



## THE USSOUTHCOM ENVIRONMENT

In the U.S. Southern Command area of responsibility, U.S. forces are not engaged in combat, but there are still a myriad of problems, from internal security challenges to transnational terrorist and criminal organizations that threaten the United States and its partners in the region. While the DoD is not the lead federal agency in the USSOUTHCOM area of operations, the interagency cannot easily achieve effects without Department of Defense support. Yet, the growing demand for military resources in other parts of the world precludes a large U.S. military presence in the Caribbean and Central and South America. U.S. Special Operations Forces are the principal military presence in the AOR. Still, most of SOCSOUTH operations, activities and investments mutually support achieving the effects of the lead federal agencies in the AOR. Moreover, the military actions often include multinational efforts from regional partners seeking to achieve common national security interests. Employing this indirect networked approach, USSOF operations, activities and investments, or OAI, are optimized to affect the region in pursuit of U.S. national security interests.

SOCSOUTH supports USSOUTHCOM's strategy by collaborating actively with its interagency partners to engage *by, through and with* partner nations. This networked operational approach uses coordinated USSOF OAI to enable U.S. interagency and partner nation efforts to achieve mutually desired effects, or attain positive changes in the operational environment. The increased complexity and longer time frame of non-combat operations makes identifying the cause and effect links much more difficult in USSOUTHCOM. Furthermore, because the AOR is considered stable at a strategic level, the U.S. contributes few forces to generate desired operational effects. It is thus imperative to employ these limited military resources in the most efficient way possible to achieve the desired effects. Answering resource utilization questions in the now-muddled interactions of causes and effects requires a

01

**U.S. partner forces participate in a SOCSOUTH joint exercise which provides an opportunity to improve interoperability and exchange best practices.**

U.S. ARMY PHOTO BY STAFF SGT. OSVALDO EQUITE

# MEASURING INDIRECT EFFECTS OVERTIME

Phase Zero Challenges to Operations Assessment.

BY LIEUTENANT COLONEL (RETIRED) ALBERTO PEREZ  
AND LIEUTENANT COLONEL JEREMY STRINGER, PH.D.

## INTRODUCTION

Why assessments? Why the extra burden of data collection and analysis placed upon already overmatched personnel? After all, during combat operations desired effects, end states and means are readily defined. At the tactical level, even with a short action-reaction loop, there are many tools to make appropriate adjustments, to achieve desired effects in a timely manner. Yet even in this data-rich environment where desired outcomes are clear, commanders struggle to understand the links between cause and effect. Imagine then the conundrum at the operational level where effects are less direct and achieved over a longer time horizon. For achieving results short of war, the problem of assessing operational results is compounded exponentially from the already difficult operational assessment. How then does the U.S. Department of Defense pursue desired U.S. national interests when Department of State or another agency has the lead in operations?

uniform, comprehensive assessment methodology. SOCSOUTH requires a rigorous scientifically-based assessment program that optimizes USSOF presence to enable partner nations, general purpose forces and the interagency to advance shared national interests in the USSOUTHCOM AOR. Although the details, sensitivities and complexities of SOCSOUTH's operations assessments are beyond the scope of this article, a general discussion of the process would highlight the collaborative way SOCSOUTH approaches the challenges.

## SOCSOUTH APPROACH

SOCSOUTH developed an approach that nests with both USSOUTHCOM's and U.S. Special Operations Command's operational approaches. SOCSOUTH identified three overarching campaign activities that nest and reinforce the end states of both strategic commands: proactive theater posture, counterterrorism and counter-transnational organized crime. Each campaign activity was then analyzed to identify a set of subordinated objectives, effects and indicators that support achieving the end states. These are further aggregated and simplified as desired conditions. One of the most correlated conditions identified is the capability of PN forces to counter threat networks.

In fact, partner nation capability is a factor that directly affects all three of SOCSOUTH's campaign activities. The key cause-effect link under this construct is which partner-nation units have the greatest effect in achieving desired objectives. The more capable the PN forces are to counter threat networks, the more security and eventually the greater stability the PN will achieve. As security and stability are strengthened, the overall need for U.S. OAI's decrease. To understand the links, SOCSOUTH J5 set up an assessment team focused on assessing PN capacity.

The methodology used to gauge the efficacy of USSOF efforts to build partner capacity uses seven criteria of partner force capability: operational effects, readiness, planning/targeting, command and control, training, logistics and medical. Initially, the unit capability and capacity data helped refine existing BPC efforts (i.e. training, advising and equipping). Over time, the data allows planners to better identify the right units with which to partner for each type of mission, and subsequently identify opportunities to optimize and reallocate USSOF to better achieve results (see figure 01).

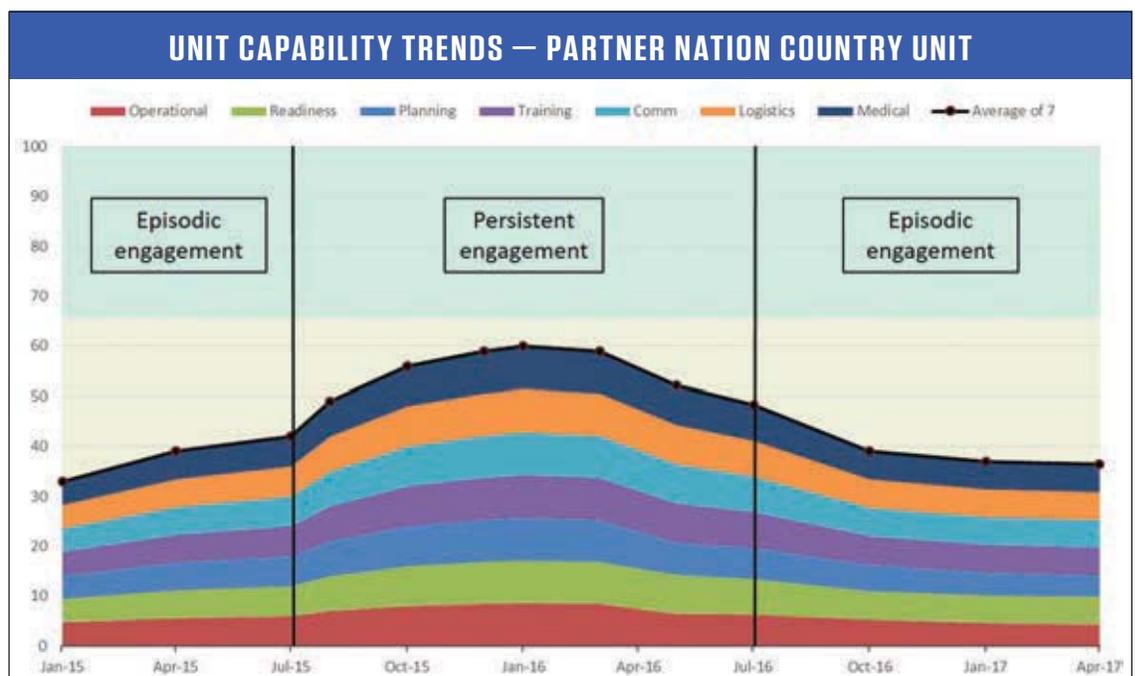
The SOCSOUTH assessment team's reporting has better enabled the SOCSOUTH commander to make informed decisions on where and when to engage

PN units persistently, episodically, or not at all. Furthermore, the assessment products allow the commander to identify and articulate the effects achieved by SOF employment to higher headquarters and the Joint Staff.

While the assessment program has been successful to date, PN unit assessments do not provide the complete picture to the commander regarding the rapidly changing operational environment in the USSOUTHCOM AOR. An increase in influence from both state and non-state actors in the region has increased the uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity in an already unpredictable region. These changes have precipitated the need for a more comprehensive assessment program that encompasses the causes and desired effects across all regional campaign activities to include threat monitoring and operational reporting. The goal of the revised assessment effort is to scale-up the partner-nation unit assessment process and apply it across a wider spectrum. The new process is designed to answer the questions: are we doing the right things, and are we doing those things right across all OAI's in the AOR.

Understanding the desired path forward requires an understanding of the current environment. While Theater Special Operations Commands grapple with how to best use the resources assigned in pursuit of theater objectives, a bigger question must first be answered. Why, with limited resources, is the U.S. involved in the USSOUTHCOM AOR? Answering

Figure 01  
Assessments measuring progress. Based on trend analysis of a partner force unit over the course of a year, the assessment data indicated a gradual, but significant, decline in capabilities in spite of a constant application of USSOF support. After closer analysis, the assessment team found that BPC efforts were not effective in this case: the partnered unit was not fully engaged in countering the desired threats, the unit was not internalizing USSOF training, and the access to threat NAI's was reduced. Based on the analysis, the commander realigned USSOF to achieve operational effects in other critical areas within our AOR.





01  
A competitor from Peru competes in an assault team event as part of Fuerzas Comando, a USSOUTHCOM sponsored multinational special operations skills competition and fellowship program. U.S. ARMY PHOTO BY STAFF SGT. CHAD MENEGAY

02  
A U.S. Army Special Forces Soldier with SOCSOUTH assigns sectors of fire to a Panamanian police officer during a hostage rescue scenario as part of Joint Combined Exchange Training in Colon, Panama. U.S. ARMY PHOTO BY STAFF SGT. OSVALDO EQUITE

01

this question requires knowledge of the operational environment in the AOR and the *National Security Strategy*, which in turn drives the strategic environment. Regional operational assessments thus inform strategic assessments.

United States presence in the AOR is required because lack of attentiveness and investment opens the door for other state and non-state actors. While not all actors are nefarious, there is no guarantee that conditions will remain favorable to the U.S. without direct involvement. Countering adverse efforts of state and non-state actors requires presence. SOF OAI is in support of the IA, thus assessing the effectiveness of campaign OAI requires input from across the IA. Unfortunately, prior to the current SOCSOUTH effort, no overarching campaign assessment framework existed.

## THE ASSESSMENT PROCESS

The first step in starting an operational assessment process is determining what will be assessed. For the SOCSOUTH Theater Campaign Assessment, a logical construct is to assess the SOCSOUTH lines of effort through the corresponding intermediate military objectives. By relating each LOE to a series of IMOs, a methodical assessment strategy is formed. Assessing the theater campaign effects requires assessing the theater campaign LOE, which is determined by assessment of each IMO.

At this point, the revised assessment deviates from the PN unit assessment program in that the SOCSOUTH J5 is no longer the only stakeholder. Furthermore, the J5 does not have expert knowledge of, nor deep insight into, every IMO. A successful theater campaign assessment program requires understanding of the key stakeholders for each IMO. For the revised assessment program, SOCSOUTH has assigned each IMO to a directorate that takes ownership for reporting and assessing the data for its particular IMOs. Each directorate, through its subject-matter experts, determines a series of measures of effectiveness and corresponding indicators that give insight into each measure. As SOCSOUTH does not operate separately from USSOUTHCOM, the development of SOCSOUTH LOEs and IMOs is directly tied to USSOUTHCOM LOEs and IMOs.

Owners of each IMO are not expected to assess the required effects in a vacuum, as each IMO requires input from subject-matter experts from across the USSOUTHCOM enterprise, to include IA partners. These experts provide the performance measures, assessment data and relevant analysis required to

track progress of operational objectives. As the assessment SME, the J5 works with each IMO owner to ensure that the right data is collected and that rigor is employed in generating theater campaign assessment products. Previous J5 PN unit assessment products directly support the revised assessment process by providing data in support of multiple IMOs across all campaign LOEs related to effects achieved by PN units.

Once the assessment data is compiled from across the enterprise, the SOCSOUTH assessment team analyzes the information and generates draft assessment products. The products are validated and finalized by the staff, and the commander is briefed on the state of the campaign. Reporting to the commander is not the culmination of the assessment process, but rather a part of the cyclical process. The purpose of assessment is to inform the commander about the effectiveness of the campaign OAIs in order to facilitate decisions to improve the effective application of scarce resources. It is the adjustments (command decisions) that are the desired outcome of the assessment process. The assessment products are only useful if they enable the commander to readjust current force structure to more effectively influence the operational environment in support of U.S. strategic objectives. Once the revised force structure is in place, the assessment process begins anew to determine the effect of the latest cycle of OAIs.

## INTERACTIONS WITH ADJACENT AND HIGHER HEADQUARTERS

The output from the SOCSOUTH assessment process does not stay within SOCSOUTH. While the knowledge gained through the process is invaluable to the SOCSOUTH commander, it is also invaluable to adjacent and higher headquarters. As a TSOC, SOCSOUTH has two headquarters: USSOCOM and USSOUTHCOM. A successful assessment program allows for a unified SOF theater picture across both combatant commands. It provides an over arching picture of the environment that can be used across functional and geographic combatant commands.

For the USSOUTHCOM commander, assessments provide a picture of how USSOF is being effectively employed in the AOR. The assessment products allow the USSOUTHCOM commander to more effectively coordinate USSOF and general purpose forces, and to refine the request for the specific USSOF capabilities needed to achieve strategic objectives in the AOR. The assessment products provide the inputs required by USSOCOM for its annual joint assessment, which determines if USSOF are achieving desired effects on a global scale. Likewise for the USSOCOM commander, it provides a picture of where SOF are effective within the AOR and a picture



of where general purpose forces might be better suited to achieve the desired effect. As with USSOCOM, the SOCSOUTH assessment products directly support the USSOUTHCOM Annual Joint Assessment to determine the effective use of the military instrument of national power in support of USSOUTHCOM LOEs and IMOs.

The SOCSOUTH assessment provides a shared understanding of the ability to achieve desired effects in the AOR by, through and with PN forces. Because of the networked approach described earlier, it is important to collaborate assessments with partners to develop shared insight into how we are collaboratively achieving the objectives required by the National Security Strategy. The process for creating shared assessment is still developing, but there is great promise in the potential for networked assessment efforts.

## THE WAY AHEAD

The enduring fiscally-constrained environment and growing global competition makes it imperative to continue to seek the most efficient and effective application of SOF possible. Optimization of SOF employment and commitment of resources requires a comprehensive assessment program. Only by understanding the effects being achieved, and the underlying reason, can the commander employ the appropriate course corrections needed to optimize results. The assess-

ment program must incorporate the entire SOCSOUTH enterprise, to include force providers, the country team and regional partners. Increasingly, SOCSOUTH will have to use its networked approach to assessments to provide the performance measures and relevant analysis required by law under the Assessment, Monitoring and Evaluation section of Section 333 Security Cooperation Programs. Fortunately, there are already some baselines in the AOR that can be scaled to provide AM&E compliance for OAI areas related to counterterrorism and counter weapons of mass destruction, counter transnational organized crime, and maritime and border security.

Challenges lie ahead for SOCSOUTH's nascent assessment process, as buy-in is still required across the command as well as from the broader USSOCOM and USSOUTHCOM enterprise. Misunderstanding the process as more "busy work" could lead to an inefficient process. Overcoming the challenges requires socialization of the process across the SOCSOUTH enterprise, and, more importantly, support and involvement from leaders at all levels. **SW**

## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

**Lieutenant Colonel (Retired) Alberto Perez** is the Strategic Assessment Analyst for SOCSOUTH. He assumed these duties upon his retirement from the U.S. Army, after 24 years of distinguished service as an Engineer and Foreign Area Officer. With deployments in Afghanistan, South Korea, and Latin America, Lt. Col. Perez has worked on measuring the effects of building partner-nation capacity programs at the tactical, operational and strategic level. He spent a great part of his career in Latin America, including a UN deployment in Haiti during UNMIH, assignments in Colombia supporting Plan Colombia and tours in Brazil and Paraguay to build partner capacity.

**Lieutenant Colonel Jeremy Stringer, Ph.D.**, is the Chief of Assessments for the SOCSOUTH J5. He previously was on faculty at the Air Force Institute of Technology. Prior assignments include flight testing of Joint STARS, F-35, and F/A-22 aircraft where he analyzed data to ensure technical and operational performance parameters. He also worked as both a ballistic missile guidance analyst and a directed energy analyst at the National Air and Space Intelligence Center where he was key in assessing foreign nation military capability.