

THE PILLARS OF ARSOF CAPABILITY

ARSOF Strategic Value to the Nation: Four Pillars of Capability

For more than 60 years, ARSOF have served at the tip of the spear in defense of the nation. Today, the U.S. Army Special Operations Command represents a force of approximately 33,000 personnel and more than half of the nation's SOF. ARSOF elements consistently fill more than 60 percent of all U.S. SOF deployments worldwide with ARSOF Soldiers deployed in more than 70 countries on any given day of the year, delivering strategic value to the nation through four complementary capabilities — the *Pillars of ARSOF Capability*: an Indigenous Approach to Operations, Precision Targeting Operations, Developing Understanding and Wielding Influence, and Crisis Response. They are employed throughout the operational spectrum and across all campaign phases, including interagency- or Coalition-led campaigns and operations. Together, the Pillars of ARSOF Capability provide options to shape or prevent outcomes in support of our national interests. These capabilities, coupled with tailorable mission command nodes and scalable force packages that are low-signature and employ a small footprint, are particularly suited for employment in politically sensitive environments.

The four pillars are a new way to talk about ARSOF capabilities and represent a way to define ARSOF value using simple terminology. Military doctrine contains terms that are not universally known. There are times when doctrinal terms should be used; however, when conveying the strategic value of ARSOF capabilities to a wide range of audiences, we need to simplify the narrative. The four pillars represent a means by which every member of the force can explain ARSOF capabilities to those unfamiliar with how the force provides value to joint force commanders, interagency leaders, and the nation.

Formally assessed and selected ARSOF soldiers, trained to an elite level, deliver strategic value to the nation through four complementary capabilities — *The Pillars of ARSOF Capability*



INDIGENOUS APPROACH

The indigenous approach is a means to address challenges to regional stability with and through populations and partner forces empowered by persistent ARSOF engagement. Through the approach, ARSOF leverage nascent capability within populations, transforming indigenous mass into combat power. Since World War II, ARSOF elements have amassed unique institutional and operational expertise in living among, training, advising, and fighting alongside people of foreign cultures, achieving effects with and through partner forces.

Today, ARSOF training pipelines, unlike any other in the Department of Defense, produce regionally oriented, culturally astute, and language-capable personnel who can apply an indigenous approach across the spectrum of conflict in permissive, uncertain, and hostile environments. The indigenous approach provides low-cost, high-impact options to address state and non-state threats, set conditions for conventional force success, and execute sensitive activities through minimal force commitment.



PRECISION TARGETING

Precision targeting operations involve direct action and counter-network activities enabled by SOF unique intelligence, targeting processes, and technology, such as ARSOF rotary wing capabilities and armed unmanned aerial systems. Precision targeting operations are employed against uniquely difficult target sets that may require operating in uncertain or hostile environments, careful and focused application of force, and significant intelligence and operational preparation. These operations are executed by highly trained, rapidly deployable, and scalable ARSOF personnel and formations that are employed to buy time and space for other operations to gain traction, as seen in counterinsurgency campaigns. They create precise physical and psychological effects and can be used to collapse threat networks through deliberate targeting of critical nodes, as demonstrated in counterterrorism campaigns. They also include sensitive activities in support of targeting processes and the execution of operations.



UNDERSTAND & INFLUENCE

Developing understanding and wielding influence are essential aspects of the value ARSOF capabilities provide joint force commanders and the nation. The SOF network of personnel, assets, and international partnerships represents the means to obtain early understanding of emerging local, regional, and transregional threats and where opportunities exist for advancing U.S. objectives. The SOF network provides capabilities needed to influence outcomes in all campaign phases and especially in conflict short of overt war.

Engagement worldwide allows ARSOF to develop long-term partner nation relationships and an advanced understanding of complex environments. Operating in culturally and politically complex environments requires ARSOF personnel to be adept at interacting and coordinating with multiple agencies and partners. Institutional training and education programs unique to ARSOF, along with long-term regionally aligned employment, provide the expertise necessary to understand complex environments and the ability to influence people and circumstances.



CRISIS RESPONSE

Crisis response, provided through CONUS and OCONUS stationed alert forces and persistently deployed and dispersed units, provides national decision makers with agile, tailorable, and rapidly employable special operations formations necessary to respond to emergencies. These forces provide options to rescue people under threat, to recover sensitive materials such as weapons of mass destruction components, to provide humanitarian relief, or to address other short notice requirements.

ARSOF crisis response capabilities leverage the SOF network and partner-nation relationships established before crisis occurs. Persistent engagement develops relationships and the advanced understanding needed in times of crisis for ARSOF to effectively employ unilateral capabilities and those created during partner-force development. Through ARSOF crisis response, a small number of operators can rapidly address emergencies in an effort to enable host nation solutions to local or regional security challenges.