A VISION FOR 2021 AND BEYOND

1ST TO OBSERVE
1ST TO INFLUENCE
1ST TO COMPETE

1ST SPECIAL FORCES COMMAND - AIRBORNE
The military problem we face is defeating multiple layers of stand-off in all domains in order to maintain the coherence of our operations. Therefore, the American way of war must evolve and adapt.

- GEN Milley, CSA
- TRADOC PAM 525-3-1: MDO

The 2018 National Defense Strategy was clear in its call to shake off strategic atrophy - to maintain competitive advantage against our Nation’s adversaries we must evolve… To succeed, we must exhibit leadership agility and adaptability. We must question our assumptions.

- LTG Beaudette, USASOC CG
- USASOC STRATEGY

The 2018 National Defense Strategy articulated the need to shift towards Great Power Competition. While the fight against Violent Extremism persists, we must turn our attention to near-peer adversaries who closed the gap on our Nation’s competitive advantages. Just as our formations played an enormous role in the counterterrorism and counter-insurgency fights of the previous two decades, our role in competition will be crucial.

We act as strategic sensors and influence networks that enable JIIM partners, impose costs on our adversaries, and set the conditions to win on any battlefield.

We must embrace revolutionary change needed to compete, deter and win against near-peer adversaries in an increasingly complex environment. This vision lays the groundwork for how we will adapt to be the First to Observe, First to Influence, and First to Compete in 2021 and beyond.

JOHN W. BRENNAN
MG, USA
Commanding

DAVID R. HOLTON
CWS, USA
Command Chief Warrant Officer

TED C. MUNTER
CSM, USA
Command Sergeant Major

The Nation’s Premier Partnership Force – In the return to Great Power Competition, 1st Special Forces Command (Airborne) serves as the nation’s global partner of choice for Irregular Warfare, operating as strategic sensors and influence networks using an indigenous approach. Working with our Joint, Inter-agency, Inter-governmental and Multinational (JIIM) partners, we are the first to observe our adversaries’ actions, the first to influence target audiences, and the first to compete with those who wish to harm our nation.

1st Special Forces Command (Airborne) assigns, equips, trains, certifies, and validates Army Special Operations Forces Soldiers and units to conduct global special operations in support of theater and national objectives. On order, 1st Special Forces Command (Airborne) deploys as the Army core of the Special Operations Joint Task Force (SOJTF) HQs to command and control special operations, and/or coalition forces in support of global crisis response and contingency missions.
STRATEGIC CONTEXT

BALANCED FOCUS
Our national focus on defeating Violent Extremist Organizations (VEO) over the last two decades allowed our strategic competitors to close the gap with our nation’s military capabilities. As rogue regimes and VEOs continue to destabilize regions and near-peer opponents increasingly undermine long-established international order, our national leaders have shifted primary efforts for national security back to interstate strategic competition while balancing Counter-VEO requirements.

ENVIRONMENTAL COMPLEXITIES
The accelerating complexity of the international strategic environment complicates this shift. Rapid technological advancements that change the character of warfare also created ambiguous conditions where military, political, and economic realms overlap and where all domains can be contested simultaneously. The environment’s complexities allow adversaries – using manipulation, coercion, and deception – to compete for partnerships balanced against US interests and deny access to U.S. Forces.
We are uniquely organized, manned, trained, and resourced to operate in complex and ambiguous environments. Our soldiers, from three interdependent regiments, operate in small teams around the globe strengthening relationships with our partners and allies.

» We are the Nation’s Army Special Operations Division composed of 23,000 Civil Affairs, Psychological Operations, Special Forces, Support Soldiers, and Civilians who continuously compete with our adversaries across the globe in 70 countries by leveraging capabilities that span all five operational domains: land, maritime, air, space, and cyberspace.

» We are quiet professionals, unconventional warriors, masters of the indigenous approach, and leaders uniquely educated and trained as regional and cultural experts who can operate in complex, austere, and politically sensitive environments to support or counter resistance movements.

» Our culture is one of constant innovation and improvement. We seek the best people, the latest equipment, and the most effective methods to achieve success. As the world evolves, we quickly maneuver and adapt to anticipate and solve our Nation’s most wicked problems. Our country, our Allies, and our partners rely on us to excel in ambiguous environments, overcome challenging conditions, influence and win, whether on the battlefield, online, or in competition with our collective adversaries. We are the global partners of choice.

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.
WHAT WE DO

Through in-depth understanding of the operational environment across multiple domains, we provide national decision-makers with options to counter our adversaries’ activities, leverage, and influence. Due to our persistently deployed, interconnected posture, with support from our CONUS-base, we serve as strategic sensors and influence networks against those who seek to undermine our partnerships and challenge our military advantage across the competition continuum—from great powers to VEO threats. We build partnerships through trust, habitual relationships, and a professionalism that undercuts our adversaries’ attempts at manipulation. We deter conflict by out-maneuvering our adversaries across multiple domains simultaneously, expanding our physical access and influence. Once war becomes unavoidable, we leverage a robust network of JIIM partners and surrogates to produce effects against adversaries in complex, austere, and sensitive environments.

Soldiers from our three interdependent Army Special Operations regiments operate in small cross-functional teams that strengthen partner and Allied relationships and complement our partners’ efforts.

“"We are vital across the entire spectrum of conflict. We have to train for large-scale combat operations even though we work to prevent them. With partners, we operate with a very small footprint that doesn’t require the U.S. government to send large conventional formations.”"

- MG Brennan
1st SFC (A) CG

We operate alongside the National Mission Force and Inter-agency/Intelligence Community partners to execute discreet, sensitive activities in support of national objectives. By combining our unique capabilities into mission-specific cross-functional teams, 1st SFC (A) achieves out-sized effects for the Nation in which the whole is greater than the sum of its parts.
**THE VALUE WE PROVIDE**

» **DIRECT SUPPORT FOR STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES**
As practitioners of Irregular Warfare, our force is uniquely educated to operate in the human dimension of war within complex and austere environments. Our teams operate in small footprints with enduring relationships around the world, providing national decision-makers with advantages in information, intelligence, and influence that generate low-visibility and low-cost options that produce high returns. Our efforts in the competition space and against VEO threats preserve the time and reduce the resources necessary for our Army and Joint Force to prepare for, deploy to, and win the next war. Additionally, we respond to global crises and form the core of a Special Operations Joint Task Force to provide Joint Task Force commanders with one consolidated SOF headquarters.

» **GLOBAL PRESENCE, PERSISTENTLY ENGAGED**
Our longstanding regional relationships with security, governance, development, and influence partners enable aggressive networking against revisionist states, rogue regimes, and violent extremist organizations. Not limited to diplomatic zones or capital cities, our expertise and presence at the frontiers, along borders, and within weak states ensures we are the first to see and sense subversive attempts to gain leverage and advantage against our Nation and our partners.

» **ADVISE, ASSIST, AND ENABLE PARTNERS**
Our ability to identify, report, and exploit adversary activities enables multi-domain options for JIIM partners to compete, deter, resist, and impose costs against our opponents. Should competition escalate into conflict, we provide uniquely tailorable partnered options to strike deep cognitively, virtually, and physically. We shape conditions to disrupt adversaries and create windows of opportunity that enable JIIM partners to dominate and win.

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The power of our force is the power of combinations and the partners we bring to bear across the JIIM. That is something that other divisions in the Army do not do. It is our value proposition to the nation. We converge partners at the right time and place to create outsized effects.

- MG Brennan
1st SFC (A) CG

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STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

This framework provides a basic structure and roadmap for how 1st SFC (A) will drive towards our vision for FY21 and beyond. It is composed of 4 Lines of Effort and 5 Current Priorities. The 1st SFC (A) staff, organized into focused Operational Planning Teams with input from the CSUs, USASOC, an SOCOM, is developing a detailed strategy which will provide greater fidelity on the tasks, intermediate objectives, and assessments associated with this framework.

LINES OF EFFORT

Our four lines of effort are enduring and drive alignment of our actions and resources to achieve intermediate objectives in pursuit of our end state – to be the Nation’s Premier Partnership Force.

» PEOPLE are our most precious resource. 1st SFC (A) fields the most capable, diverse, and professional Special Operations Forces in the world. We reinforce a culture of accountability and teamwork and empower leaders through Trust and Mission Command. We are successful when we employ a cross functional team of quiet professionals, with the highest ethical and moral values to succeed in the most complex, ambiguous environments. We execute ARSOF talent management to recruit and retain the highest quality Soldiers and Civilians the Nation has to offer and invest in programs that ensure the welfare of the Force and their Families.

» READINESS 1st SFC (A) builds readiness every day. We employ purpose-built, calibrated, cross functional teams designed to dominate our adversaries through convergence of our unique capabilities across multiple domains. We pursue competitive advantage daily through rigorous, leader-centric training to deploy a diverse team of teams trained and validated to compete, deter, and win in conflict. We procure mission critical equipment to properly resource our Forces for operational requirements, while aggressively pursuing the next generation of technology to succeed in the Information Age. We project capability through deployable command nodes and provide expeditionary Special Operations Task Forces to meet the needs of the Joint Force.

» INNOVATION 1st SFC (A) invests in equipment, processes, and approaches that advance ARSOF into to the Information Age. While modernization improves existing capabilities, innovation develops new methods and technologies needed to succeed in the future operating environment. Through a broad network with academia, industry, and the greater SOCOM enterprise, we take existing ideas and materiel and use them in novel ways to enable the agility needed to compete and win. As SOCOM’s primary Research Testing Development and Evaluation mechanism, we are uniquely postured to exploit technological inflection points to give our Soldiers revolutionary capability at the point of need and to share success with the wider enterprise.

» RELATIONSHIPS As the Nation’s Premier Partnership Force, relationships are interwoven into everything we do. The Irregular Warfare space is large and complex, and no single entity can achieve success without help from a variety of partners. 1st SFC (A) leverages organic cultural and regional expertise to build relationships and broaden networks across the JIIM enterprise. We are collaborative team-builders, using our global understanding and placement to create opportunities for change. We leverage authorities and capabilities of our partners to optimize effects and create overmatch to achieve mission objectives.
The title of “Nation’s Premier Partnership Force” is aspirational and not simply bestowed upon us – we must earn it! 1st SFC (A) has five priority efforts that will set initial conditions for the command to be successful as the Nation’s primary force for competition against our adversaries. These priorities will shift over time as we achieve our goals, but this is where we must focus NOW.

» INFORMATION WARFARE CENTER (IWC)

The IWC is a CONUS-based, operationally-focused standing task force designed to support GCCs, TSOCs, and JIIM partners to identify, expose, exploit, and disrupt adversary influence campaigns. The IWC integrates cross functional capabilities from Psychological Operations, Intelligence, Cyber, Information Operations, and other Information-Related Capabilities to mass effects against global competitors in the Information Environment.

» SPECIAL OPERATIONS JOINT TASK FORCE - CONTINGENCY (SOJTF-C)

1st SFC (A) establishes SOJTF-C to act as a convergence headquarters, at echelon above brigade, which provides expeditionary campaigning in times of crisis and conflict, enabling mission command for Joint SOF. 1st SFC(A) forms the core of the SOJTF-C and sets the conditions necessary to seize the initiative and retain freedom of action for the Joint Force. The SOJTF-C creates synergy across all domains to converge combat power, including ARSOF Cross Functional Teams at echelon, to disrupt and defeat the physical, virtual, and cognitive cohesion of the adversary.

» CROSS-FUNCTIONAL TEAMS (CFT)

1st SFC(A) Cross Functional Teams provide SOF with its competitive advantage. CFTs at all echelons combine the unique capabilities of Civil Affairs, Psychological Operations, Special Forces, and enablers to rapidly integrate multi-domain capabilities that create layered options across time and space.

» HARD TARGET DEFEAT COMPANIES (HTD)

1st SFC (A) develops and provides Hard Target Defeat Companies that are empowered, equipped, and networked to support high-end Partners and Allies across the spectrum of special operations. These hyper-enabled teams are uniquely organized to counter near-peer adversary campaigns by simultaneously layering multi-domain capabilities at echelon to impose costs on them. They operate with regional partners to defeat hard targets in sensitive and constricted environments, and enable the Joint Force to achieve overmatch.
ARSOF TRAINING CENTER (ARSOFT-TC)

The ARSOFT-TC is the premiere warfighting training venue for ARSOF. It is a scalable, flexible venue to test, train, certify, and validate units against a variety of contingencies and missions. Using ARSOFT-TC as a base of operations, 1st SFC (A) executes realistic, challenging training scenarios from decentralized locations to replicate geographic dispersion and operational reach back and enable mission command. 1st SFC (A) invests in infrastructure and scenario development to enable training in a multi-domain environment including Space, Cyber, and EW.

US ARMY CONCEPT FOR SPECIAL OPERATIONS 2028-2040

ARSOF conduct special operations during competition and conflict, as part of the joint force commander’s campaign plan, to mitigate risk, deter, disrupt, or defeat hostile aggression, and gain time in order to set up strategic and operational options. By expanding partnerships with local irregular forces Army special operations allow the joint force to sense and create a picture of the adversary’s layered standoff system. When directed, ARSOF penetrate denied areas to disintegrate enemy anti-access systems thereby producing multiple physical, virtual, and cognitive dilemmas.
NATION’S PREMIER PARTNERSHIP FORCE

SDJTF-C

CONVERGENCE C2
SPACE EMS CYBER
LAND INFO
SEA AIR

Integrate JIIM
Converge Multi-Domain
Capabilities
Develop Resilient, Capable, Interoperable Partners
Reinforce Partners and Allies

Demonstrate Ability
To Penetrate Adversary
Standoff System
Create Virtual &
Physical Standoff
Prevent Surprise Attack
Set Conditions to Win in War

Enable JTF To
Penetrate, Dis-integrate, Exploit
Adversary A2/AD

Information Warfare
Identify, Expose, Exploit
& Counter Enemy OAs
Integrate IRC Capabilities
Inform & Enable JIIM
Deep Area Sensing

Cognitively Disrupt Adversaries
Create Cognitive Standoff
Deep Area Penetration

Harden the Environment
Prepare Partners & Allies
Understanding Adversary Standoff Weapons

ADVERSARIES ENABLE VICTORY CONFLICT
A Civil Affairs (CA) Team acting as a Civil Military Support Element (CMSE) from the 91st Civil Affairs Battalion, on its third tour to West African nation of Naruvu, was on its way to meet with a local government leader. While driving on the highway, the team noticed a billboard with Chinese characters, a photo of a southern port city, and a prominent yellow ribbon. The CMSE took a photo and continued to their meeting.

Upon returning to their team house, they shared the photo with their cross-functional team (a Special Forces Operational Detachment-Alpha (SFOD-A) from the 3rd Special Forces Group and a Psychological Operations Detachment (PSYDET) from the 7th Psychological Operations Battalion). Recognizing the billboard’s near-peer competition significance, they developed a plan to investigate the Chinese activity: Each element would gather information from their respective indigenous partners in Security, Governance, Development and Information while also exploring local publically available information.

When the CFT reconvened after their reconnaissance efforts, the SFODA’s assistant detachment commander mentioned the Naruvian Commando Team Leader (a long-time acquaintance) stated high-level Chinese officials recently visited to discuss large-scale real estate investment. At a local development meeting, the CMSE learned the Chinese purchased land around the southern port city. The PSYOP detachment located advertisements on local social media outlets signaling Chinese interests in the port area. Recognizing the significance, the cross-functional team transmitted their findings through SOCAFRICA to the 8th PSYOP Group’s Information Warfare Center (IWC) at Fort Bragg, North Carolina.
As 1st Special Forces Commands’ CONUS-based information warfare capability, the IWC leveraged the global 1st SFC (A) network to illuminate the threat activity. They rapidly integrated the 389th Intelligence Battalion’s all-source intelligence against the Chinese investment in Naruvu. Assisted by sophisticated artificial intelligence and machine learning, within 48-hours the IWC found the original source of the advertisements—a Chinese construction conglomerate active in Naruvu over the last two years. The advertisement announced a deep-water port that would begin construction in just over a month. It further confirmed the port as a key node in China’s Belt and Road Initiative for 2025 and likely naval military intentions in 2035.

The IWC immediately developed an influence campaign to enable JIIM partners to discredit Chinese activities several weeks before the ribbon cutting ceremony and impede the Chinese from further purchasing land. SOCAFRICA directed the CFT to monitor and report on Chinese activities.

Naruvian government cooperation was key to stopping port establishment and to inhibit further Chinese expansion. With ground breaking less than 1 month away and American diplomats needing more time to persuade the Naruvian leadership against Chinese investment, SOCAFRICA requested assistance from SOJTF-C. Working from Ft Bragg, NC, SOJTF-C developed a plan and established mission command to converge SOF capabilities on the problem.

They first directed the IWC to initiate their previously-developed influence campaign. Relying on civil-economic information provided by the CMSE, the IWC’s approach empowered IWTF’s, in coordination with the JIIM, to enflame long-standing friction between Naruvian workers and Chinese corporations. Within days, protests supported by the CFT’s ODA, erupted around Chinese business headquarters and their embassy in Ajuba. Simultaneously, the IWC-led social media campaign illuminated the controversy to a global audience.

Simultaneously, SOJTF-C activated the CMSE who, working with local branches of the Naruvian government, DoS, USAID, and NGOs, established job fairs near protest areas, providing disaffected workers with alternative employment options. Within two weeks, the construction company lost 60% of its required labor pool. With increased scrutiny from the international community, and without a workforce, China’s port opening was set back by months. The JIIM now had sufficient time to engage with Naruvian leadership, communicate the problem, and develop options.

One week later, Naruvian security forces discovered an illegal weapons cache which it traced back to a subsidiary of the construction company. To further investigate the matter, they partnered with 3rd SFG (A)’s Hard Target Defeat Company (HTD) to surveil the construction company’s headquarters. Enabled by the HTD, Naruvian security forces accessed the building and, while searching it, recovered blueprints for the proposed port facility.

Naruvu sent the recovered blueprints to DIA analysts who identified plans for concrete footings specifically designed for CSA-9 surface-to-air and DF-25 shore-to-ship missiles. These missiles, if emplaced in Naruvu, would challenge America’s air and sea lanes across the Atlantic. Armed with this information, the US Ambassador explained if China emplaced those weapons at the port, Naruvu would become a strategic target and potential war zone between great powers. China’s true intent illuminated, the Naruvian government seized the Chinese-purchased land.

Though the US thwarted China’s expansion and military plans, it was certain China would try to achieve the same goals in the future. Thankfully, ARSOF’s forward presence in multiple regions would provide advanced warning of their activities, provide the ability to disrupt them, and, if necessary, set conditions for the US to win in conflict.
**1st SPECIAL FORCES COMMAND**

**OUR COMMAND**

23,000 People

11 Subordinate Brigade-Sized Units

- 1st SFG(A)
- 3rd SFG(A)
- INDO-PACOM AFRICOM
- 5th SFG(A)
- CENTCOM SOUTHCOM
- 7th SFG(A)
- EUCOM
- 10th SFG(A)
- 19th SFG(A)
- 20th SFG(A)
- 4th POG(A)
- Regional Focus
- 8th POG(A)
- Global Focus
- 95th CA BDE (A)
- 523rd Sust BDE (GS) (A)

**Our Mission:**

1st Special Force Command (Airborne) assigns, equips, trains, and certifies / validates Army Special Operations Forces Soldiers & units to conduct global special operations in support of theater & national objectives. On order, 1st Special Forces Command (Airborne) deploys as the Army core of the Special Operations Joint Task Force (SOJTF) HQs to execute command and control of special operations and/or forces in support of global crisis response missions.

**OUR STRATEGIC VALUE**

- **Cooperation**
  - Regionally-Aligned with Persistent Global Presence

- **Competition**
  - Uniquely educated and trained for human-governance-information dimensions of war

- **Conflict**
  - Enable Multi-Domain options for JIIM partners to defeat VEOs and impose costs on adversaries

WE ARE UNIQUELY TRAINED, RESOURCED, AND POSTURED TO COMPETE ON BEHALF OF THE NATION, ACROSS THE SPECTRUM OF CONFLICT

**THE NATION’S PREMIER**
PERSISTENT GLOBAL PRESENCE
~3,000 Soldiers in 70+ Countries Daily


U.S. NORTHERN COMMAND
- 7th SFG (A)
- 98th CA BN (A)
- 1st POB (A)

U.S. EUROPEAN COMMAND
- 10th SFG (A)
- 92nd CA BN (A)
- 6th POB (A)

U.S. CENTRAL COMMAND
- 5th SFG (A)
- 96th CA BN (A)
- 8th POB (A)

U.S. AFRICA COMMAND
- 3rd SFG (A)
- 91st CA BN (A)
- 7th POB (A)

U.S. INDO-PACIFIC COMMAND
- 1st SFG (A)
- 97th CA BN (A)
- 5th POB (A)