



01

## TAILORING LOGISTICS SUPPORT FOR SPECIAL OPERATIONS FORCES IN THE PACIFIC

BY CAPT. KEDRICK PALMER AND 1ST LT. NICHOLAS BONAVIDA

01, 02  
Members of the 1st SFG(A) Forward Support Company conduct slingload training.

03  
A member of the 1st SFG(A) Forward Support Company teaches drivers Hilux self-recovery procedures in Dhaka, Bangladesh.

U.S. ARMY PHOTOS COURTESY OF 1ST SFG(A)

Forward stationed in Okinawa, Japan, the 1st Battalion, 1st Special Forces Group (Airborne) Forward Support Company is charged with providing multifunctional logistics to sustain 1st Battalion's Operational Detachment Alphas as they conduct missions to meet SOCPAC and PACOM objectives, dispersed throughout South and Southeast Asia. The most important resource — people — is a finite one. That said, the unit must maximize the investment in SOF support Soldiers to ensure support requirements do not exceed capacity.

The unit provides sustainment support with a small footprint by employing a deliberate “multi-skilling” Soldier training methodology.

During the last year, it aided deployments for more than 750 SOF to 12 countries and shipped 12,500,000 lbs. of equipment by air and sea in support of 55 Joint Combined Exchange Training Events, two Joint Chiefs of Staff exercises and five Subject Matter Expert Exchanges.

Alongside the ODAs, the FSC builds partner logistics capacity throughout the region with SOF support SMEEs, by assessing partner forces' maintenance and distribution systems, and by helping to implement practices designed to prolong endurance and increase operational reach required to sustain operations.

The SOF support Soldier must possess a level of maturity and

competence exceeding rank, age or Military Occupational Specialty. Because SOF operations require minimal footprint, each Soldier must be a force multiplier for the ODA.

1st Battalion's enabler training program is a six-month pipeline designed to maximize each Soldier's effectiveness in the unit. Within 90 days of arrival, new support personnel attend a battalion-led, 14-day Special Forces Basic Combat Course-Support, which equips Soldiers with a baseline set of skills required to integrate with an ODA.

Students learn Tactical Combat Casualty Care, advanced marksmanship, communication equipment operation and advanced driving techniques. New personnel also undergo extensive MOS cross-training to provide various technical skills in forward locations. For example, wheeled vehicle mechanics learn small-boat operations and engine repair, multi-modal load planning and small unmanned aircraft operation.

While MOS cross-training is enduring, Soldiers are also selected for institutional training. Examples include Static Line Jumpmaster course, HAZMAT certifier, foreign weapons repair training and Family of Special Operations Vehicles (FOSOV) maintainer course. Six months after arrival to 1st Battalion, support Soldiers are prepared to deploy with an ODA. This is where “tailoring” occurs. Based on an ODA's mission set, the FSC provides the best suited Soldier, with the specific suite of skills to integrate with the ODA. As a result, more than 150 FSC Soldiers have deployed to 12 countries in support of SOF missions in PACOM.

One example of this concept in action is a FOSOV mechanic who

deployed to Mindanao, Philippines, to provide maintenance support to an ODA. A native Tagalog speaker, SFBCC-S graduate, FOSOV Mechanic, USASOC Static Line Jumpmaster and HAZMAT certifier, this enabler assisted with partner-force training in TCCC, convoy/recovery procedures and ensured that all mobility platforms remained fully mission capable. Since the partner force used similar vehicles, he taught preventive maintenance procedures to extend the lifecycle of the partner force's platforms. This is just one example of the multi-skilled Soldier adding value in each phase of the deployment.

The FSC increases partner forces' sustainment capability through SOF Support SMEEs. Foreign weapons repairmen from the armament section conducted three engagements in 2017, with counterparts from the Japanese

Special Operations Group and the Philippine Army Special Operations Command. The maintainers have been instrumental in inspecting partner-force sniper weapons systems and identifying solutions for these forces to sustain their organic equipment.

A recent example of successful partner-force integration was in July 2017, when the FSC dispatched a two-man maintenance repair team from Okinawa to the U.S. Embassy in Dhaka, Bangladesh. The team provided a non-standard vehicle recovery and operator course to Bangladeshi drivers who support the PACOM Augmentation Team-Bangladesh. A heightened threat level and constant travel on unimproved roads to remote locations dictates that assigned drivers must be equipped to increase survivability in emergency situations. Defensive driving

and vehicle self-recovery training are necessary skills to protect U. S. Embassy and U. S. Special Forces personnel. This three-day SMEE proved highly effective.

Units never feel as if they have enough people. However, constant investment in the SOF support Soldier with additional institutional and non-standard training increases our capability to support operations, independently or in conjunction with the ODAs. Producing multi-skilled Soldiers to support SOF is the method by which to provide scalable, tailorable logistics support forward in a "zero-growth" environment. No Soldier is limited by his or her MOS; one Soldier equals at least two. Minimal footprint. Maximum impact. 

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**Capt. Kedrick Palmer** is the Commander of the Forward Support Company, 1st Battalion, 1st Special Forces Group (Airborne).

**1st Lt. Nicholas Bonavia** is the Executive Officer of the Forward Support Company, 1st Battalion, 1st Special Forces Group (Airborne).



02



03

THE SOF SUPPORT SOLDIER MUST POSSESS A LEVEL OF MATURITY AND COMPETENCE EXCEEDING RANK, AGE OR MILITARY OCCUPATIONAL SPECIALTY... EACH SOLDIER MUST BE A FORCE MULTIPLIER FOR THE ODA.