



IT TAKES A VILLAGE A Civil Affairs Soldier works alongside Philippine government officials to assess the needs of the local population. *U.S. Army photo.*

Conclusion

Special operations are characterized by their centrality to the modern-era of warfare where an understanding of the Human Domain is important to success. Small, agile, adaptable, innovative and culturally skilled and mature, SOF will continue to be increasingly called-upon. Based on their unique skills in wartime, the effects SOF can achieve within the Human Domain are irreplaceable.

Key to any future decisions on the application of special operations will be in ensuring it maintains a political-military-social orientation to address challenges. SOF will constantly need to improve these operational capabilities across the spectrum of conflict. Any of the chosen attributes of the Human Domain provide opportunities in military operations or a basis for exploitation of their vulnerabilities. An analysis of where SOF achieves its highest efficacy may suggest a form of nodal and nexus warfare in the Human Domain.

The nation's special operators will continue to build on their legacy to effectively serve in the national interest to deter and defeat our enemies, assist and engage with U.S. partners and allies and to help change the environment where oppressed populations desire freedom and stability. SOF provide the nation a highly trained and disciplined force that can operate globally, with speed, precision, innovation and initiative as global scouts, strategic sensors, warrior-diplomats and ambassadors of good will (senior SOF Soldier-Statesmen). **SW**

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Notes

1. Hoffman, Frank and Michael C. Davies. "Joint Force 2020 and the Human Domain: Time for a New Conceptual Framework?" *Small Wars Journal*, June 10, 2013. accessed via internet www.smallwarsjournal.com, 17 Nov 2013, pg. 10.
2. General Robert W. Cone, the Commanding General of the U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command, explained the importance of understanding the human nature aspects of conflict as essential to operationalizing Strategic Landpower. See his "Operationalizing Landpower" speech prepared by the Commanders Planning Group, HQ, U.S. Army TRADOC, Ft. Eustis, Va., prepared on 27 June 2013. General Cone delivered his speech at the Royal United Services Institute (RUSI) Land Warfare Conference as a keynote speaker.
3. Till, Geoffrey. *Seapower: A Guide for the Twenty-first Century*. Routledge, London, UK, 2004: pp. 6-18.
4. COL (USAF Ret.) John D. Jogerst from his work in the draft monograph, "An Introduction to Special Operations Power: Origins, Concept, and Application," with co-authors COL (USA Ret.) Joseph D. Celeski, LTC (USA Ret.) and Timothy S. Slempp, 15 August 2013.
5. The Strategic Landpower White Paper. "Strategic Landpower: Winning the Clash of Wills." Produced as a result of findings from the Strategic Landpower Task Force, the U.S. Army Capabilities Integration Center, May 2013. Accessed on the Internet 1 Dec 2013, www.arcic.army.mil.
6. Collins, Alan. *Contemporary Security Studies* (3rd Edition). Oxford University Press, UK, 2013: pp. 104-115. For a more detailed look at the various threats to Human Security, see also Paul D. Williams' (Editor) *Security Studies: An Introduction*, Routledge, UK: 2008.
7. This idea for looking at command of and control in the Human Domain originated with Dr. Milan Vego's article in the U.S. Naval Institute *Proceedings*, November 2013 issue, titled "Getting Sea Control Right." Dr. Vego succinctly makes the point that understanding the doctrine and theory behind sea control is essential for strategists, requiring a deeper look at the set of both offensive and defensive operations entailed in achieving sea control. While there may be other parallels in military power theories on achieving command of a domain, and in achieving control in a domain, the analogy of sea control was chosen to explain how these effects can be applied within the Human Domain.
8. Naval Doctrine Publication 1: Naval Warfare, Wash DC: Department of the Navy, March 2010: pg. 27.



URBAN PATROL U.S. Special Forces and Philippine Army Soldiers conduct a joint patrol in the city of Jolo. U.S. Army photo.

SOF OPERATIONAL DESIGN BY CAPTAIN ANNE M. BARLIEB

As the ARSOF community looks beyond the battlefields of Iraq and Afghanistan, we see a complex and ill-structured future operating environment (FOE) characterized by increased urbanization, resource constraints, evolving threat forms and advanced social media. This environment will present both challenges and opportunities and also ultimately demand new responses from our military.

ARSOF 2022, the U.S. Army Special Operations Command's forward-looking "blueprint for change," outlines these challenges and opportunities. With clearly defined priorities and goals, *ARSOF 2022* also presents a way ahead to ensure USA-SOC is well postured to provide, through its unique capabilities, a full range of options and alternative approaches that are required in the future operating environment.

Developing SOF capabilities at the Operational Level is an *ARSOF 2022* priority that will be accomplished by "providing the expertise to enable operational-level headquarters in their effort to tie tactical capabilities to regional or national strategies."¹ The goal, to develop multiyear SOF campaigns for uncertain and politically sensitive environ-

ments that integrate the full suite of SOF/CF/JIIM and partner capabilities aimed at shaping the future operating environment and achieving national objectives, is nested within this priority. Additionally, this goal serves as a point of integration for the other key priorities outlined in *ARSOF 2022*. It is through campaign planning, the exploration and identification of options and alternatives, that ARSOF capabilities, adaptability and innovation are most evident.

With a renewed emphasis on campaign planning at the operational and strategic levels serving as a catalyst, SOF Operational Design began as an effort to explore the current planning methodologies and constructs available to the SOF planner. More specifically, the effort was to determine if the cur-

rent methods and constructs best facilitate the process planners use to design the types of campaigns in which special warfare activities, options and approaches play a central rather than supporting role in achieving national strategic objectives. Future campaigns will increasingly rely on special warfare and alternatives over the direct-action or protracted, high-intensity conflict approach; therefore, it is necessary to ensure that planners involved with SOF-centric campaigns are well equipped with the most relevant and effective planning tools possible.

Through extensive research and then initial planning experimentation at the inaugural Silent Quest facilitated wargame (March 2013), it was determined that current design and planning methods, as

applied to the unique characteristics of special warfare campaigns, were adequate but not ideal. During the Silent Quest 13-1 wargame, it was verified that current Army and Joint methodologies produce suboptimal results when executing long-duration, small-footprint, low-visibility operations in the complex and ill-structured future operating environment. In order to adequately mitigate these challenges and exploit opportunities through special operations core competencies, ARSOF needed to codify its planning processes related to special warfare, which included a unique set of elements and a distinct flow specifically engineered to support the increasing demand for special warfare solutions anticipated in the future operating environment. The outcome of this effort was SOF Operational Design and the corresponding *USASOC Planner's Handbook for SOF Operational Design*.

In order to develop *SOF Operational Design and the Planner's Handbook*, the production team conducted a thorough review of strategic guidance, existing planning tools and methods. Additionally, the team maximized the inputs and outputs generated through the USASOC Campaign of Learning and the Silent Quest Exercise Program. Outputs from Silent Quest 13-1 were used to shape the foundation for the initial draft of the *Planner's Handbook*. Silent Quest 13-1 used a multiyear, interagency, SOF campaign scenario set in the future operating environment characterized by uncertainty and political sensitivity. This platform was used to explore emerging concepts and planning considerations that included SOF mission command, human domain, the Global SOF network, and strategic landpower.

As various concepts were explored throughout the four operations of the Silent Quest war game: shaping/unconventional warfare/strategic raid/ and stability operations, conceptual planning gaps and seams emerged that routinely reflected two distinct patterns consistent with the development team's research findings. First, the gaps and seams were less common during the Strategic Raid phase of the operation: the planning effort was more uniform and doctrinal frames of reference and terminology were fairly consistent among military, interdepart-

mental and governmental agencies. Second, the gaps and seams were far more apparent in less decisive phases during which special warfare capabilities were more appropriate: coordination and integration was notably less efficient despite a clear need for a more integrated and collaborative approach. Also relevant were reduced and less confident



FIGURE 1 SOF Operational Elements and SOF Operational Critical Planning Terms as described in the *USASOC Planner's Handbook for SOF Operational Design*.

references to doctrine, a lack of clarity or awareness as to the capabilities and options available; and more importantly, the roles and responsibilities regarding coordination for, and orchestrations of, resources were not immediately apparent.

The identification of these recurring gaps and seams provided a basis for the development of specific elements, which include culture/problem characterization/stakeholder

development/operational time/SOF-CF/JIIM-SH approach/and collaboration model. These elements were considered critical to successful campaign design but unlikely to be taken into account unless specifically outlined in a framework. The lack of consideration for these elements was driven by a number of factors; the most notable was the planners' backgrounds and experience in executing campaigns set in an interagency space that relied on the implementation and integration of special warfare capabilities.

The framework described in the *USASOC Planner's Handbook for SOF Operational Design* consists of 11 interrelated elements that are nested within four critical planning terms (*figure 1*).

The framework is dynamic and attuned to both internal and external conditions; driven by re-framing, it was intended to facilitate the inclusion of these specific elements and guide a planning effort that would, by its structure, identify challenges and opportunities and lead to a collaborative effort in nominating courses of action that might not have otherwise been identified.

The SOF operational design flow (*Figure 2*) as applied to the framework consists of four steps that are executed in a way that enables a plan to evolve and adapt through the continual process of reframing. The first step in SOF Operational Design is Framing the SOF Operational Environment. During this step, key factors of culture, problem characterization and stakeholder development must be explored and fully understood: Current and desired conditions are clearly defined. As a transition is made to the second step, Developing the SOF operational approach, centers of gravity and decisive point analysis are conducted. This collaborative effort among all stakeholders within nested end states informs the development of the SOF/CF/JIIM/SH Approach.

This approach, through expanded reliance on CONUS-based operationalization and judicious application of force or capability, is cognizant of, and responsive to, operational time considerations. Once the approach is determined, nested end-states are revalidated in the context of implementing SOF operational art, the third step. In this step, conceptual problem framing is fused with mechanical

planning. In Step 4, Planning and Executing SOF Campaigns, specific objectives, culmination and termination criteria are identified. As the framework is constructed, operational risks and opportunities are identified throughout. Once applied, continuous reframing is conducted to identify emerging operational risks and opportunities.

SOF Operational Design, with the addition of distinct elements, a framework and a flow tailored for the types of campaigns anticipated in the future, is not a new or independent concept. Rather, SOF operational design is firmly grounded in operational design and current doctrine. However, it is adapted for campaign planning considerations specific to interdisciplinary, cross-functional, low-visibility, small-footprint formations operating in an interagency space with constrained resources for long durations. Campaigns in the future operating environment are driven by ARSOF 2022 assumptions: increased instability, constrained resources, waning political endurance or tolerance for sustained conflict, and innovative social media. These campaigns are expected to achieve objectives more common to the special warfare side of the special operations continuum prior to, and in prevention of, strike operations, direct action or large-scale conflict.

Since its publication in August 2013, the *Planner's Handbook* has been reviewed and implemented in several forums including Silent Quest 13-2, September 2013; the USASOC Young Lions program, October 2013; and a SOF Operational Design Working Group, November 2013. Continued feedback, encouraged through events in the USASOC Campaign of Learning and Exercise Program, are consolidated and used to inform and validate the handbook's revision in the fourth quarter of every fiscal year. This enduring requirement will ensure the handbook contains the most effective tactics, techniques and procedures as identified by those planning campaigns and conducting operations. Senior leader participation will ensure content reflects innovative organizational concepts and initiatives that directly impact the planner.

The objective is to provide a useful tool and common frame of reference for planners charged with the responsibility of nominat-

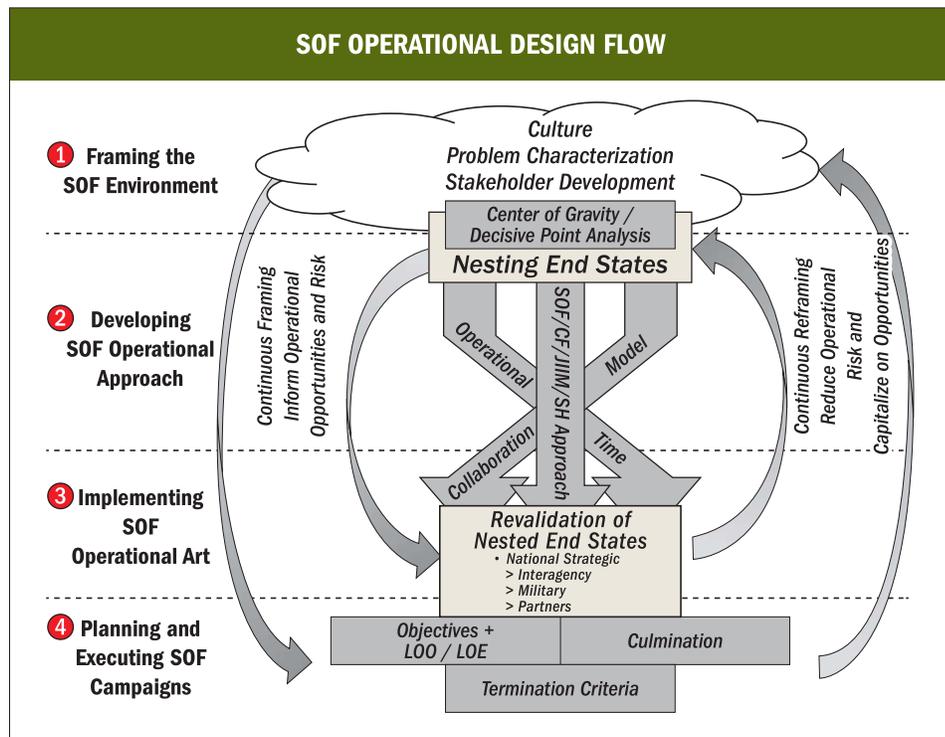


FIGURE 2 The SOF Operational Design Flow consists of four steps that are executed in a way that enables a plan to evolve and adapt through the continual process of reframing.

ing special warfare solutions at the operational level and further elevating them to the strategic level. The process of disciplined and continual exploration, experimentation, reflection and documentation is aimed at delivering an ever current and helpful reference for special warfare campaign design as well as applications in the art of special warfare. The handbook is a starting point, an institutional baseline. Quality in special warfare and SOF operational design will be perfected through experience. Self-study among disciplined professionals, dedicated to excellence in their craft and fiercely committed to being as capable and proficient in special warfare applications as they are in strike or direct action will ensure special operations remains a relevant and reliable resource when national leadership wants to explore the full menu of options and alternative solutions available to solve the country's most challenging strategic problems. **SW**

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As a PSYOP officer, Capt. Barlieb has served as a planner at the Joint Information Support Task Force (Special Operations), detachment commander and assistant operations officer in 5th Military Information Support Battalion, and a planner at the Military Information Support Operation Command. Capt. Barlieb will attend Intermediate Level Education in January 2014 followed by the School of Advanced Military Studies which will mark the beginning of her future career track as a Strategist in Functional Area 59, Strategic Plans and Policy.

As a member of the MISOC drafting team for the USASOC Planner's Handbook for SOF Operational Design, Capt. Barlieb authored several chapters and served as the lead editor.

Notes

1. United States Army Special Operations Command, ARSOF 2022, (Fort Bragg, NC, USASOC, 2013), 17.