open ended mission that lacks strategic implications such as the unique support provided to the Russians, SFLEs need to have a clearly defined end state. Mission end state will vary based on the nature of the mission. For the majority SFLEs employed in Bosnia, the end state was successful integration of the contingents and higher headquarters in the following areas: (1) tactical liaison, (2) intelligence connectivity, (3) secure communications connectivity, (4) call for or coordinate close air support or indirect fire, (5) call for or coordinate medical evacuation (Beattie 2002). According to Lieutenant Colonel Mike Jones, operations officer of the US-led MND in Bosnia during 1996:

There was some degree of redundancy with the LCEs and LNOs, but having both were beneficial. First, the LCE had the communications gear our LNOs lacked. Secondly, they had the communications and tactical expertise to teach and if need be deliver close air support, artillery support, etc. . . . Eventually, after the LNOs were on the ground, we began trimming the LCEs. (Findlay 1998, 35)

#### Provide Communications Connectivity

An SFLE can provide communications connectivity until a supported unit is either fully equipped with compatible equipment or augmented by the multinational force headquarters. An SFLE deploys with a communications package comprising secure voice, data, and video links. Previous employments reveal that communications responsibilities vary from primary, alternate, or contingency means for the supported

unit. During the Gulf War, SFLEs deployed down to the battalion-level throughout the coalition primarily “to extend the command and control system from the coalition headquarters to all national elements in the field” (Johnson 1996, 51). Historically, effective C2 in combined operations has been hampered by an inability to fully leverage information sharing technologies, which results in “a lack of standardized communications systems, procedures, and applications for establishing common operational and logistical pictures for multinational forces” (Center for Army Lessons Learned 2001, 29).

An augmented communication package for the supported unit from the multinational headquarters may consist of redundant secure radio systems, telephone lines, local area network workstations, and a video-telephone conferencing capability (Center for Army Lessons Learned 2001, 29). A coalition local area network significantly enhances a multinational force’s ability to transfer critical operational, intelligence, and logistical information. However, a coalition local area network has limitations because it is not rapidly employable and requires user-friendly multilingual software (RisCassi 1997, 44). Moreover, the sharing of sensitive technology and intelligence depends on established associations. The reliability of some partners may lie with the common cause of the current fight and not beyond; therefore, the protocols and limits of sharing technology and intelligence will influence a multinational force commander’s ability to create a common operational picture amongst contingents (RisCassi 1997, 44). A common operational picture is:

An operational picture tailored to the user’s requirements, based on common data and information shared by more than one command. The common operational

picture is displayed a scale and level of detail that meets the information needs of the command at a particular echelon. (FM 3-0 2001, 11-14).

According to Larry Wentz's paper on integrated C4ISR services and capabilities during Operation Joint Endeavor, "a lack of an agreed standard and platform for a common operational picture, and differing requirements for intelligence amongst contingents lead to independently developed, stovepipe systems resulting in C4ISR disparity" and inefficient situational understanding (1997, 1). Thus, SFLEs may find themselves initially responsible for providing the only "real-time operational and intelligence connectivity" as well as "logistics situational awareness" for supported units (US Pacific Command 2000, 3).

As far as real-time tactical communications are concerned, an SFLE serves as a primary or backup link for the supported unit with other contingents and critical joint and combined battlefield systems. In the Gulf War and Afghanistan, the use of global positioning systems, laser range finders and designators, and communication links between SFLEs and joint close air support (JCAS) proved invaluable to coalition ground operations (Celeski 2002, 1). Furthermore, the use of a parallel C4I system established by SFLEs with various contingents significantly enhanced in both cases the multinational force commander's ability to coordinate ground combat operations and reduce the risk of fratricide. Despite such efforts to reduce fratricide on the battlefield, the issue of controlling Joint fires remains a challenge. Recently, several Special Forces and anti-Taliban soldiers were injured during operations in Afghanistan by an errant precision-guided bomb. According to USSOCOM's Deputy Commander Lieutenant General William P. Tangney:

The services need to pay attention to lessons of blue-force tracking-- in other words, making sure that sensors can detect friendly forces, something that could potentially reduce fratricide incidents. . . . [W]e need to be able to link that up with the other systems the services are fielding, and we have a critical need to link that ability up with the people who are in cockpits dropping bombs. (Hodge 2002, 1)

### Conduct Force Protection

The threat an SFLE faces varies according to whether it is employed in a permissive, uncertain, or hostile environment. Past missions show that an SFLE must be equipped with weapon systems and tactical vehicles to maintain protection measures and mobility comparable to the supported unit (Davis 1995, 14). Moreover, an SFLE, whether operating in a stationary or mobile mode, cannot rely on the supported unit for all its security. Thus, SFLEs need to be proficient in mounted and dismounted immediate action drills. In hostile and uncertain environments such as the Gulf War, Kosovo, and Afghanistan, SFLEs routinely demonstrated the need to move rapidly by vehicle over harsh terrain and protect themselves from uncertain threats. According to a former Special Forces battalion commander, “you can’t support the coalition if you don’t have that capability” (Brownlee 1993, 43).

### Conduct Sustainment

An SFLE must be resourceful when it comes to fulfilling logistical requirements. Typically, an SFLE depends on its supported unit for routine support (housing, feeding, and expendable supplies). Previous missions show that foreign, as well as US supply systems, sometimes have taken up to thirty days to be operational (FM 3-05.20 2001, C-8). For SOF peculiar items, the responsiveness of theater SOF resupply channels depends

on the forward presence of SOF support elements. For protracted missions, it is prudent for elements to deploy with enough critical items to sustain itself for an extended period.

#### Conduct Transition or Mission Handoff

An SFLE may transfer responsibilities to LNOs organic to the multinational force headquarters or handoff the mission to a replacement SFLE. Typically, for protracted missions, an SFLE rotates out--this was the circumstances for the SASO missions in Haiti, Bosnia, and Kosovo where SFLE rotations fluctuated between three to six months. As is the case in any transition or mission handoff, it is essential to brief the incoming element on past and current operations and to keep the supported unit informed of the rotation. Most likely, the incoming LNOs or SFLE will conduct some type of survey to gather necessary information for mission planning and preparations. Upon arrival of the incoming element, the outgoing SFLE assesses when it is appropriate to disengage and allow the incoming element to assume the mission and gain the overall trust of the supported unit.

#### Redeploy to Home Station

At the conclusion of a mission, the SFLE plans its departure in accordance with the plans of the contingent, higher Special Forces command, and theater SOC. Upon return to home station, the SFLE completes necessary debriefs and after action reports. This information is constructive for future peacetime military engagement or SFLE missions. Lessons learned from previous combined operations show that SFLEs may require augmentation of skilled personnel to provide needed functional subject matter expertise or special technical equipment to accomplish certain tasks. In Haiti and Bosnia,

SFLEs received specialists to monitor civil affairs and psychological operations. While most coalition forces possessed adequate mobility and firepower, few had any type of formal CA capability during these SASO missions and thus required assistance in planning and execution (Center for Army Lessons Learned 1996, 12). In order to facilitate the planning of the Russian Independent Airborne Brigade headquarters in Bosnia, an SFLE teamed up with an Army FAO to provide training in US military decision making and staff processes at the operational level. For recent operations in Afghanistan, SFODAs received Air Force tactical air controllers to assist in planning, coordinating, and directing strikes by JCAS. Worth mentioning is the following piece of information to show how complex it is to control air strikes even for the subject matter experts:

The last three CAS fratricide incidents since 1995 involving Special Forces were under the control of USAF ground terminal controllers, not Special Forces. These errors ranged from pilot error to technology error. Although this never precludes a potential accident with Special Forces controlling air, it highlights that an accident may occur as long as there is human error and technology errors, regardless of the ground control team makeup. (Celeski 2002, 2)

In addition to the tasks that may require augmentation, an SFLE may receive tactical missions that fall outside the scope of traditional liaison coordination activities. Such missions include conducting combined tactical-level operations with a supported unit and unilateral special operations in support of the multinational force commander. Although some Special Forces commanders caution against using an SFLE in both a liaison and tactical role because the elements are not normally manned or organized for such employment, operations in Kosovo and Afghanistan demonstrate this role is warranted when an SFLE is comprised of a seasoned SFODA or split-team. This was also

the case frequently in Haiti with the SFLEs supporting the Pakistanis and Guatemalans (Meddaugh 2002).

### Conclusion

This chapter familiarized the reader with Special Forces and demonstrated how SFLEs--whether configured as CSTs, LCE, or standard SFODAs--can provide the multinational force commander a flexible capability. Based on the liaison activities described in this chapter, one must agree with the assessment made by General Gary E. Luck, former 18th Airborne Corps commander, "Special Forces an enormously effective combat multiplier--a capability that when employed by a conventional commander significantly increases the potential of his unit and enhances the probability of mission accomplishment" (1993, 20). The use of Special Forces as a force multiplier not just watchers will allow SFLEs to gain valuable experience as well as permit coalition commanders the ability to leverage the unique qualities of SFLEs to enhance the overall capabilities of the force.

## CHAPTER 4

### ANALYSIS

While no error in military history is more chronicled than armies preparing to refight the last war, only to discover they had failed to prepare for the next, the art is to identify the significant features and then discover their causes. With this information it may be possible to forecast how patterns may evolve over time and what must be done to deter, prevent, or if necessary, win the next war. (Clark 2000, 418)

General (Retired) Wesley K. Clark  
Former Supreme Allied Commander, Europe

#### Introduction

The objective of this chapter is to answer the three subordinate research questions. The measures used for formulating the answers to each question are subjective and derived from the author's analysis of the raw data presented in earlier chapters as well as from insights of past SFLE participants. Thus far, all of the data indicates that the basic premise of SFLE activities is to overcome "coalition warfare inhibitors" such as linguistic, cultural, doctrinal, and technological asymmetries that typically prevent multinational partners from becoming a unified force (Beattie 2002). This undertaking requires SFLEs to use inherent UW and FID skills to advise, assist, organize, train, or equip allies and coalition partners. To further differentiate the significant functions of an SFLE, this chapter initially looks at what doctrine and lessons learned have to offer and then derived future operational requirements.

The first portion of the analysis uses a direct approach in answering the first and second subordinate research questions. Essentially, this portion will identify the particular Special Forces core competencies that have been critical for improving interaction and

interoperability between US conventional forces and multinational partners during past operations. Additionally, this portion will determine whether the competencies were required in every case or did they vary by mission.

The second portion of the analysis uses an exploratory approach by applying the findings from the first portion against future operational requirements derived from Joint, SOF, and Army vision statements and operational concepts. To begin, the analysis will familiarize the reader with the specific areas of transformation that pertain to SFLE activities. Next, the analysis will measure these areas against existing SFLE capabilities to identify any shortfalls. Consequently, this approach will answer the final subordinate research question by identifying what areas of change in Special Forces DTLOMS need to be made to ensure SFLEs remain a unique and relevant capability as the US military transforms its war-fighting capabilities.

### Part 1

How does an SFLE improve the interaction and interoperability of US forces and multinational partners?

At first look, the multitude of tasks that can be assigned to an SFLE seems to defy any single answer to this question. Yet, further analysis reveals that the critical functions for improving interaction and interoperability fall under the umbrella of seven core competencies of Special Forces--those being intercultural communications, political awareness, problem solving, training, combined operations, war-fighting and advanced technology. These seven competencies directly affect the reconciliation of the “coalition warfare inhibitors” discussed earlier. For purpose of clarification, it is helpful to group some of these competencies together since they are to some extent interrelated and

dependent upon each other during SFLE activities. Thus, intercultural communications, political awareness, and problem solving will be referred to as one competency--that being intercultural communications. Additionally, training, combined operations, and war fighting will be referred to as one competency--that being training.

Intercultural communications reduce linguistic, cultural, and political barriers by enabling dialogue between US conventional forces and multinational partners. The combination of Special Forces interpersonal skills, linguistic ability, and cultural sensitivity “communicates positive perceptions and goes far in promoting a shared sense of partnership” (Fenzel 1993, 4). These skills allow an SFLE to perform “tactical liaison” and thus productively assess, advise and assist foreign counterparts. The ability to assess a foreign unit’s capabilities and then implement a training program that addresses any identified needs promotes mutual confidence and unity of effort amongst partners. Based on interviews with key participants, it is evident that an SFLE must be completely conversant with the doctrine and procedures of the supported contingent as well as the multinational force headquarters before they can advise and assist. According to Major General Boykin, commander of US Army John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School, Special Forces soldiers must possess fundamental war-fighting skills in order to adequately advise multinational forces on Joint and Army operations (2002). Therefore, an SFLE needs to train with these units “to maintain the skills needed to integrate these forces into a combined operation effectively” (FM 3-05.20 2001, 1-8). Lastly, probably the most significant emerging function for an SFLE is to reduce the technology gap that exists between the US and its allies by providing access to advanced C4ISR systems and weapons technology. Thus, SFLEs use a combination of intercultural communications,

training, and advanced technology as a seamless tool to enhance interaction and interoperability amongst diverse forces.

Will SFLEs perform the same role in every case  
or will it vary by mission?

While it is unrealistic to predict the exact role an SFLE will perform in each case, it is possible to determine those characteristics that will have the greatest effect on liaison activities and thus make some reasonable assumptions. *The Army and Multinational Force Compatibility* prepared by RAND shows three factors that can affect the performance of coalitions and consequently influence the role of an SFLE--political and military association of the contingent to the US, type of mission being conducted, and time available for preparation (Zanini 2000, 51). To further analyze these areas, it is beneficial to use the three core competencies discussed under the first subordinate research question to see how they compare to the association of the contingent to the US, type of mission, and time available for preparation.

The evaluation matrix in table 3 shows a comparison of the competencies against different contingents under different circumstances. Each competency received a rating--good, average, or marginal--based on its influence on integration between Joint, Army, and multinational forces. A good rating means the competency was always required to achieve integration and without it, the contingent presumably would not have been able to conduct the mission. An average rating means the competency was required to achieve integration and without it, the contingent presumably would have experienced routine difficulties conducting the mission. A marginal rating means the competency was seldom required to achieve integration and without it, the contingent presumably would have experienced only minor difficulties conducting the mission. The measures used for

determining each rating were subjective and derived from the author’s understanding of post-deployment reports, interviews with participants, other studies, and media reports. Note that the evaluation does not consider the Somalia operation since SFLEs during this deployment spent too little time on the ground to meet the criteria of being fully employed and able to facilitate interoperability. Additionally, the evaluation of the Afghanistan mission is incomplete until it can be validated by primary sources.

Table 3. SFLE Influence on Different Contingents

Association:	Coalition	Coalition*	Alliance	Partnership†	Coalition	Coalition
Contingent:	CARICOM	Hungary	Canada	Russia	Saudi Arabia	N.Alliance
Type of Unit:	Infantry Bn	Engineer Bn	Infantry Bde	Airborne Bde	Mechanized Bn	Mixed#
Time for Preparation:	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	No
Type of Mission:	SASO	SASO	SASO	SASO	Combat	Combat
Operation:	Haiti	Bosnia	Bosnia	Kosovo	Gulf War	Afghanistan
Intercultural Communications	1	1	3	1	1	1
Training	1	2	3	2	1	2
Advanced Technology	2	2	2	2	1	1

<u>Key</u>		
1 = Good	Bn = Battalion	* Joined NATO in 1999.
2 = Average	Bde = Brigade	† Special C2 arrangements applied to Russian forces in IFOR.
3 = Marginal		# Force equipped with a mixture of equipment; used rudimentary tactics.

As the matrix illustrates, the needs of different contingents vary only slightly and can be predicted based on association, type of mission, and time available for preparation. The first function of intercultural communications was a vital tool for SFLEs with all the contingents with exception of the English-speaking Canadian contingent. As far as dealing with the other contingents, communicating in the native language significantly enhanced the SFLE members’ ability to build rapport with commanders and staffs. However, a lack of full fluency in a supported unit’s native language was not seen as a

mission stopper as long as one member of the SFLE had functional fluency and the others were adept in using an interpreter. In the missions evaluated, not every member of the SFLEs was fully fluent in the native language, thus requiring the use of linguists or speaking a third mutual language (Angle 2001, 1). In some cases, contingent commanders or key staff understood English. For the elements working with coalition units, cross-cultural awareness and sensitivity were essential (Fenzil 1993, 4). Any ideological differences had to be reconciled through intensive dialogue and cooperation. Thus, being a soldier-diplomat by maintaining the proper “one team, one mission” attitude and showing patience as opposed to arrogance proved to be invaluable in building rapport and working side-by-side with foreign counterparts (Beattie 1996, 2). Ultimately, personal interaction is the SFLE’s primary weapon.

The second function of training contingents primarily encompassed core capability assessments and small-scaled training on force protection, JCAS, fire coordination, and communications. With exception to the Gulf War, training lacked in substance because of limited resources, time available, and willingness of the supported unit to conduct extensive collective training. In the case of the Gulf War, SFLEs had five months to assess and train Arab-Islamic partners in individual and collective tasks. According to Peter Davis, then a Special Force major, the training “had a significant impact on readiness” and “the Arabs in particular were much relieved following initial intensive training in protective measures against the chemical threat Iraq possessed” (1995, 52). It is doubtful that SFLEs in the future will get this amount of time to prepare partners for combat. Research shows “potential adversaries learned from the Gulf War the danger of letting the US military build an unopposed coalition and prepare forces for

battle” (Research Planning Inc. 1999, 7). More than likely in future conflicts, any interoperability training will have to take place during actual hostilities, as is the case currently in Afghanistan (Myrie 2002, 1). Additionally, it is worth mentioning that some contingent commanders may be reluctant to have a Special Forces element assess and train their forces for reasons that relate back to the “watcher” accusation.

The last function of providing advanced technology was required in all cases. SFLEs enabled the supported unit’s communications capability by establishing primary or alternate links to critical joint and combined battlefield systems such as JCAS, artillery, and medical evacuation. Furthermore, SFLE communications connectivity established a limited parallel C4I system for contingents. During the Gulf War, 5th Special Forces Group initially was not able to provide sufficient connectivity for all the coalition partners because it “lacked enough conventional short-range FM communications radios to link the partners in any coherent fashion” (Davis 1995, 14). Generally, SFLEs in the other combined operations were equipped with radios compatible to conventional systems. Moreover, contingents received direct support in the form of conventional signal detachments from the multinational force headquarters around thirty days after commencement of operations. Thus, from that point on, SFLEs provided on-call links at the tactical level between contingents and other forces during the conduct of combined missions.

## Part 2

This portion of the analysis will identify what changes need to be made to improve future SFLE performance. Consequently, the answer to this question will provide the final piece to the thesis. The extent of the analysis will focus on the specific

areas of transformation that pertain to SFLE activities. The analysis will measure up these areas against existing SFLE capabilities to identify any shortfalls and subsequently determine what aspects of Special Forces DTLOMS need to be changed. Clearly, the current challenges faced by the US military are not as predictable as in the past. The words complex and ambiguous probably best describe the nature of the international security environment. The aftermath of 11 September largely supports this point.

According to Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld:

There is a great deal we can learn from this first war of the 21st century, but we cannot and must not make the mistake of assuming that terrorism is the only threat. The next threat we face may indeed be from terrorists, but it could also be cyber-war, a traditional state-on-state conflict or something entirely different. . . . [W]e need to transform our forces for new and unexpected challenges. (2002, 1)

Even though the primary mission of the US military--to fight and win the nation's wars--remains unchanged, the uncertainty of future operational and threat environments requires that the US place an added emphasis on protecting the homeland and preventing conflict overseas through deterrence and engagement in stable as well as unstable regions. A heightened US military presence abroad coupled with decisive, overpowering interventions sometimes causes other nations to worry about US "unilateralism." Therefore, military activities abroad necessitate partnerships. Lately, the US has teamed up with an assortment of nations in "floating" coalitions that are not really bounded by a common ideology but instead by a shared enemy (Rumsfeld 2002, 2). A relationship of this nature usually encompasses vast differences in other areas as well.

A look at the various Joint, Army and SOF vision statements and conceptual templates shows that several aspects of the military transformation could affect the activities of SFLEs. The majority of operations from now until 2020 will require rapid

deployment methods by US forces to actively engage enemy forces in “decisive high-end, small-scale contingencies vice protracted campaigns” (US Joint Forces Command 2001, 2). No longer will coalition forces be able to acclimatize and rehearse for battle as was the case for the Gulf War. Although the US military will be capable of unilaterally fighting and winning conflicts, for the most part it will participate in unified actions of joint forces, multinational partners, and other governmental and non-governmental players (Basehart 2002, 1).

Coalitions will be formed with new as well as old partners to accomplish various objectives. Participation on behalf of partners will vary based on different circumstances and the mission will determine the coalition. According to Defense Secretary Rumsfeld, if the mission does not determine the coalition, then it risks being “dumbed [*sic*] to the lowest common denominator” (2002, 2). After examining the six operations presented in chapter three, it is evident that each coalition will encompass distinctive characteristics and will require “a tailored approach to interoperability that accommodates a wide range of needs and capabilities” (*Joint Vision 2020* 2000a, 21).

The military forces of future partners will continue to vary in size and composition ranging from the Northern Alliance forces to the Russian Independent Airborne Brigade to the Syrian 9th Armor Division. Therefore, a transformed US military must be prepared to operate with a variety of different forces as the US seeks “floating” coalitions with new partners. The Army’s proposed Objective Force, equipped with advanced communications and weapon technology, is supposed to be able to rapidly deploy within ninety-six hours and provide innovative solutions on the battlefield. However, the Objective Force will likely face a number of integration problems when it

attempts to conduct combined operations with new partners who do not rely on advanced digital technologies. Additionally, interoperability amongst the US and its allies over the next two decades will continue to be hampered by the growing technology gap. The cause will be twofold. First, allies will continue to decrease defense spending especially in the area of force development (Nichiporuk 2000, 25). Second, the US will continue to avoid sharing technology and information with all of its allies. Thus, SFLEs and other instruments will have to serve as “workarounds” or “stopgaps” for these shortfalls (Lewis 1994, 28). The SOF transformation plan considers these shortfalls by modernizing Special Forces communication systems to be compatible with Joint and Army advanced digital technologies. In addition to having enhanced communications connectivity, future Special Forces will have better intelligence collections means and possibly improved organic mobility capabilities.

There are four characteristics of the transformation that could significantly influence SFLE missions. These features are (1) Rapid deployments in support of small-scaled contingency operations, (2) “Floating” coalitions formed with new partners for a variety of reasons, (3) Contingents comprised of different sizes, composition, and capabilities and (4) An increased reliance on advanced technologies by US forces. With these characteristics as a starting point, it is feasible to answer the third subordinate research question--what areas of change in Special Forces DTLOMS need to be made to improve liaison coordination activities in a multinational environment?

#### Doctrine

No major Special Forces doctrinal modifications are anticipated in the future. However, this study recommends that conventional Army doctrine stress the use of

SFLEs during multinational operations. Furthermore, this study concurs with the findings in Major Peter E. Davis' thesis "United States Army Special Forces Coalition Support Operations: Mission or Collateral Activity." Special Forces should continue to treat coalition support as a collateral activity, not a primary doctrinal mission, because SFLEs can use inherent UW and FID skills to train, advise, assist, organize, and equip partners. Nonetheless, a standard tactics, techniques, and procedures manual needs to be published that captures all the lessons learned from past operations. Most material pertaining to liaison coordination activities and coalition support exists in fragmented form spread throughout the Special Forces community, and thus requires consolidation and further clarification.

### Training

To mitigate language and cultural barriers in future operations, an SFLE must have personnel skilled in the official languages of the supported contingent and the operational area. Table 4 depicts the official languages of the supported units in the SFLE missions presented in chapter two. Specifically, the matrix reveals that over half of the official languages required in previous missions were not being formally taught at either the Army SOF Basic Military Language Course, the Defense Language Institute, or the Foreign Service Institute (US Army Special Operations Command 2002, 10). Further examination shows thirty-one missions requiring linguistic skills. Of these missions, forty percent required knowledge of languages not studied by Special Forces. Overall, this basic analysis shows that the traditional languages and cultures studied by Special Forces needs to be expanded. Based on the likelihood of increased coalitions with new partners,

it is apparent that Special Forces needs to reevaluate its traditional language and cultural preparations to include as a minimum current partners.

Table 4. Languages Used During Previous SFLE Missions

Official Languages of Contingents	Gulf War	Somalia	Haiti	Bosnia	Kosovo	Afghanistan
Arabic*	x	x		x	x	
Bahasa Melayu				x		
Bangla	x		x			
Czech*	x			x		
Dari						x
Dutch		x	x			
English	x	x		x		
French*	x	x		x		
Greek					x	
Hungarian*				x		
Italian		x				
Nepali			x			
Pashtu*						x
Polish*				x	x	
Romanian				x		
Russian*				x	x	
Spanish*			x			
Turkish				x		
Ukrainian				x		
Urdu*			x	x		
Uzbek						x

\* Taught at either the Basic Military Language Course, Foreign Service Institute, or Defense Language Institute.

Presently, new Special Forces soldiers with no linguistic skills receive four to six months of functional language training at the basic military language course before assignment to an operational group. On a scale of 0 to 3 (3 being the highest score), each soldier must score at least a 0+/0+ on a reading/listening exam to be considered language qualified. The course goal is a 1/1 score (Special Forces Qualification Course 2002, 1). Hence, new soldiers generally arrive at their first assignment with minimal language and cultural skills. Special Forces attempts to correct this deficiency by pursuing dynamic peacetime military engagement missions that not only expand their regional access as “global scouts” but also broaden their skills as “regional scholars” (Basehart 2002, 4).

For Special Forces to be true regional experts requires improved formal programs of study, peacetime military engagement with present and potential partners, and recruitment of personnel with arcane languages and cultural skills. A recent Special Forces transformation assessment suggests that:

Where US interests warrant the micro-focus, Special Forces will be committed to long-term study and education in their respective area. Cultural and language education will address ethnic composition of the area. Where colonial languages are the norm in the Legacy Force, the Objective Force Special Forces will master the languages and culture of the ethnic populations, as well as the colonial language if appropriate. This micro-regional expertise will take time to achieve. (Basehart 2002, 4)

Regarding tactical and technical expertise, the same transformation assessment recommends that Special Forces officers and NCOs be prepared to “effectively use relevant advances in technology, and yet be able to successfully function in austere environments without the benefits of technological” (Basehart 2002, 4). Sustaining a balance of advanced technical knowledge and “warrior ethos” will allow Special Forces soldiers to make decisions at the tactical level with operational and strategic implications. This type of decision-making capability is essential as concurrent “revolutions in military affairs, technology, and information have shattered traditionally boundaries, merging tactical, operational, and strategic levels of war into a single, integrated universe in which action at the bottom often has instant and dramatic impact at all levels” (Chilcoat 1995, 1-2). Thus, funding and allocating time for training and education in the areas of cultural, tactical, and technical expertise is not only a good investment for future SFLE missions, but for the entire transformation of Special Forces as well.

## Leader Development

Past SFLE missions demonstrate that a combination of rudimentary and advanced leader talents are necessary--such as advising a Northern Alliance commander on attacks using horse cavalry or assisting a Syrian armor division commander with a complex relief in place maneuver with other foreign mechanized forces (Johnson 1996, 49). Hence, it is beneficial for the SFLE leadership to be experienced in advising both proxy and conventional ground forces. In the cases where the SFLE leadership requires knowledge of brigade-sized or higher operations, it may be necessary to furnish the SFLE with a field grade officer or senior NCO who has received formal operational level training through the Army's intermediate leader education system.

With the establishment of the Special Forces branch in April 1987, Special Forces officers and NCOs have single career paths and no longer rotate back to conventional units to gain practical experience at the tactical and operational levels. Generally, officers join Special Forces with less than four years experience in a conventional unit. Moreover, because of shortages in manpower, Special Forces recently began to recruit enlisted soldiers "off the street" with absolutely no military experience. Hence, future officers and soldiers will lack basic operational experience with conventional forces. As previously mentioned, it is essential that an SFLE be completely conversant with conventional Army and Joint doctrine. Therefore, in order to gain the necessary leadership skills and experience, SFLEs will need to conduct routine realistic training with conventional units. Based on his Gulf War experiences, Lieutenant Colonel Brownlee suggests that SFLEs be "competent in the tactics and equipment of both potential foreign counterparts and US" and "understand their requirements and capabilities for indirect fire, air defense and

engineering” (1993, 43). Therefore, it is not sufficient for Special Forces leaders to be only versed in battalion light infantry tactics, techniques, and procedures (FM 3-05.20 2001, 1-6). As a final point, it is counterproductive to field a liaison element lead by an officer or NCO who “lacks the essential mix of experience, rank, communicative skills, leadership and attitude” (FM 90-14 1998, 1-7).

### Organization

SFLEs need to be tailored to the specific mission. Responsibilities, composition and disposition must be based on the language, culture, competence, and operational mission of the supported contingent. The use of operational elements such as SFODAs or split-teams is recommended because it allows the conventional commander the capability to employ the element in a tactical role if necessary. However, an operational element of six or more soldiers should not be forced on the supported contingent if it is unable to accommodate these numbers.

### Materiel

Special Forces will need improved inter and intra-theater deployment capabilities in order to maintain responsive SFLEs that can link-up with supported contingents before commencement of hostilities. Special Forces future concepts propose an organic aerial capability consisting of fixed and rotary wing aircraft to transport operational detachments and equipment to meet deployment requirements.

SFLE communication capabilities need to be compatible with Joint and Army systems. According to the Special Forces transformation plans “digital communications at various security levels will be necessary to interact with joint, conventional,

multinational, indigenous forces, nongovernmental organizations and other government agencies both within and outside of the battle space, whether an engagement, crisis response, or combat environment” (Basehart 2002, 6). This type of communications will need the capabilities of C4ISR, tasking, planning, streaming video, and virtual simulations and rehearsals. Lastly, SFLEs will need the latest equipment to direct and monitor other advanced battlefield systems such as JCAS, integrated fire support platforms, unmanned aerial vehicles, robotics, and sensors.

### Soldiers

In addition to recruiting soldiers with advanced language and cultural talents, or as a minimum the aptitude to learn these skills, Special Forces will need to augment SFLEs with personnel of different niches such as tactical air controllers, FAOs, CA specialists, linguist, regional experts, and digital technicians. US Army Special Forces needs to establish habitual relationships with parent units of these specialties for immediate support as well as routine cross training to improve the overall capabilities of SFLEs. Efficient and responsive employment of these augmentees requires that they be accessible to US Army Special Forces. Past operations have demonstrated that “ad hoc groupings, particularly those operating in ambiguous environments, invite problems in command relationships, interoperability, maintenance, logistics, and other functional areas” (Research Planning Inc. 1999, 37). Lastly, the following traits are required for all soldiers--whether Special Forces or augmentees--when working in a multinational environment: 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, self-confidence, and flexibility (Research Planning Inc. 1999, 37).

### Summary

In this chapter, the study examined both historical employments and current understandings of liaison activities to determine the significant functions of past SFLEs. These functions were applied against future employment scenarios to identify necessary areas of change. Previous operations show that SFLEs benefit from augmentation when assigned to carry out specialized tasks such as monitoring civil affairs and psychological operations or directing complex JCAS and air interdiction missions. Additionally, as the US finds itself establishing coalitions with new partners, SFLEs most likely will require the support of regional experts attuned to the arcane languages and cultures of new partners and operational environments. Other areas highlighted in the lessons learned indicate that SFLEs are capable of conducting both liaison work and tactical missions when manned as operational SFODAs or split-teams. Finally, what is probably the most important insight from the first portion of the analysis, SFLEs consistently relied on three core competencies--those being intercultural communications, training, and advanced technology--as a seamless tool to enhance interaction and interoperability among multinational partners under various circumstances.

The second portion of the analysis revealed that there are several areas of Special Forces DTLOMS that require development and enhancement. Of major significance is the need for Special Forces transformation plan to include enhanced digital communications technology compatible to Joint and Army battlefield systems, and improved regional expertise in traditional and arcane language and cultural skills.

Furthermore, an SFLE needs to be comprised of individuals with seasoned leadership skills capable of advising a contingent commander on tactical as well as operational level plans and maneuvers. Overall, this analysis validated the premise that SFLE activities overcome “coalition warfare inhibitors,” such as language, cultural, doctrinal, and technological asymmetries, that typically prevent multinational partners from becoming a unified force. These findings will prove useful in answering the primary research question. As the next chapter will show, the role of SFLEs will remain unique and relevant over the next two decades.

## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Despite the unparalleled strength of the Armed Forces, we should not become complacent. Maintaining the status quo will not serve national interests. The evolving security environment of today, replete with new challenges and new opportunities, demands a capable and flexible military. Our great strength is service core competencies. We must expand on them to provide seamless interoperability. (Joint Force Quarterly 2000, 1)

General (Retired) Henry H. Shelton  
Former Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff

#### Introduction

This chapter answers the primary research question by drawing conclusions concerning the SFLE's role in future multinational operations and making recommendations to enhance current doctrine and future operations regarding the employment of liaisons. Additionally, this chapter will make recommendations for further research on the topic and other areas that were uncovered but fell outside the scope of this thesis.

#### Conclusions and Recommendations

How might SFLEs improve interoperability during multinational operations from now through the 2020 timeframe?

The findings from chapter 4 reveal that it is not practical for Joint and Army commanders to expect SFLEs to serve as a long-term fix to eliminate current and future interoperability challenges with allies and coalition partners. The source of these challenges encompasses several shortcomings that fall beyond the means of Special Forces--most notably the growing technology gap between the US military and

multinational partners. Nonetheless, SFLEs will play a significant role enabling interaction and integration between US conventional forces and multinational partners from now through 2020. It is imperative to point out that the significant role will be as an “enabler”--a capability that can be rapidly employed by Joint and Army commanders to primarily perform standard liaison duties, provide communications connectivity to vital battlefield systems such as C2 networks and JCAS, and assess foreign forces for US use until organic LNOs and C4I technologies can be dispatched and integrated. Ultimately, the function of an enabler, especially during a protracted campaign, will be to work toward transferring responsibilities to US conventional assets when feasible. Having a foreign contingent deal directly with a US conventional force instead of through Special Forces soldiers will in the end achieve long-term synergistic effects conducive to sustaining mutual trust and confidence within a combined force. To achieve this synergy will require SFLEs to advise and assist Joint and Army forces on intercultural related issues and to provide multinational partners training on the employment of Joint and Army advanced battlefield systems.

The enabler role is undoubtedly unique and relevant because no other capability like it is expected to exist in the US military from now until 2020. Interestingly enough, the enabler role coincides with retired Lieutenant General William Yarborough’s perception of Special Forces: “I didn’t see the Special Forces soldier as a direct combat instrument. I saw him as a catalyst who could gather around him those whom he could then train and lend help to lead” (Clancy and Stiner 2002, 95). In addition, the enabler role meets the special operations mission criteria outlined in FM 3-05.20, *Special Forces Operations*: (1) The mission is appropriate for Special Forces since SFLEs are not being

used as a substitute for readily available conventional assets and because it has operational or strategic implications; (2) The mission supports the theater geographic combatant commander's campaign plan by facilitating interaction and integration amongst multinational partners; (3) The mission is operationally feasible and is not beyond Special Forces capabilities, limitations, and vulnerabilities; (4) The required resources are available to conduct the mission assuming SFLEs are equipped with compatible Joint and Army communications; and (5) The expected outcome justifies the risk even after considering the high value and limited resources of Army SOF (FM 3-05.20 2001, 1-22).

Given that coalition support is a collateral activity not a primary mission, one may assume that Special Forces would be somewhat reluctant to commit an abundance of resources to fully develop or enhance any particular skills that may be unique to liaison coordination activities. Conversely, as the US military transforms itself to focus on "decisive, high-end small-scale contingencies" and establishes "floating" coalitions with new partners, it is evident that the requirement to employ SFLEs in a variety of innovative roles will significantly increase and consequently demand skills that are unique to the emerging needs of US conventional forces and multinational partners. Thus, "maintaining the status quo" and relying on UW and FID inherent skills and materiel will not serve Joint and Army or multinational partners' interests. As the analysis of the raw data presented in earlier chapters shows there are several areas of Special Forces DTLOMS that require further development or enhancement in order for SFLEs to facilitate "seamless interoperability." The most critical areas entail compatible communication systems with Joint and Army forces, enhanced regional expertise that

includes vast knowledge of traditional as well as arcane languages and cultures, and an improved understanding of Joint and Army procedures and equipment at the operational levels. Therefore, these critical areas along with other related capabilities must receive adequate consideration.

Initially, Special Forces must be responsive and able to rapidly deploy SFLEs worldwide so they can link-up with multinational partners and begin carrying out liaison coordination activities before or soon after the commencement of hostilities. This capability will require better inter and intra-theater transportation arrangements. The Special Forces transformation plan discusses the possibility of organic fixed and rotary wing aircraft assigned to Special Forces units. Until this capability exists, Special Forces will need to address this “responsive deployment” requirement with Air Force counterparts. Next, SFLE must be equipped with portable, advanced communications and other digital technologies that ensure coalition forces maintain communications and intelligence connectivity and subsequently view the same common operational picture of US forces. Furthermore, coalition forces must be fully integrated into vital Joint and Army battlefield systems such as close air support and indirect fires.

While advanced digital technologies will certainly enhance future military capabilities, the human factors--the ones dependent on training and intercultural communications--will continue to dominate combined operations involving both old and new partners. Therefore, SFLEs must be able to support both allies and new coalition partners, no matter what type of force--regular or irregular. SFLEs should be thoroughly familiar with the capabilities, roles and missions of potential partners as well as those of US conventional forces. To gain such vast knowledge, Special Forces will have to sustain

an aggressive peacetime military engagement program in the geographic theaters to include participation in multinational exercises and military-to-military contacts. This regional exposure will further increase Special Forces linguistic skills and cultural orientation. Any pre-crisis combined training and advisory assistance will also need to include work with Joint and Army units to increase Special Forces understanding of conventional procedures at the tactical and operational levels and to increase conventional forces understanding of intercultural related issues. Lastly, SFLEs must have common tactics, techniques, and procedures. Understandably, future SFLE missions will be tailored to the supported unit and the nature of the operation; however, there are numerous lessons that can be learned from past missions that need to be captured and recorded in a publication so future SFLEs do not make the same mistakes of their predecessors. Thus, by adequately addressing the matters discussed above, Special Forces should be able to sustain the necessary SFLE skills and materiel to support future Joint, Army, and multinational interoperability.

#### Recommendations for Further Research on the Topic

This study uncovered several topics that require further comprehensive research and should prove useful in discovering additional ways to improve future SFLE activities or other Special Forces missions related to working with Joint, Army, and multinational forces. The first topic deals with intermediate level education for Special Forces. The study revealed that despite attendance at the Infantry and Armor Captain Career Courses and the Combined Arms Service Staff School, Special Forces captains generally lack the practical experience to advise and assist foreign counterparts on conventional procedures and equipment at the operational level. Thus, it is applicable to ask, what can be done to

ensure Special Forces officers as well as NCOs sustain a basic of knowledge of Joint and Army procedures and equipment at the tactical and operational levels as the military transform itself and adjusts the way it conducts combat and SASO missions? The next topic pertains to the revolution in military affairs and the US military's reliance on advanced technologies. What technical skills will be required of Special Forces soldiers to operate compatible C4I technologies of Joint and Army forces from now until 2020? The last topic requiring further research deals with Special Forces' primary tool when working with foreign counterparts--that is intercultural communications and regional expertise. What traditional and arcane linguistic and cultural requirements for SFLEs will emerge as the US military establishes "floating" coalitions with new partners over the next two decades?

### Closing

This study originated in August 2001 because of the author's desire to promote Special Forces' capability to support integration and interoperability of Joint, Army, and multinational forces in future combined operations. The study assumed that the US military would continue to conduct future operations within a multinational framework. It was also assumed that Joint and Army commanders would take the brunt for leading future multinational forces and would face situations involving severe shortcomings in integration and interoperability, thus requiring a means such as SFLEs to enable mutual understanding and unity of effort. Although this study began with a fictitious scenario based in Zaire during the year 2012, it seems fitting to close with the reality face by today's US military and its allies and coalition partners as they are actively engaged worldwide conducting combined operations. The events following September 11th have

certainly validate this study's initial assumptions and fully support the finding that Special Forces plays a vital enabler role in integrating old as well as new partners, whether regular or irregular forces. Currently, Special Forces is overtly assisting coalition partners in the fight against terrorism in two geographic theaters and facilitating two multinational peace operations in another geographic theater. It seems clear that this enabler role will not diminish in the near future. Thus, to ensure SFLEs remain "capable and flexible" to the emerging needs of US conventional forces and multinational partners from now until 2020, Special Forces must as a minimum obtain compatible communication systems with Joint and Army forces, enhanced regional expertise that includes vast knowledge of traditional as well as arcane languages and cultures, and an improved understanding of Joint and Army procedures and equipment at the operational levels.

## GLOSSARY

**Coalition Support:** A collateral activity to improve the interaction of coalition partners and US military. It includes training coalition partners and on tactics and techniques, providing communications to integrate them into a coalition command and intelligence structure, and establishing liaison to coordinate combat support and combat service support (FM 3-05.20 2001, 2-21).

**Combined:** Between two or more forces or agencies of two or more allies. When not all allies or services are involved, the participating nations and services shall be identified JP 1-02 1994, 89).

**Command and Control (C2):** The exercise of authority and direction by a properly designated commander over assigned and attached forces in the accomplishment of the mission. Command and control functions are performed through an arrangement of personnel, equipment, communications, facilities, and procedures employed by a commander in planning, directing, coordinating, and controlling forces and operations in the accomplishment of the mission (JP 1-02 1994, 90).

**Foreign Internal Defense (FID):** Participation by civilian and military agencies of a government in any of the action programs taken by another government to free and protect its society from subversion, lawlessness, and insurgency. During FID, Special Forces support the host nation government. The emphasis is on countering or preventing insurgencies. Operations are characterized by interagency cooperation (FM 31-20-3 1994, 1-24).

**Interoperability:** The ability of systems, units, or forces to provide services to and accept services from other systems, units, or forces and to use the services so exchanged to enable them to operate effectively together (JP 1-02 1994, 235).

**Liaison:** That contact or intercommunication maintained between elements of military forces to ensure mutual understanding and unity of purpose and action (JP 1-02 1994, 266).

**Liaison Officers (LNOs):** Representatives who serve in designated organizations. They serve primarily among Joint Task Force components to represent commands and to coordinate operations, staff actions, and any other requirements. Normally, an LNO cell is a temporary requirement, established in support of any requirement (FM 3-05.20 2001, 4-6).

**Multinational Operations:** A collective term to describe military actions conducted by forces of two or more nations usually undertaken within the structure of a coalition or alliance (JP 1-02 1994, 307).

**Peacetime Military Engagement (PME):** Army forces contribute significantly to promoting regional stability, reducing potential conflicts and threats, and

detering aggression and coercion. PME activities are proactive, opportunity-based endeavors conducted at home and abroad to shape the international security environment to favor US interests. Most nations maintain armies and paramilitary organizations as their primary military instruments. Through many day-to-day interactions with these forces, Army forces strengthen alliances and coalitions and foster the development of democratic institutions. Working with allies and potential coalition partners, Army forces foster bilateral and multilateral relationships, increase military openness, enhance cooperation, and advance regional conflict prevention and resolution mechanisms (FM 3.0 2001, 1-4)

**Special Operations Forces (SOF):** Those active and reserve component forces of the military services designated by the secretary of defense and specifically organized, trained, and equipped to conduct and support special operations (JP 1-02 1994, 428).

**Special Operation Command and Control Element (SOCCE):** A C2 element based on a Special Forces company headquarters element augmented with a communications package, equipment, and selected personnel as required by the mission. It is normally operational control or tactical control to conventional forces at corps level and synchronizes operations between Special Forces and conventional forces (FM 3-05.20 2001, 4-6).

**Stability Operations:** Promote and protect US national interests by influencing the threat, political, and information dimensions of the operational environment through a combination of peacetime developmental, cooperative activities and coercive actions in response to crisis. Armed forces conduct ten types of stability operations: peace operations, foreign internal defense, security assistance, humanitarian assistance, support to insurgencies, support to counterdrug operations, combating terrorism, noncombatant evacuation operations, arms control, and show of force (FM 3.0 2001, 9-1).

**Support Operations:** Employ Armed Forces to assist civil authorities, foreign or domestic, as they prepare for or respond to crisis and relieve suffering (FM 3.0 2001, 10-1).

**Unconventional Warfare (UW):** A broad spectrum of military and paramilitary operations, normally of long duration, predominantly 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. During UW, Special Forces foster and/or support insurgencies against an established government (FM 31-20-3 1994, 1-24).

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