



Vision Provide our nation the world's premier special operations units, capable of prosecuting the most sensitive special warfare campaigns and executing the most difficult surgical strike operations, while providing seamless and persistent special operations support to joint-force commanders worldwide.

WHAT WE HAVE LEARNED

Over the past decade, USASOC built a robust capability to target terrorist networks and an unmatched capacity for counterinsurgency operations. At its peak, the level of support to joint-force headquarters in the U.S. Central Command area of operations was the largest sustained effort in our history. As a force, our Soldiers have performed magnificently during two of the nation's longest wars while executing a wide range of demanding and high-risk operations in hostile environments. As the nature and extent of our engagements in the Middle East change, it is critical to review the lessons learned over the past decade, assess our current situation and explore requirements for the future force.

Perhaps the most significant change of the past decade is the evolution of the Human Domain. During World War I, aerial platforms were used as a means of fire and observation in land combat. By the end of World War II, airspace had evolved into a distinct domain because its control became recognized as a key to success in the war. National leadership directed the establishment of a separate department of the Air Force in order to develop the required and unique doctrine,

organization, training, materiel, leadership, personnel and facilities solutions needed to dominate this newly, contested space. A similar appreciation for influencing populations now suggests the need for establishment of a Human Domain.

Wars among the people that emphasize influencing population groups rather than an exclusive emphasis on battle is an ancient concept. Since the early 1950s, ARSOF have been specifically designed to work in this Human Domain. The emergence of the Human Domain demands the armed forces and other U.S. government security agencies analyze what it takes to win wars among the people, including defeating terrorist and other VEOs. Evidence of this new domain can be found in the number and type of ad hoc structures and significant repurposing of traditional Land Domain tools.

Based on lessons learned, the Army is updating its concept framework to reflect the work done to advise, assist and influence foreign security forces, governments and people. Adding the 7th Warfighting Function to the other six Warfighting functions will leverage the Army's recent war-time experiences and help ensure the hard-

learned lessons are not forgotten. The establishment of a 7th Warfighting Function addresses the related tasks and systems that influence the behaviors of a people (friendly, neutral, adversary), security forces and governments and enables the prioritization and synchronization of efforts to achieve strategic effects.

The importance of SOF interdependence with Army conventional forces also became evident. Across the battlefields of Iraq and Afghanistan, we forged relationships with the conventional force that resulted in operational effectiveness unparalleled in our history. By improving interdependence, we enabled seamless and consistent application of combat power across the full range of military operations.

The need for special operations campaigns that tie SOF tactical capabilities to U.S. regional or national objectives became apparent. Efforts over the past decade focused on building partner-nation capacity, advising partner forces and conducting some unilateral activities to safeguard U.S. interests outside of declared theaters of armed conflict. To support the development of these operational-level efforts, theater special operations commands required individuals with competency to design plans. These campaigns, many of them SOF-centric, consisted of multiple lines of effort developed and synchronized by the TSOCs to achieve discrete outcomes in support of the geographic combatant commanders' overall strategy. We will increasingly need special operations campaign designers and planners who understand the full range of special operations capabilities and can weave their operations together over time to achieve U.S. objectives.

Operations Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom required USASOC to primarily focus on developing the manpower, equipment and command structures necessary to ensure operational success in mature combat theaters. As the war in Afghanistan transitions to an Afghan-led effort, a large segment of our force will be remissioned to other strategic and theater problem sets. Future operations and SOF campaigns will require persistence, distributed command and control, low-visibility operations and small-scale, non-standard logistics support. The current force structure, manpower and equipment are not optimized for this dispersed operational footprint. Therefore, we must develop and validate flexible, scalable and responsive distributed command and control structures. Our regionally expert forces will be called upon to provide continuous, proactive and responsive support to their respective joint-force commands — whether in country or deployed.

WHERE WE WANT TO GO

ARSOF 2022 Objective: In 2022, ARSOF provide joint-force commanders scalable nodes, with unmatched levels of tactical skill and language and cultural expertise, which establish persistent and distributed networks that provide the nation precise and nuanced asymmetric capability. Skilled SOF operational planners and leaders routinely mesh special warfare and surgical strike capabilities to conduct SOF campaigns in support of joint and interagency efforts. As a force, we are uniquely prepared to succeed in the most uncertain conditions and offer solutions to the nation's most difficult and sensitive problems.

“The ability to assess and understand a situation from multiple points of view and to intuitively adapt operations as necessary requires mature Soldiers who have the ability to combine their education and experience to solve a problem.”

PRIORITIES >

USASOC PRIORITIES

- » Win the Current Fight
- » Strengthen the Global SOF Network
- » Further Army SOF/CF Interdependence
- » Preserve the Force

SOF TRUTHS

- » Humans are more important than hardware.
- » Quality is better than quantity.
- » Special operations forces cannot be mass produced.
- » Competent special operations forces cannot be created after emergencies occur.
- » Most special operations require non-SOF support.

ARSOF CRITICAL CAPABILITIES >

SPECIAL WARFARE:

The execution of activities that involve a combination of lethal and non-lethal actions taken by specially trained and educated forces that have a deep understanding of cultures and foreign language, proficiency in small-unit tactics, subversion, sabotage and the ability to build and fight alongside indigenous combat formations in a permissive, uncertain or hostile environment.

SURGICAL STRIKE:

The execution of activities in a precise manner that employ SOF in hostile, denied or politically sensitive environments to seize, destroy, capture, exploit, recover or damage designated targets, or influence threats.

ARSOF CRITICAL CAPABILITIES: SPECIAL WARFARE AND SURGICAL STRIKE

USASOC provides the nation with forces capable of executing two different, but mutually supporting forms of special operations: special warfare and surgical strike. Joint-force commanders leverage ARSOF's ability to execute these capabilities in the development and execution of their special operations campaigns. Understanding the differences will illuminate how special warfare and surgical strike can best be utilized to achieve strategic effects in support of regional or national objectives.

Previous attempts to describe our force included descriptions such as "black/white," "national/theater" and "direct/indirect." These terms, which describe the force by the nature of the funding, command and control structures, authorities or operational approach have limited utility. The terms special warfare and surgical strike more accurately describe our force based on its capabilities.

Special warfare and surgical strike are distinguished by how they address uncertainty. Our

SOF CORE ACTIVITIES >

10 Title X Core Activities as enumerated by the U.S. Congress:

1] Direct Action: Short-duration strikes and other small-scale offensive actions conducted as a special operation in hostile, denied or diplomatically sensitive environments and which employ specialized military capabilities to seize, destroy, capture, exploit, recover or damage designated targets.

2] Strategic Reconnaissance: Reconnaissance and surveillance actions conducted as a special operation in hostile, denied or politically sensitive environments to collect or verify information of strategic or operational significance, employing military capabilities not normally found in conventional forces.

3] Unconventional Warfare: Activities conducted to enable a resistance movement or insurgency to coerce, disrupt or overthrow a government or occupying power by operating through or with an underground, auxiliary and guerrilla force in a denied area.

4] Foreign Internal Defense: Participation by civilian and military agencies of a government in any of the action programs taken by another government or other designated organization to free and protect its society from subversion, lawlessness, insurgency, terrorism and other threats to its security.

5] Civil Affairs Operations: Those military operations conducted by civil affairs forces that (1) enhance the relationship between military forces and civil authorities in localities where military forces are present; (2) require coordination other interagency, intergovernmental and nongovernmental organizations, indigenous populations and institutions and the private sector,

(3) involve application of functional specialty skills that normally the responsibility of civil government to enhance the conduct of civil-military operations.

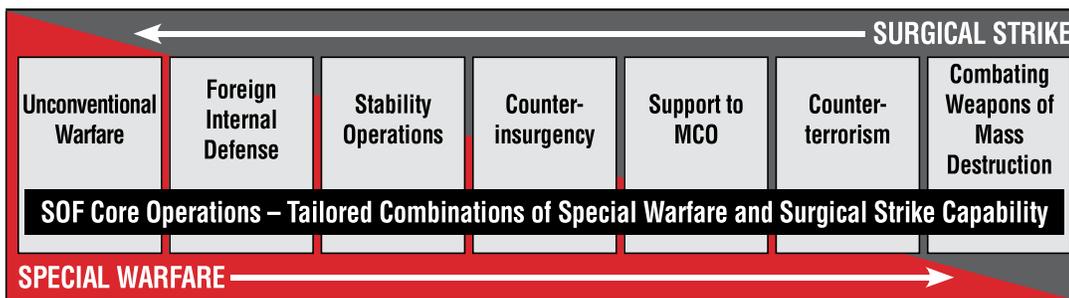
6] Counterterrorism: Actions taken directly against terrorist networks and indirectly to influence and render global and regional environments inhospitable to terrorist networks.

7] Military Information Support Operations: Planned operations to convey selected information and indicators to foreign audiences to influence their emotions, motives, objective reasoning and ultimately the behavior of foreign governments, organizations, groups, and individuals.

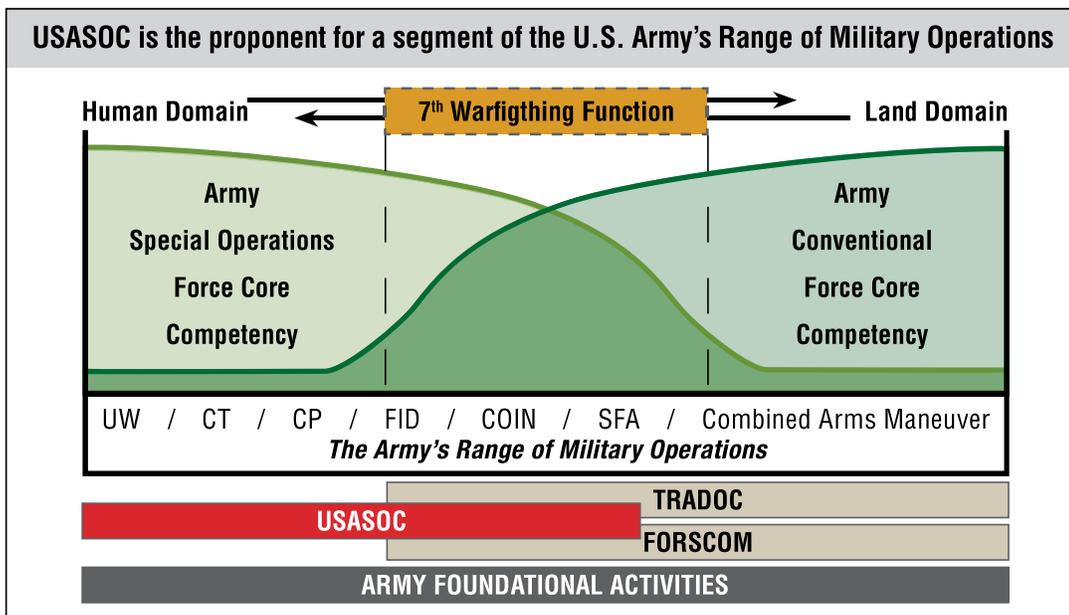
8] Humanitarian Assistance: Programs conducted to relieve or reduce the results of natural or man made disasters or other endemic conditions such as human pain, disease, hunger, or privation that might present a serious threat to life or that can result in great damage to or loss of property. Humanitarian assistance provided by US forces is limited in scope and duration. The assistance provided is designed to supplement or complement the efforts of the host nation civil authorities or agencies that may have the primary responsibility for providing humanitarian assistance.

9] Theater Search and Rescue: Employment of specialized SOF aircraft and uniquely qualified SOF air crews for the rescue of personnel from enemy territory or denied areas whenever conventional combat search and rescue techniques and capabilities are inadequate.

10] Activities Specified by the President or SECDEF



< USASOC generates the ARSOF critical capabilities of special warfare and surgical strike to conduct these special operations missions.



special warfare capability mitigates uncertainty by providing the nation a self-contained force that is designed to accomplish its mission through and with indigenous surrogates and partners. Special warfare Soldiers possess expertise in tactics, combat-adviser skills, military deception, sabotage and subversion, expertise in foreign language, relationship-building skills, cultural understanding, adaptive decision making and cognitive problem solving. This unique skill set is necessary to enhance survivability for our force over extended periods of time in hostile, austere and denied environments. Surgical strike reduces uncertainty through detailed analysis and pinpoint accuracy. Key knowledge, skills and attributes for employment of surgical strike include the execution of robust

intelligence fusion, leveraging high-tech collection systems, management of deliberate targeting cycles and the ability to discriminate and engage threat targets with minimal collateral damage.

In August 2012, the U.S. Army published Army Doctrinal Publication ADP 3-05, *Special Operations*. Although doctrine will evolve over time, the introduction of these terms in ADP 3-05 represents a maturation of special operations concepts. By describing special operations in these two different forms, USASOC's ability to generate, sustain and articulate ARSOF capabilities is enhanced. Further, this approach highlights the synergy possible through the combination of special warfare and surgical strike capabilities at the operational level.

SPECIAL WARFARE

Since 1952, the term special warfare has been key to the conduct of special operations. At that time, the term described the conduct of unconventional warfare, counterinsurgency and Psychological Operations. In 1956, to reflect the evolution and focus of special operations, the PSYWAR Center, now the JFK Special Warfare Center and School, changed its name to the Special Warfare Center. In 1961, President John F. Kennedy made special operations the center of his strategic policy, naming the first Special Assistant to the Secretary of Defense for COIN, Special Activities and Special Warfare. Between 1952 and 1962, special warfare became the commonly accepted term to discuss UW, COIN and PSYWAR, although it was not codified into doctrine until the publication of ADP-3-05, *Special Operations* in 2012.



From the Office of Strategic Service's operational groups and the exploits of Filipino guerillas led by Russell Volckmann in World War II to the Montagnard Civilian Irregular Defense Groups of Vietnam to support to counterinsurgency operations in El Salvador, the United States has a rich history of special warfare.

More recently, our force led the U.S. overthrow of the Taliban regime in Afghanistan in the days following 9/11 and have provided essential contributions to the successful efforts against violent extremists organizations in Colombia and the Philippines.

Special Warfare is that form of special operations in which the United States government defends its interests through training, material or even direct combat support to indigenous people and friendly governments whose interests coincide with those of the United States. Special Warfare includes foreign internal defense, counterinsurgency and unconventional warfare. Unconventional warfare became a mission for the U.S. Army in 1952 with the activation of the 10th Special Forces Group at Fort Bragg, N.C. A couple of years later, in response to the French defeat at Dien

Bien Phu, counterinsurgency and foreign internal defense were added to the Special Warfare mission set.

As with conventional warfare, the Army has developed special warfare maneuver units, whose mission includes closing with and destroying the enemy. These are the five active duty and two National Guard Special Forces Groups. Selected, trained and organized to work with indigenous forces, possessing area expertise and language proficiency, exceptional small-unit fighting skills and the ability to operate in uncertain or denied areas for extended periods, Special Forces units are designed to operate in complex and uncertain environments. Also essential to the conduct of Special Warfare are Civil Affairs and Military Information Support Operations units, particularly enabled by their capability to analyze, segment, and



ultimately influence populations in ways desired by the supported commanders. Each of these Special Warfare units (CA, MISO, SF) has an assigned area of responsibility that corresponds to their supported geographic combatant command.

Typically long in duration, special warfare campaigns are conducted in a temporal context that differs from many military activities and is most effectively conducted through a persistent forward presence. Once viewed as separate and isolated operations, the operating environment may change rapidly, resulting in what may begin as a foreign internal defense operation transitioning to a UW operation, or vice versa, as conditions change in the country due to time or disruptive events such as coups d'états. Therefore, it is important, and more accurate, to view FID, COIN and UW as a range of special warfare capabilities that are similar in that they cultivate relationships with partner forces and seek shared security interests.

The most critical gap in ARSOF special warfare capability exists in the UW mission set; our ability

to conduct UW in denied areas for extended periods of time. As the Department of Defense and U.S. Special Operations Command lead for UW, USASOC must focus on building such a capacity over the next decade. Over the next 10 years, USASOC will make a concerted effort to address this critical gap and others by rebalancing the force and developing an enhanced ARSOF capability to conduct special warfare in concert with joint and interagency partners. For many in our force and our Army, this will require a paradigm shift and an assessment of the historic role of SOF versus the more publicized role our force assumed over the past decade. The Soldiers in our special warfare units must recognize that their value lies not only in their lethality, but in the fact that they are trained, educated, led, equipped and organized in unique ways to meet the demands of an uncertain future. Our force will possess unparalleled special warfare capabilities that will enable them to support long-duration special operations campaigns in the most sensitive, austere and denied environments to achieve strategic U.S. objectives.

SURGICAL STRIKE

World War II, Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia were military conflicts that resulted in major collateral damage to the areas in which the battles were waged as well as significant loss of life. As the Vietnam War wound down, international and American public opinion was outraged by widespread bombing campaigns that resulted in the loss of innocent lives. The “slash and burn” bombing campaigns of the first half of the century were outdated, and in its place, the Department of Defense introduced the term surgical strike in the first Gulf War to describe a new way of waging war that included “one bomb, one target,” which greatly limited collateral damage and loss of innocent lives. Today, ARSOF has honed that capability in order to act with precision against threats to our national security.



Throughout our nation’s history, Army special operations forces have conducted sensitive military-strike operations to achieve some of our most critical strategic objectives.

Our surgical strike capability has been forged from the daring exploits of the 1st Special Service Force and Ranger Battalions of World War II to the Son Tay Raid deep inside enemy territory in Vietnam. This legacy continues today with the relentless pursuit of our nation’s enemies across the globe.

The modern ARSOF surgical strike requirement was born from our experiences in Operation Eagle Claw in 1979. From this failed rescue attempt of U.S. hostages in Iran, the U.S. was determined to improve its capability to rapidly and surgically conduct sensitive, scalable and unilateral direct-action missions against adversaries anywhere in the world. The conduct of hostage rescue or other unilateral sensitive operations requires special airlift, intelligence and support assets that utilize cutting-edge technologies to ensure success. ARSOF surgical strike maneuver units include a

special mission unit, Special Forces Commander’s In-extremis Forces and the 75th Ranger Regiment.

Executed unilaterally or collaboratively, surgical strike extends operational reach and influence by engaging global targets discriminately and precisely. Strike operations are not always intended to be an isolated activity; they are executed to shape the operational environment or influence selected target audiences in support of larger strategic interests. Although the actual strike is short in duration, the comprehensive planning process and affiliated influence efforts frequently require interagency and host-nation partnerships to develop an understanding of the threat network and facilitate post-operation activities.

ARSOF possess a highly scalable and versatile suite of surgical strike capabilities, ranging from clandestine small-unit raids to overt, regimental-



sized forcible-entry operations. Our elements support enduring, decisive, counterterrorism requirements outside designated theaters of armed, active conflict and maintain a forward presence in order to support and/or conduct precise counterterrorism operations in politically sensitive environments. These operations are conducted with pinpoint precision and minimal collateral damage. Our force is uniquely designed to infiltrate austere, remote locations and rapidly mass combat power to seize, destroy, capture or recover designated targets and exfiltrate in a single period of darkness. The 75th Ranger Regiment has the ability to seize heavily defended airfields for a wide variety of purposes, including non-combatant evacuation operations, precious cargo transfers and establishing a lodgment for conventional or special operations forces.

To enhance our surgical strike capability we must develop innovative means to increase organic ARSOF capability to conduct the find, fix, finish,

exploit, analyze and disseminate (F3EAD) targeting cycle regardless of the austerity or complexity of the environment. ARSOF must possess surgical strike capability across a wide spectrum of threats, ranging from sophisticated nation states with advanced anti-access, cyber and defensive capabilities to VEOs operating inside failed nation states. To meet this challenge, USASOC must maintain a robust research and development capability and aggressive experimentation process that continues to identify opportunities to enhance our partnerships and methodologies and leverage cutting-edge technology.

Over the next 10 years, ARSOF will continuously evolve to provide decision makers an ever-increasing range of sophisticated SOF strike options. ARSOF will remain a lethal and agile strike force, capable of projecting discreet, precise and scalable force, without notice, anywhere in the world.