



JOINT EFFORT Partner-nation special-operations forces and a National Police K-9 team conduct vehicle-interdiction training in Honduras. *U.S. Army photo*

OEF-CCA: IRREGULAR APPLICATIONS FOR USSOF EFFORTS

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Operation Enduring Freedom-Caribbean, Central America is a U.S. regional military operation initiated in 2008, under the operational control of Special Operations Command-South. SOCSOUTH is the theater special-operations command for U.S. Southern Command. While OEF-CCA has a focus on counterterrorism, it also supports US-SOUTHCOM's military objectives and is a regional part of the larger fight against terrorism.

Special Forces operational detachment-alfas, Naval Special Warfare task elements, Navy special-boat teams, civil-military support elements, military-information support teams as well as U.S. Army general-purpose forces Civil Affairs teams and U.S. Navy's maritime CA teams are assigned as persistent tactical units in support of OEF-CCA. Additionally, elements from U.S. Air Force's 6th Special Operations Squadron and the U.S. Army's 3rd Battalion 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment conduct episodic deployments in support of OEF-CCA. While deployed into the area of operations, these units are under the tactical command and control of a Special Forces operational detachment-bravo, which is deployed to Soto Cano Air Base, Honduras, as an advanced operational base. The AOB is responsible to the commander, SOCSOUTH for all assigned U.S. special-operations forces and supporting general-purpose forces in the Central American countries of Belize, Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, Costa Rica and Panama.

After a decade of asymmetrical conflict, SOF are well poised to implement creative solutions to affect the geographic combatant commander's military objectives and to support the U.S. country teams. OEF-CCA provides a SOF construct to highlight examples of creative solutions in today's contemporary operating environment.

Unique distributed command and control, utilizing ways within a partner-nation's means to achieve realistic ends, breaking training-engagement paradigms and utilizing reachback support were among the tools AOB 2230 (C Company, 2nd Battalion, 20th Special Forces Group (Airborne)) leveraged to achieve success during a recent OEF-CCA deployment.

SOCSOUTH exercises control of deployed SOF through a unique DC2. In CENTAM, an SFODB is deployed as an AOB, referred to as AOB CENTAM, headquartered at SCAB. SCAB is a Honduran-owned air base that hosts SOUTHCOM's Joint Task Force-Bravo. While the AOB deploys with its organic complement of personnel and equipment, it is unique in several aspects: all SOF and GPF operational control to SOCSOUTH is under tactical control of AOB CENTAM while deployed into the AOR. On occasion, the deployed SOF or GPF element commanders were at the rank of O5, but were under the C2 of the AOB commander, an O4. Additionally, while there is no doctrine for a joint AOB, AOB 2230 exercised command and control of not only U.S. Army elements but also sister-service elements with the U.S. Air Force and U.S. Navy. Up to 15 subordinate elements were attached to AOB 2230 during its simultaneous deployment in up to five countries. In essence, AOB 2230 became a miniature joint special-operations task force and needed to understand joint culture and language and how to plan for employment of CATs, MISTs NSWTEs for campaigning in CENTAM, while exercising effective command and control.

Additionally, AOB 2230 was assigned an enhanced enabler with two more planned enablers for future AOBs to better facilitate its ability to perform at the operational level. A civil-military operations planner was assigned to the AOB and was integrated into the staff. The assignment of a CMO planner, who was a GPF O5, to the AOB was a new initiative which occurred during AOB 2230's deployment. The CMO planner focused at the operational level and was responsible for developing a regional CMO plan, nesting the regional AOB CMO plan within the U.S. country teams, SOUTHCOM component commands and JTF-B. Additionally, the CMO planner assisted the subordinate CAT commanders implementing measures of performance and measures of effects, again synchronizing these effects with a regional approach throughout CENTAM. The CMO planner ties the operational level into the strategic level, working with the SOCSOUTH J37 as well as advising the AOB commander on all CMO aspects. SOCSOUTH in-

tends to ask for an information operations planner to be incorporated into future AOB staff, in order to create more capable DC2 nodes. Lastly 7th Special Forces Group (Airborne) agreed to provide a strategic debriefer who will be assigned to the AOB during the next rotation. This asset will be able to conduct debriefings of subordinate elements upon their return from activities in key areas of interest. This will better answer the AOB's priority intelligence requirement and assist with future decision points regarding area of interest adjustments and force protection. SOCSOUTH is also considering requesting a NSW planner to be assigned to the AOB, which will allow improved synchronization of land and maritime regional planning.

One of the challenges AOB 2230 faced was synchronizing lines of operations with the individual U.S. country teams. Each CENTAM country and U.S. country team faces unique challenges. AOB 2230 also realized that often members of a country team did not fully understand the capabilities that the AOB brought to the table. In order to better support the country team, the AOB assigned liaisons to the country teams in those countries that had a persistent SOF presence.

The commander of SOCSOUTH provided guidance to more utilize the 'ops-intel' capabilities of Special Forces intelligence sergeants more commonly known as 18Fs. As a result, 18Fs and SF operations officers,

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known as 180As, from the SFODAs were assigned the additional duty as U.S. country team LNOs with instructions to integrate with the tactical analysis team, sourced by Joint Inter-Agency Task Force- South. This relationship grew throughout the deployment and provided a significant return on SOF investment in the AOR. In order to facilitate integration between the 18Fs, 180As and the country team, the AOB and SFODAs needed to build rapport, trust and confidence with the country team. As an Army National Guard unit, AOB 2230 was well suited for this task. AOB 2230 and its SFODAs leveraged its organic member's civilian occupations to build this rapport. Many members' civilian occupations are with U.S. government agencies and state and local law enforcement. This background helped the team members build almost instant rapport with many members of the country teams. In many instances, the AOB/ SFODA LNO's civilian agency was the same agency assigned to the country team. This resulted in the AOB/ SFODA LNO being welcomed and in some cases offered a seat at the regular country team meetings with the U.S. ambassador. Ultimately, the 18Fs were used to assist with intelligence analysis and were the conduit for reachback support to the AOB and SOCSOUTH while the 180As kept the country team advised of all AOB activity. The LNOs had the freedom of maneuver to meet with the country team and spend time with the SFODAs at the training-engagement locations. This allowed the LNOs the ability to provide the country team ground truth and atmospheric throughout the particular country. The end result was a fluid nesting of the AOBs lines of operations with the country team's goals fully utilizing the 18Fs' capabilities.

One of the benefits after a decade of experience in conflict with an asymmetric enemy is the ability of tactical SOF leaders to apply critical thinking to solve complex problems. The AOB provided guidance to the subordinate elements to develop ways, within the partner-nation's existing means; to achieve both the U.S. government's and partner-nation's ends. The subordinate units were challenged to develop bottom up solutions without additional investment of U.S. assets or expenditures. This approach of achieving ends, which are self sustaining by the partner nation, supported the goal of working ourselves out of a job. Some of these ways are highlighted in the following examples.

One of the SFODAs, on a persistent training mission, recognized their partner-nation SOF counterparts were only utilized occasionally on high-value target operations. The target deck for HVT operations was limited and this unit only conducted these operations a handful of times throughout the year. Through their LNO to the country team, the SFODA identified a national police unit that was actioning interdiction and medium-level targets on a weekly basis. This police unit stood to benefit from training with its own military SOF — the partner unit of the SFODA. The SOF partner unit had previously not utilized its instructor abilities outside of the unit. The SFODA, with the country team, encouraged and facilitated the

partnered SOF unit to provide tactical instruction to the police unit. The SFODA assisted its partner unit in developing a program of instruction and mentored the instructors. This greatly enhanced the PN SOF unit's instructor capability, while enhancing the police unit's tactical capacity. The result was quality tactical courses of instruction conducted by the PN SOF unit for the police unit on a recurring basis. The additional benefit was integration and close-working relationship engendered between the police and military units, which was previously lacking in SOF connecting of dots.

In another case, an SFODA recognized its host-nation's statutory authorities allowed its maritime partnered SOF unit to conduct illicit-trafficking interdiction operations without police, since they had inherent arrest authority. However, much of the intelligence necessary for such law-enforcement operations, as well as the technical expertise required to obtain criminal convictions of illicit trafficking suspects resides with the national police. The SFODA began developing a POI, which included interoperability training with a counternarcotics national-police unit. At the onset of this training, the maritime partner SOF unit successfully conducted two significant illicit-trafficking interdictions. This led the SFODA, again through their LNO with the country team, to develop an interagency task-force concept for consideration by the PN and U.S. country team, comprised of a SOF national-police element and a military air-support wing. This concept was further developed with the US country team, with the SFODA remaining in the background when they formally presented it to the partner-nation ministers of defense and public security. The country

team took ownership of the concept and the SFODA moved into an advisory role. This concept was subsequently adopted by the partner nation, and at the time of this writing, was in an initial implementation phase. This concept is now being briefed to other country teams as a model to consider. What the SFODA conceived at the tactical level produced an operational, even strategic effect.

One of the MIST elements assigned to AOB CENTAM developed products for an airborne leaflet drop to support a land-domain partner-nation SOF unit. This particular SOF unit did not have organic assigned fixed-wing aircraft, however a sister maritime unit did. The land domain unit and maritime unit had not previously collaborated, although they shared geographic areas of responsibility.

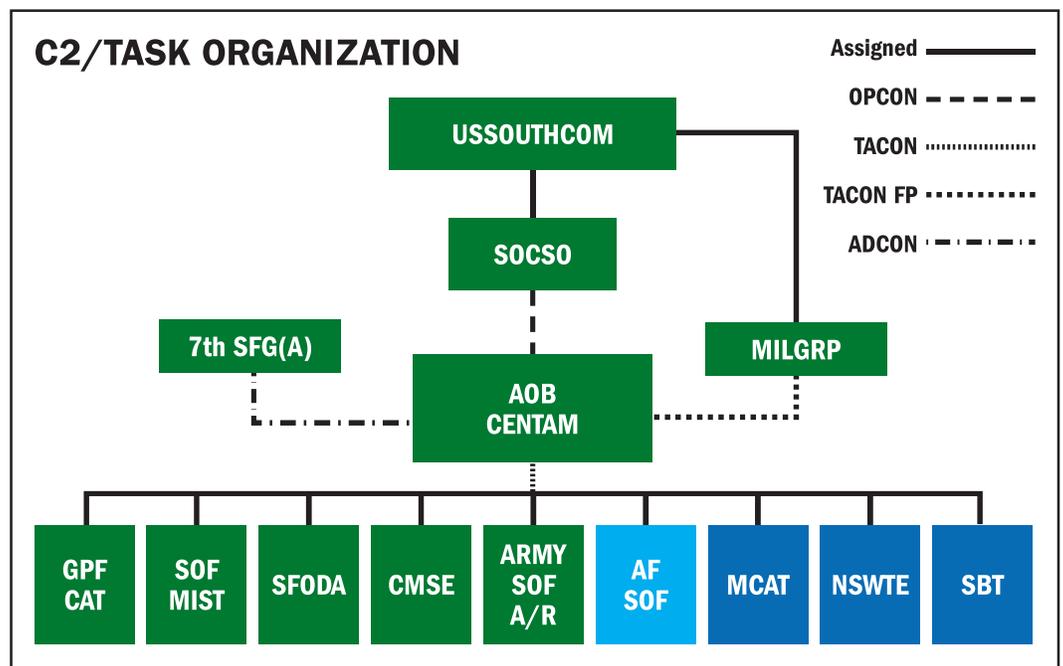
The MIST commander facilitated meetings between the two units resulting not only in utilization of the fixed-wing aircraft to support the leaflet drop. The meeting also had the effect of initiating enduring collaboration between the two units. By using creative thinking, SOF often influences positive cultural change to break longstanding institutionalized biases against cooperation by simply creating pathways for improvement.

Another MIST element decided to break from the normal process and develop partner-nation IO capability as it conducted product development. Previously, an information product was developed by the MIST, who would then seek country-team and partner-nation approval prior to release. This particular MIST elected rather to facilitate the partner-nation development of products by conducting a subject-matter expert exchange with the partner-nation public affairs sections. During this exchange, the MIST presented its methodology and then mentored the partner-nation in drafting of its own IO products. Not only was the partner nation, who has the best perspective given it's their country, lead in product development, but also in developing a structure and process for use in the future without the assistance of a MIST. Ultimately this was a significant step in the U.S. military again, working itself out of a job.

In another country, a CAT multiplied the effect of its efforts by integrating non-governmental organizations with its partner-nation's CA program. The CAT was limited in the amount of area it could geographically affect, but by enlisting non-governmental organizations to collaborate with the partner nation, a much larger area was positively affected by CMOs.

During the course of AOB 2230's rotation, it strove to increase the efficiency of its capacity building and direct support (IO, CMO, etc.) by focusing on effects. This moved away from old, simple, comfortable paradigms through several methods, some of which are closely linked to developing 'ways' within the partner nation's 'means' to accomplish 'ends'.

The AOB received guidance from SOCSOUTH regarding the establishment of a reconnaissance capacity in one of the CENTAM



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SOF units. This guidance was based on dialogue with the country team and the fact this particular country was the leading recipient of illicit air-trafficking. The intent was to establish a national level RECCE capability to directly support law-enforcement efforts. While there was some initial RECCE capability with this SOF unit, it was in need of improvement and the task organization of the unit did not allow for a dedicated RECCE capability. The SFODA was tasked to build this capability within the current SOF unit's capacity. Previous SFODA's training engagements with this partnered unit revolved around assisting them conduct a commando course, which was conducted by the unit for all military services. The SFODA convinced the unit's leadership of the utility of a dedicated RECCE detachment, and concentrated its training on this detachment in lieu of assisting with the conduct of commando courses for their GPFs. The SFODA was successful in influencing the unit's leadership and was allowed to build a specific task organization and training POI for a national-level RECCE. The SFODA concentrated the majority of its deployment time on this effort.

Upon completion of the RECCE POI, and one day prior to the RECCE detachment's graduation, the partner-nation unit conducted an HVT operation. Despite being awake for the previous 48 hours on the course's final field-training exercise, the RECCE students conducted infiltration to hide sites and established eyes on target, to provide current information on the target. The unit actioned the target as the RECCE transitioned into a blocking force and detained numerous squirts. This operation was one of the most successful operations to date for this unit, and the leadership directly attributed its success to the RECCE detachment. Currently this RECCE detachment is being utilized on a regular basis.

SFODAs and NSWTEs that were conducting training engagements at the same time, in the same country, partnered to conduct culmination exercises between navy and army elements. Previously, SFODAs and NSWTEs had not conducted partner-nation joint-training



BUSTED Partner Nation SOF, National Police and DEA Advisors conduct training in vehicle, board, search and seizure. DoD photo

exercises together. These CULEXs served to develop joint planning, at the operational level. Thorough after-action reviews of these CULEXs have led to partner nations addressing communication and planning shortfalls and increased partner-nation joint-operating capability.

Prior to conducting a series of FTXs, one SFODA coordinated with the country team to determine best locations to conduct the FTX. The intent was to determine where the presence of the partner-nation's forces would have operational-shaping effects or result in disruption of illicit trafficking. The series of FTXs were conducted in general areas known as illicit-trafficking movement corridors. The presence of the partner-nation's forces in itself was a disrupting effect. This shaping-effect FTX is being evaluated as a model in the AOR.

A final paradigm shift the AOB recommended to SOCSOUTH was to conduct training engagements in conjunction with the GPF, by front loading episodic USSOF training engagements with mobile training teams from U.S. Army South or U.S. Marine Forces South. Often an SFODA or NSWTE will arrive to conduct training with a host-nation SOF unit, only to find their weapons in a state of disrepair and the soldiers lacking in basic marksmanship skills. By synchronizing GPF- and SOF-training engagements they become mutually supporting of SOUTCHOMs military objectives. Both USARSO and MARFORSOUTH have the capability to conduct armorer course MTTs can repair many small-arms shortcomings as well as small-unit tactics MTTs. If these MTTs are conducted immediately preceding the arrival of SOF, trainers can bring the partner-nation SOF to a higher level than would otherwise be possible. Instead of focusing the first few weeks on weapons repair and zeroing weapons, SOF can develop higher-level skill sets while increasing the overall efficiency of the training engagement. Currently the SOCSOUTH staff is working with USARSO and MARFORSOUTH to schedule such MTTs conducted by GPFs in conjunction with USSOF follow-on training.

Another challenge AOB 2230 faced was a lack of depth to adequately provide C2, plan regionally and synchronize subordinate elements across seven countries. While expected to perform as a miniature JSOTE, the AOB needed to increase the depth of its 18-person staff, in order to work at the operational level. To fill staff-

ing gaps, AOB 2230 utilized reach-back support from CONUS units, SOCSOUTH J2, force-provider S2s, and other government organizations to assist in intelligence and analytical support.

When partner-nation SOF elements conducted sensitive-site exploitation, they may share, as authorized, information with their partnered SOF units, who in turn pass the raw information to the AOB S2 section. The AOB would forward such information to the SOCSOUTH Joint Intelligence Support Element to analyze and process for sharing with other agencies. The AOB/SFODA LNOs to the country team would also receive this intelligence and provide products directly to country teams. An additional service AOB 2230 utilized

was with the 98th Civil Affairs Battalion cultural analysis database. This, combined with support through SOCSOUTH from the National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency, provided a human terrain, social/ cultural analysis for AOIs. This process was initiated by AOB 2230 and at the time of this writing is still in development. The intent is to have an analytical product to assist CMO and MISO in focusing and planning at the micro-node level in their AOIs. As previously mentioned, AOB 2230 also requested a strategic debriefer to assist with managing information obtained from personnel as they returned from civil reconnaissance and medical civic-action missions. 7th SFG(A) agreed to provide a strategic debriefer, who is scheduled to deploy with AOB 2230's replacement AOB. These initiatives, in concert with SOCSOUTH staff efforts, will better focus the AOB's CMO and MISO efforts.

While there is no defining tactical level playbook or doctrine for AOB CENTAM, USSOF tactical elements are well poised, trained and experienced to implement creative solutions to affect the GCC's military objectives and to support the country teams. The level of training and experience, after a decade of conflict with an asymmetrical enemy in the Global War on Terrorism, has led to an unprecedented level of SOF capability and performance. By arming these units with a clear understanding of the commander's intent and granting them the latitude and freedom of maneuver to innovate, they will continue to achieve unparalleled success in today's contemporary operating environment. **SW**



comment here

Lt. Col. Shawn Satterfield served on an ODA for 12 years in 12th, 10th and 20th SFGs. His ODA command time includes JCETS in SOUTHCOM, support for Operation Joint Guardian, and OEF-A. Satterfield's staff time includes the Andean Ridge Regional Engagement branch chief and J33 for SOCSOUTH. Satterfield has deployed as an AOB commander in support of OEF-A and OEF-CCA. Lt. Col. Satterfield's civilian occupation is a Missouri State Trooper where he is an assistant director of the criminal division.