

INSTITUTIONALIZING INTERDEPENDENCE:

The Mindset Change for the Future Operational Environment

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As a force, Army special operations must continuously learn, anticipate and evolve in order to defeat an adaptive enemy and the uncertain threat of the 21st century.¹

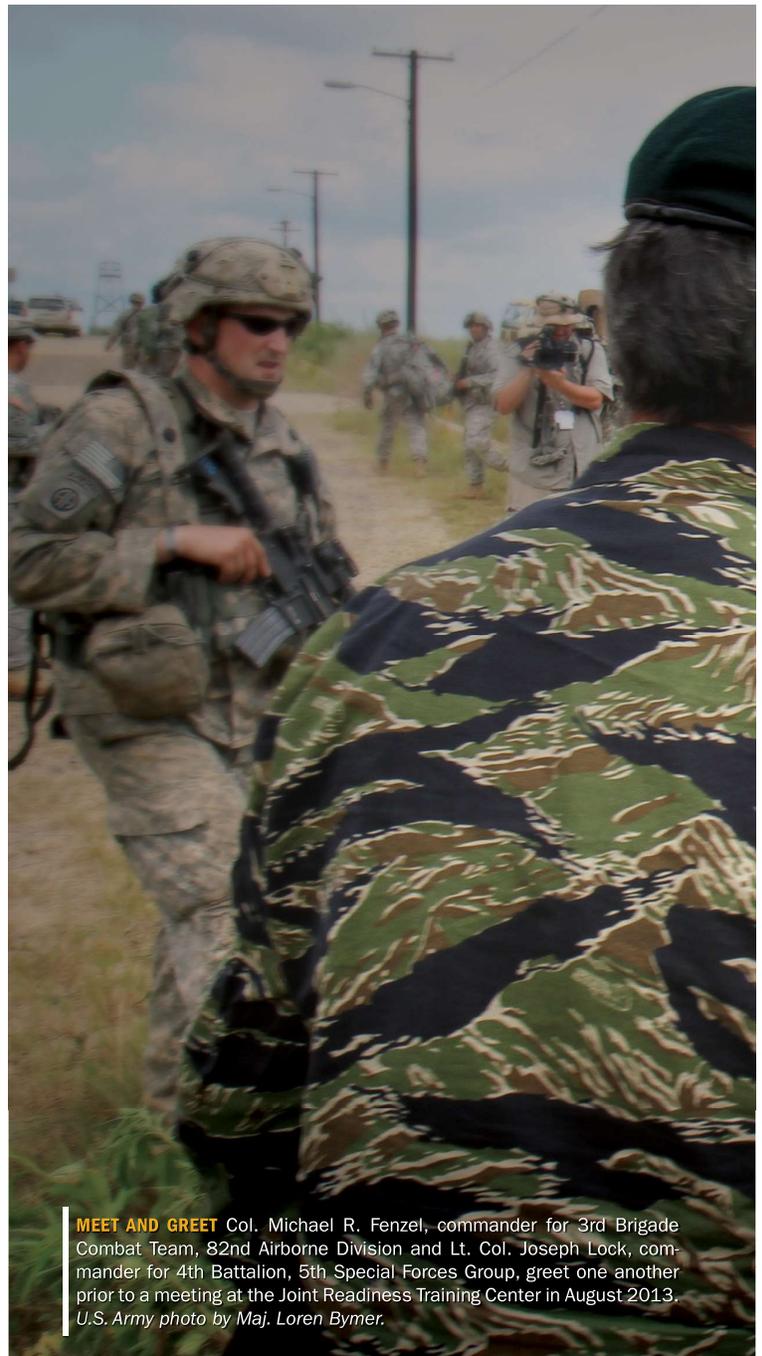
In *ARSOF 2022*, Lt. Gen. Charles T. Cleveland, commander, U.S. Army Special Operations Command, speaks of an adaptive adversary who leverages a myriad of capabilities ranging from the employment of mass, firepower and maneuver of a conventional force, to illicit tracking methods of criminal cartels and gangs, to the utilization of information and terror to incite fear, locally, nationally and internationally. The spectrum of capabilities demonstrated by this adaptive adversary is characterized by Training Circular 7-100 as a hybrid threat. Hybrid threats are the diverse and dynamic combination of regular forces, irregular forces, terrorist forces and/or criminal elements unified to achieve mutually benefiting effects.²

The ability to defeat these diverse and complicated adversaries cannot be understood through a line-and-block charts, special skills possessed by special operations forces or the unique characteristics within a country team. The ability to defeat this hybrid threat demands a “hybrid response.” Given the characteristics of the threat mentioned above, the response must “optimize the force multiplying potential of partnerships with the Army and interagency to provide the nation with seamless combat power.”³

The response that this article advocates is a deliberate and mutual reliance by conventional forces, special operations forces and elements within the joint-interagency-intergovernmental-multinational community to conduct operations in an interdependent manner.

“The ultimate goal of CF-SOF interdependence is to increase operations by enabling the joint force to present a seamless front to our enemies and a unified face to our friends and partners.”⁴ Additionally, operations conducted in an interdependent manner provide senior leaders the ability to reduce the risk to the force, to the mission and reduce redundancies to address the current and future operational environments. Although CF-SOF-JIIM interdependence, throughout planning and execution, supports the Chief of Staff of the Army’s vision to “prevent, shape and win,” the question is how do units and/or elements of the JIIM environment train to counter the hybrid threat of the future?

I advocate a change of mindset by institutionalizing best practices/lessons learned that support CF-SOF-JIIM interdependence. The purpose of institutionalizing interdependent training is to facilitate a common understanding and doctrinal approach to CF-SOF-JIIM interdependency. To further create a common understanding and



MEET AND GREET Col. Michael R. Fenzel, commander for 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 82nd Airborne Division and Lt. Col. Joseph Lock, commander for 4th Battalion, 5th Special Forces Group, greet one another prior to a meeting at the Joint Readiness Training Center in August 2013. U.S. Army photo by Maj. Loren Bymer.

doctrinal approach between CF-SOF-JIIM elements, TRADOC Pam 525-X-7 characterizes interdependency as the following:

- The deliberate and mutual reliance of one unified action partner on another’s inherent capabilities to provide complementary and reinforcing effects.
- The ultimate goal of conventional forces and special operations interdependence is to increase operational effectiveness by enabling the joint force to present a seamless front to adversaries and a unified face to friends and partners throughout the phases of operations.
- To dominate any operational environment and provide decisive results across the range of military operations, the Army requires SOF and CF to blend their capabilities, working together to achieve effectiveness and unity of effort.⁵
- Although TRADOC’s definition does not address the JIIM environment, the capability that unified action partners possess within this environment cannot be overshadowed by CF and



SOF contributions to interdependency. An example of an additional mindset change that must take place is the role of the JIIM environment in support of the future operating environment. The role of interdependency becomes increasingly more important as the U.S. finds itself conducting operations in a sovereign nation where the country team is the supported command not the geographic combatant commander.

The Joint Readiness Training Center's Approach to Interdependency

Understanding the nature of the hybrid threat within a constantly changing physical and political environment, coupled with the nuanced environment of a country team, the Joint Readiness Training Center developed an approach to enable a shared vision for interdependence in operations. The JRTC approach is designed to provide training units

a programmed (versus ad hoc) method to resource, plan and execute operations at the combat training center and for real-world operations. In the absence of doctrine, this approach was derived from a multitude of observations from previous rotations, senior leader feedback and with the characterization of interdependence within this article. This approach considers critical seams and gaps that reside in the unit's ability to plan and direct operations in an interdependent manner. These gaps and seams affect the unit or agency ability to:

- Acknowledge inherent capabilities
- Communicate through nodes, systems and functions
- Plan identifying gaps and seams/leveraging capabilities;
- Execute synchronizing inherent capabilities in a mutually supportive manner
- Analyze the ability to maintain the momentum to win

This approach uses inherent capabilities to gain and maintain a seamless front to our adversaries and partners. In efforts to “insti-



COLLABORATION Conventional and special operations forces conduct a joint planning meeting at the Joint Readiness Training Center. U.S. Army photo.

tutionalize” the ability to observe, coach and teach throughout the planning and execution of operations focused on interdependency, the CTC examines key functions that drive its approach in five steps.

Step 1: Acknowledge

Leaders must first articulate the inherent capabilities possessed by CF-SOF- JIIM and consider factors such as access, placement, mass, firepower, movement and maneuver, unique authorities and assets. The intent is to provide clear understanding of unit and country team limitations and capabilities. Stakeholder articulation of goals and objectives will facilitate a shared vision and identify divergence. Finally, stakeholders must identify unique environments/conditions where it would demand unilateral action in order to achieve specific strategic goals and objectives.

Step 2: Communicate

Establish a seamless flow of communication through the integration of nodes such as the Command Post of the Future, systems such as joint and combined targeting boards and functions such as liaison. The integration of select nodes, systems and functions will create the environment to gain and maintain a common operational and intelligence picture when conducting mission analysis for operations conducted in a interdependent manner. Maintaining of the common intelligence picture and common operating picture is essential to interoperability, which is the foundation of interdependence in operations.

Although preexisting relationships can facilitate a more interpersonal environment between units and country-team elements, these preexisting relationships cannot be a substitute for the integration and employment of node, functions and systems. When the “fog and

friction of war” is the thickest, it has been observed during decisive action training environment and unconventional warfare exercises that an element will revert to what it knows best. In some cases, that is not conducting operations in an interdependent manner. If systems, nodes and functions are relied upon vs. preexisting relationships, the possibility for interdependence to occur, despite the environment, is greater.

In most cases, the country team will already have established its “nodes, systems and functions.” Within this environment, CF-SOF must prepare to “tie-in” with a view towards full interdependence.

Step 3: Plan

Maintain the free flow of information to inform the COP and CIP through deliberate maintenance of integrated nodes, systems and functions, coupled with an understanding of the capabilities and limitations set by the unified action partners for planning. The establishment and sustainment of an integrated unified action partner planning group is critical as it functions to identify operational gaps and seams. Further, understanding these gaps and seams, the planning group leverages inherent capabilities of CF-SOF-JIIM assets to set the conditions for follow-on activities.

Further, what makes the CF-SOF-JIIM interdependent relationship unique is that each element within this community of interest possesses its own unique skill sets. By acknowledging these skill sets, the representatives of the CF-SOF-JIIM planning work group must not only leverage the inherent capability, but protect it was well. For example, SOF can be leveraged to support CF-JIIM operations; however, the special operations mission criteria must be met for employment. The following is the Special Operations Operational Mission Criteria:

- It must be an appropriate SOF mission or task
- The mission or task should support the JFC’s campaign or

- operational plan
 - The mission or task must be operationally feasible
 - The resources must be available to execute and support the SOF mission
 - The expected outcome of the mission must justify the risk.⁶
 - The development of an interdependent plan is to create opportunities for CF-SOF-JIIM to exploit efficiencies, reduce risk (to the force and mission) and reduce redundancy. During some training exercises it has been observed that the acknowledgment, communication, and planning to support CF-SOF-JIIM interdependent operations is fairly easy.
- Step 4 Execute and Step 5 Analyze generally prove more challenging.

Step 4: Execute

The planning work group must constantly revisit Steps 1-3 throughout the execution of the plan through select nodes, functions and systems. Synchronizing assets, clearing of fires and other lethal/non-lethal activities are not just a brigade combat team's responsibility; but a responsibility shared by all elements within the community of interest.

Remaining cognizant that some CF-SOF-JIIM goals are divergent, unit and/or agency leaders must direct actions to not only form a seamless front to the enemy, but direct operations that are reciprocal in nature as well. This will enable all unified action partners to achieve their goals in a mutually supportive manner to accomplish the mission.

without considering a "...mutual reliance of one unified action partner on another's *inherent capabilities* to provide *complementary and reinforcing effects*..."⁷

Simply integrating CF and SOF elements, at the tactical level, is not CF-SOF interdependence. At the operational level, integration is needed to gain and maintain a shared vision and increase interoperability among unified action partners; however, at the tactical level, interdependence relies on the exploitation of inherent capabilities of these partners to create a favorable environment for another unit or agency to capitalize on, forming a unified front. Further, many senior CF and SOF leaders use the phrase "CF-SOF integration" or "CF-SOF interoperability" when they really mean CF-SOF interdependence. The terms are not interchangeable; words have meaning. The "interchangeable" uses of interoperability or integration, when one really means interdependence, has caused confusion at the operational and tactical levels. A change in use of terminology could be the mind set change needed to execute deliberate actions in support of interdependence.

LNOs

The quality of liaison officers exchanged between CF, SOF and the interagency is a major factor in gaining and sustaining trust, faith and confidence in a unit's or agency's leadership. Historically LNOs are often junior officers or noncommissioned officers who do not clearly understand what their headquarters is trying to accomplish, let alone

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Step 5: Analyze

Revisit Steps 1-4 and modify plans to maximize the impact on the enemy, targeted population and select segments of the physical environment. Modify plans to maximize the inherent capabilities possessed by select unified action partners for follow-on operations. The consistent utilization of systems, nodes and functions by the planning work group will create the environment needed to maintain the momentum throughout the battlespace. These drills are not episodic in nature and are strongly recommended to increase efficiencies and the possibility of mission accomplishment.

In the absence of doctrine, the above approach to CF-SOF-JIIM interdependence provides units an institutionalized approach as it prepares for the hybrid threats of the future operating environment. Although the proceeding passage provided a "road map" for the conduct of operations in an interdependent manner, the following are common misunderstandings when planning, resourcing and conducting operations to achieve a unified front.

Interdependence versus Integration versus Interoperability

Previous observations suggest, CF and SOF elements integrate at the tactical level in an effort to conduct operations in an interdependent manner. In most cases, this integration was conducted

"the host headquarters" objectives. The LNOs' lack of understanding is not due to a lack of motivation, rather it is due to a lack of experience that would allow them to confidently and competently engage the "host" commander and staff to support that unit's goals and objectives, while simultaneously ensuring there is a mutually supportive environment leading to reciprocating activities. To achieve this degree of competence and confidence, LNOs must be a former commander, operations officer, etc. They must have a "graduate level" understanding of the capabilities and limitations of the "losing and host units" assets. Further, the LNO must possess an uncanny understanding of how these assets fit in the greater picture to support the combatant commands or the chief of mission's end state.

Relationships versus Nodes, Functions and Systems

Observations suggested that unit commanders and country team leaders feel that the interpersonal relationships shared between partners would be enough to facilitate interdependence. That assumption proved false. These relationships, though solid, were not "formalized interdependent relationships." The relationship between the unified action partners, before hostilities, created an interpersonal and candid environment between partners. The interpersonal relationship, though extremely important in establishing rapport, tended to deteriorate once the fog and friction of war was present. The aforementioned relationship should be "formalized" through the addition

of unique nodes, functions and systems to facilitate interdependency.

Nevertheless, a common observation is the unintended reluctance to expand an interdependent relationship established between two units (or agencies) to another unified action partner when the operational environment demands it. The “standing” unit may know that it needs to gain and maintain an interdependent relationship with the “new” element; however, the absence of systems, nodes and functions and established doctrine may “force” the standing unit to revert to its “former partner” in efforts to achieve interdependence. Reverting back to the relationship developed by the former unified action partners can not only undercut the new unit’s ability to act, but also counterproductive in achieving a mutual supportive environment.

These are common misunderstandings that reinforce the idea that an institutional solution must be in place to support a mindset change. Having doctrine is not enough, the units’ home station training and command training centers must provide the venues to support the mindset change needed to facilitate a greater understanding of operations conducted in an interdependent manner.

The Mindset Change

Integration that relies on personnel relationships forged on the battlefield; however, is transient unless made operational and institutionalized in our forces from the very beginning of professional military education and throughout planning and training.⁷

In order for interdependence to properly be understood and applied by the force, senior commanders must allocate the time, funding and resources for training. This training must take place at home station, at the institution and combat training centers. A forcing function that can enable training is to direct interdependence training in annual or quarterly training guidance. Examples of interdependent training taking place at home station are the Joint Operational Access Exercise hosted by the 18th Airborne Corps and the *Silent Quest* Exercise hosted by the United States Army Special Operations Command. Although the JOAX is primarily an exercise focused on tactical and operational activities in support of the Global Response Force and *Silent Quest* is focused at combating the future operating environment on a strategic level; both exercises place heavy emphasis on CF-SOF-JIIM interdependence. During SOF Theater Security Cooperation Programs, SOF commanders could direct, in addition to building the partner nation capability/capacity, the execution of select training activities with the country team. These activities would not only increase SOF understanding of the nuanced culture of the interagency, but also identify the nodes, systems and functions that SOF elements can establish, tie into or re-enforce to create a more mutually supportive environment.

Although preexisting relationships are important, these relationships can be overcome by events and the unit of action reverts back to what is most comfortable. In an article written by Maj. Gen. Bennet S. Sacolick and Brig. Gen. Wayne W. Grigsby Jr., “Special Operations/ Conventional Forces Interdependence: A Critical Role in ‘Prevent, Shape, Win,’” – it was suggested that there needs to be an institutional approach to interdependence. In support of this assertion, it is believed that training for interdependence should start at the officers basic and the advanced noncommissioned officers courses. The appropriate place to “weave” interdependence training is in the mission analysis/ military decision making process block of training.

Further along the institutional “lines of effort,” select members of the JRTC host post-rotational after action review to capture signifi-

cant lessons learned and best practices with the intent to distribute to the findings to CF and SOF headquarters. In the midst of several discussion points, interdependence, and the ability to plan, resource and execute more effectively and efficiently will continue to be a persistent topic of discussion in every post-rotational after action report. Support to the Campaign of Learning² mentioned above, has the potential to provide CF/SOF and select elements within the JIIM environment a common “point of departure” when planning, resourcing and executing future training and real-world operations. The CTCs and the U.S. Army Special Operations Command are campaigning to ensure the SOF-CF interdependence lessons learned in combat are carried forward into future training and leader development.⁶

In effort to provide the venue to further hone the SOF-CF interdependence lessons learned in combat, the JRTC currently replicates through DATE/UW EX the operating environment of the future. Future DATE/ UW EXs will replicate a more volatile, uncertain, complex, ambiguous adversary who not only utilizes the methods earlier in this article, but has a greater focus on weapons of mass destruction. Further the JRTC will place greater emphasis on the integrated nodes, systems and functions that facilitate interdependence. To create a more conducive environment for SOF training, the CTC is examining ways to provide increased opportunities for ARSOF surgical strike elements, joint special operations specialized elements and allied special operations forces to train with ARSOF special warfare elements. The CTC’s near term goal is to provide the venue where Joint Special Operations Forces, in a habitual manner, look to refine specialized skills and their ability to conduct operations in an interdependent manner against a replicated hybrid threat.

The blend of a series of home station, CTCs, institutional opportunities and activities focused on critical factors of interdependence is the change in mindset mandated to create the hybrid response to counter the hybrid threat. This mindset change, institutionalizing interdependence, is the manner in which CF, SOF and elements within the JIIM environment “shape, prevent and win” within the operating environment of the future.

“The world as we have created it is a process of thinking. It cannot be changed without changing our thinking.”- Albert Einstein. SW

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Notes:

1. LTG Charles T. Cleveland, *ARSOF 2022*, Headquarters, Department of the Army, 3.
2. TC 7-100, *Hybrid Threat*, October 2010, 1-1.
3. MG Bennet S. Sacolick and BG Wayne W. Grigsby Jr., *Special Operations/Conventional Forces Interdependence: A Critical Role in ‘Prevent, Shape, Win’ Army*, June 2012, 39-42.
- 4, 5. TRADOC Pam 525-X-7, *USA Functional Concept for the 7th WFF (DRAFT Version 0.8)*, 14 March 2013.
6. ADRP 3.05, *Special Operations*, August 2012, 1-13.
7. TRADOC Pam 525-X-7, *USA Functional Concept for the 7th WFF (DRAFT Version 0.8)*, 14 March 2013.
8. COL Michael Barbee, *The CTC Program: Leading the March into the future*, *Military Review*, July-August 2013, 18.