



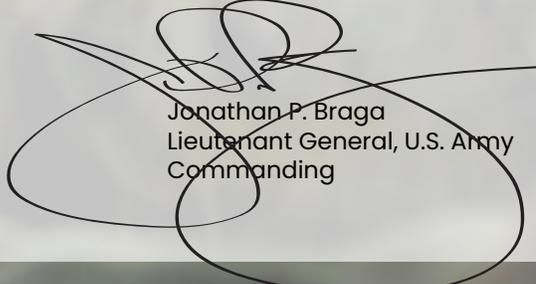
# COMMANDER'S INTRODUCTION

The Nation is at a strategic inflection point. The strategic environment features daunting challenges and extraordinary opportunities. We must embrace our legacy of innovation to transform our enterprise, deliver elite units of action to Joint Force Commanders, and posture our forces in all domains to compete against our Nation's adversaries.

The strategic environment is increasing in complexity and fraught with danger. Technology is changing the character of war, enabling adversaries to influence populations and challenge our traditional military advantage. Pandemics, refugee crises, and climate change all require coordination and cooperation in an increasingly competitive international environment. Revisionist autocratic regimes perceive these trends and seek the attendant opportunities.

The legacy of Army Special Operations is one of meeting tremendous challenges with tenacity and creativity. In 1941, the Army lacked a formal special operations organization, and the Office of Strategic Services was established to provide this capability. Our predecessors were asked to "play a bush league game . . . stealing the ball and killing the umpire" to buy time for the Nation to prepare for war with the Axis Powers. The strategic situation today has many similarities. The "game" is now played in the "gray-zone," where irregular warfare forms the basis of campaigns to strengthen allies and partners and counter the malign influence of our adversaries. At the onset of World War II, the country needed time to meet the threat posed by the Axis powers. Today, the Joint Force needs time to recover from the last twenty years of persistent conflict and prepare for the next one. Just as in 1941, Army Special Operations will "steal ball(s)" and "kill umpire(s)" to enable the Joint Force to modernize for the future.

Our unique challenge is that we must simultaneously modernize our force for multi-domain operations, campaign in support of integrated deterrence, and prepare for high-end conflict. This challenge is daunting, but it is not without precedent. This Strategy provides a vision for how ARSOF will tackle this challenge.



Jonathan P. Braga  
Lieutenant General, U.S. Army  
Commanding

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# ARMY SPECIAL OPERATIONS FORCES IN HISTORY

## RANGERS: 1675-1812

Specialized elements that were light, fast, and elite, have long been an enduring feature of American warfare. Predating the foundation of the country itself, Church's Rangers fought in the King Philip's, King William's, and Queen Anne's Wars. Rogers' Rangers fought in the Seven Years' War, also known as the French and Indian War. In Virginia, companies of Rangers guarded the frontier. Light combat units such as local militias fought in the American Revolution. Ranger units were once again called upon by the nation to defend the frontier during the War of 1812.



## WWI: 1917-1918

Modern Psychological Operations and Civil Affairs trace their roots to World War I, which the U.S. entered on 6 April 1917. In 1918, the War Department and American Expeditionary Force established sections to perform propaganda activities. After the Armistice, the Army conducted Military Government in Germany until 1923 and Russia until 1920. The Army's combat propaganda and Civil Affairs capabilities were casualties of demobilization and the lean Great Depression years, forcing the Army to rebuild them in the early 1940s.



## KOREAN WAR: 1950-1953

U.S. involvement in the Korean War led to the rebirth of Army Special Operations Forces. A new Ranger Training Center created Ranger Infantry Companies (Airborne), and later instructed individuals in Ranger skills. The Eighth U.S. Army created a guerrilla organization to command, control, train, and advise North Korean guerrillas fighting alongside United Nations troops. Civil Affairs units helped alleviate the widespread misery experienced by the Korean people. Tactical and strategic Psychological Warfare units reappeared. Toward the end of the conflict a new Psychological Warfare Center and School was formed at Fort Bragg, NC, to train Psywar and Special Forces soldiers. Some of the first Special Forces soldiers served in combat in Korea.



## POST-VIETNAM WAR: 1975-1990

The conclusion of the Vietnam War left Army Special Operations at a low point. The Special Forces was reduced to three active duty Groups and many Psychological Operations and Civil Affairs units were transitioned to the Army Reserve. The failed hostage rescue attempt in Iran led to significant legislative reform that changed the way the Department of Defense operated. During this period, the Ranger Battalions were permanently established, as was the 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment and 1st Special Forces Command. Operations in Grenada and Panama demonstrated the value of uniquely capable Army Special Operations units.



## POST-9/11: 2001-2022

After 9/11, Army Special Operations spearheaded Operation ENDURING FREEDOM to combat Al Qaeda. Since then, Army Special Operations have remained vigilant in the fight against terrorism. During this period, Army Special Operations expanded capacity and developed new capabilities to protect the United States homeland. The relationships established across the Joint Force, interagency, and with partners and allies provided Army Special Operations Forces with an unparalleled advantage in competition—the trust and confidence of allies and partners across the globe.



## MILITARY GOVERNMENT: 1848-1902



After the Mexican-American War, the U.S. Army conducted Military Government (now Civil Affairs) activities in occupied areas in Mexico. The Army also provided military governors to administer U.S. territories. During post-Civil War Reconstruction, the U.S. Army conducted Military Government activities in the former Confederacy. Later, the U.S. Army then implemented military government approaches to restore order in Puerto Rico, Cuba, and the Philippines after the Spanish-American War and subsequent Philippine insurrection.

## WWII: 1941-1945



Many units that influenced U.S. Army Special Operations Forces were formed during World War II. Today's Special Forces trace their lineage to the First Special Service Force, the Alamo Scouts, the Philippine Guerrillas, and elements of the Office of Strategic Services. Meanwhile, the six Ranger Battalions, Merrill's Marauders, and the MARS Task Force represent the role of Army Rangers. Lastly, Military Government and Psychological Warfare elements provide the origin of today's Civil Affairs and Psychological Operations units. With the exception of a small Military Government capability, all special operations units were disbanded at the end of the war.

## VIETNAM WAR: 1955-1975



The Special Forces advisory mission in Vietnam began as mobile training teams in the late 1950s and early 1960s. In 1964, 5th Special Forces Group headquarters deployed to South Vietnam to control all Special Forces activities in country. Civil Affairs and Psychological Operations capabilities expanded significantly during the war, countering Communist influence in South Vietnam. President Richard Nixon's 'Vietnamization' policy led to the reduction of U.S. forces in South Vietnam beginning in 1970, but Army Special Operations remained until the fall of Saigon in 1975. After the war, Army Special Operations experienced drastic cuts in size and capabilities, evidenced by the inactivation or transferring to the U.S. Army Reserve of various units.

## POST-COLD WAR: 1991-2000



The end of the Cold War led Army Special Operations to reorient from countering communist aggression to promoting democracy, mitigating humanitarian crises, and confronting rogue actors. During Operations DESERT SHIELD/STORM, Army Special Operations were critical to the U.S. led coalition's defense of Saudi Arabia and liberation of Kuwait. The 1990s also featured deployments in support of UN peacekeeping, non-combatant evacuations, and multilateral efforts in Somalia, Haiti, the Balkans, and throughout Africa and Latin America.

## CAMPAIGNING TO SUPPORT INTEGRATED DETERRENCE: 2022-PRESENT



The challenges of the modern world require a force flexible enough to compete against, deter, and, if necessary, defeat, near-peer adversaries, malign state and non-state actors, and violent extremist organizations. As the U.S. forges into this new phase of competition through integrated deterrence, Army Special Operations Forces must embrace their core missions while looking ahead to the future to build competitive advantages. Through irregular warfare campaigning, ARSOF can coordinate, integrate, assess, and enable trans-regional strategic and operational level effects by converging multi-domain capabilities to support and lead JIM efforts.

# VISION STATEMENT

**Threat Informed | Strategically Driven | Operationally Focused | Tactically Prepared**

*We deliver competitive advantage for the Nation as an integral part of the Joint Force. We are informed by threats, driven to achieve strategic advantage, focused to enable all-domain irregular warfare campaigns, and tactically prepared to thrive in austere and ambiguous environments.*

## COMMANDER'S INTENT

We will conduct irregular warfare campaigns and provide irregular warfare capabilities to enable the Joint Force to compete, respond to crises, and prevail in conflict. To set conditions for success, we must achieve the following key tasks:

- ***Expand and reinforce our generational relationships with Allies and Partners to increase our access, placement, and influence.***
- ***Cultivate new relationships with our Joint, Interagency, and Multinational partners to provide advantages across all five domains.***
- ***Modernize our influence operations and capabilities to shape perceptions, behaviors, and decisions of relevant actors.***
- ***Synchronize the effects of trans-regional and multi-domain operations to influence relevant populations.***
- ***Innovate relentlessly to develop options and solve problems. We must embrace innovation as a mindset at all echelons.***
- ***Provide unique value to the Joint Force's ability to see and sense further and decide faster while simultaneously inhibiting our adversaries' ability to do likewise.***

Competition is infinite and success is fleeting. Our goal is to advance our Nation's national security objectives and deter great power conflict. If deterrence fails, we must provide outsized effects to the Joint Force to enable victory.

Our legacy is one of extraordinary service to the nation. In every American conflict, irregular forces and asymmetric approaches delivered significant advantages. The contemporary environment presents unique challenges. Competition is constant, crises are unprecedented in scope and frequency, and the costs of conventional conflict elude full comprehension. In this uncertain environment, our unique capabilities buy down risk and provide options for strategic leaders.

This vision and strategy describe how we will generate, posture, and transform our forces to realize this vision alongside our generational partners and allies.

# STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENT

Our country faces a decisive decade marked by compounding strategic challenges. Our competitors undermine peace and stability through overt aggression as well as operations in the “gray zone.” Technology is expanding the scope of strategic competition. Concurrently, transboundary challenges such as those posed by climate change, mass migrations, and pandemics test the resilience of states and international cooperation.

**Autocratic states** seek regional dominance and diminished U.S. freedom of maneuver in their aspirational spheres of influence. The People’s Republic of China (PRC), Russia, Iran, and the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK) all share a common interest in disrupting major partnerships and treaty organizations. Of these states, the PRC alone possesses the diplomatic, information, military, and economic power combined with the intent to revise the international system to achieve global dominance. Russia’s invasion of Ukraine reflects the aspirations of the Kremlin and presents an acute threat to the peace and stability of Europe. Both Iran and the DPRK remain persistent threats due to their development of nuclear capabilities and regional ambitions. These states feature autocratic systems of government which perceive U.S. alliances and partnerships, and our network of international SOF, as a threat to their ambitions. These adversaries purposefully operate in “gray zones” where they assume we will not or cannot respond effectively.

**Transformational technologies** enable our adversaries to challenge many of our traditional military advantages. Our strategic rivals leverage artificial intelligence and machine learning (AI/ML), quantum computing, robotics and unmanned systems, and cyber capabilities to influence populations and discourse and present unique challenges across all warfighting functions. Advances in long-range fires embolden our rivals and challenge our traditional freedom of maneuver. Meanwhile, anti-access/area-denial (A2AD) systems complicate intervention and deterrence. We are subject to ubiquitous surveillance throughout our operations, and our strategic competitors place a premium on control of the Information Environment to gain information advantage. The combination of these capabilities and adversarial intent renders every space, and every domain, contested. There is no sanctuary.

**Transboundary challenges** to societal resilience include Violent Extremist Organizations, Transnational Criminal Networks, climate change, pandemics, refugee crises, and mass migrations. Unbounded by geography, these require globally synchronized approaches that prioritize frontline Allies and Partners. Failure to address these issues may create conditions where hostile regimes and non-state actors gain influence over relevant populations and undermine the credibility of the United States and the legitimacy of our partners. These challenges are exacerbated by the relentless narrative competition occurring in the information dimension, where adversarial actors seek to achieve information advantage. Beyond defeating its armed forces, the ability to deter, influence, or contest a rival by eroding its legitimacy, credibility, or will is critical.



# STRATEGIC PROBLEM

State and non-state competitors seek revision of the international order at the expense of the United States through 1) development of modern, multi-domain capable, forces to challenge our military strength; 2) engagement in “gray zone” activities to “win without fighting;” and 3) policy agendas designed to increase influence among strategically significant actors at the expense of U.S. interests.

For ARSOF to succeed, we must simultaneously: 1) develop new capabilities and prepare for all domain high-end conflict, 2) compete today in the “gray zone” to deny our adversaries’ goal to win without fighting, and 3) strengthen our partnerships and alliances to deliver access, placement, and influence in support of U.S. interests.

# MISSION

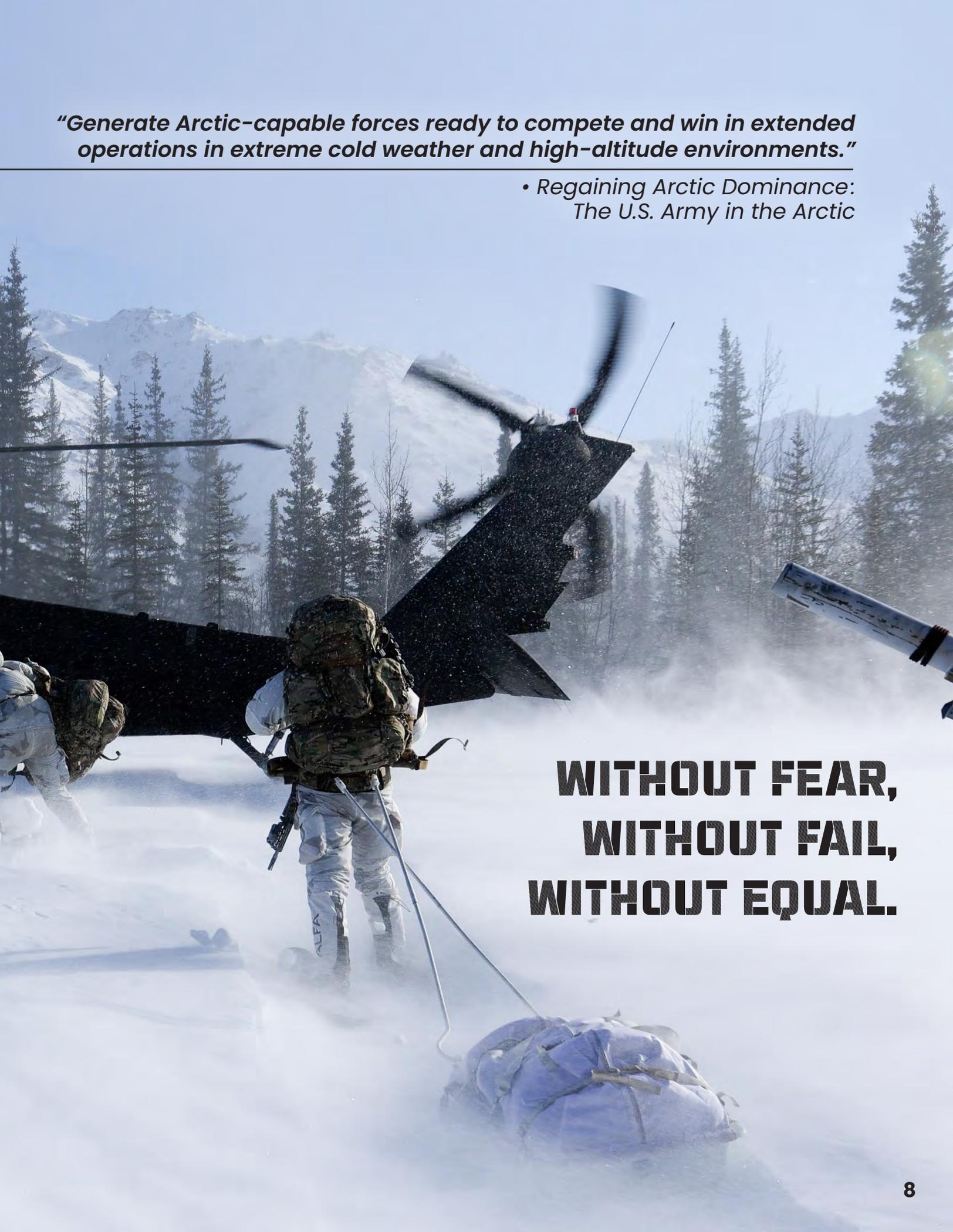
**USASOC mans, trains, equips, educates, organizes, sustains, and supports forces to conduct special operations across the full range of military operations in support of joint force commanders and JIIM partners to meet national and theater objectives.**

## ***ARSOF Enduring Strategic Value***

- See and sense further and faster to deliver precision effects and access*
- Campaign across the competition continuum and enable trans-boundary effects to address trans-boundary challenges*
- Increase access, placement, and influence for the Joint Force through our generational relationships*
- Influence relevant audiences to shape perceptions, behaviors, and decisions*
- Innovate to erode the capabilities of our adversaries and empower our Allies and Partners*

***“Generate Arctic-capable forces ready to compete and win in extended operations in extreme cold weather and high-altitude environments.”***

- *Regaining Arctic Dominance:  
The U.S. Army in the Arctic*

A full-page photograph showing a soldier in winter combat gear, including a large backpack and ski boots, pulling a sled through deep snow. In the background, a helicopter is landing or taking off, with its rotors blurred from motion. The scene is set in a snowy, mountainous area with evergreen trees. The text "WITHOUT FEAR, WITHOUT FAIL, WITHOUT EQUAL." is overlaid in the lower right quadrant.

**WITHOUT FEAR,  
WITHOUT FAIL,  
WITHOUT EQUAL.**

# ARSOF GLOBAL ACCESS



**ACCESS,  
PLACEMENT, AND  
INFLUENCE TO ENABLE THE JOINT FORCE,  
ALLIES AND PARTNERS**



***“Our partnerships, cultural understanding, diversity of thought, and enduring relationships enable the current presence of more than 2,800 soldiers in 77 countries”***

*– LTG Jonathan Braga, Commander U.S. Army Special Operations Command*



# STRATEGY | CAMPAIGN FRAMEWORK

U.S. ARMY SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND

WITHOUT EQUAL



Our strategic approach provides a broad construct to achieve the objectives established by national strategic documents, the Army, and USSOCOM. It describes the strategic goals (ends), lines of effort (ways), and associated capabilities (means).

## **Strategic Goals | Ends**

To achieve the defense objectives outlined by the DoD, Army, and USSOCOM, USASOC must accomplish the following three strategic goals:

- 1. Modernize** ARSOF concepts, capabilities, and doctrine to enable all-domain irregular warfare in support of Army 2040 modernization priorities and the Joint Force.
- 2. Enhance** and sustain readiness of ARSOF forces for employment by Joint Force Commanders in support of current operational demands.
- 3. Position** ARSOF globally and in all domains to generate and sustain advantage in support of integrated deterrence and campaigning.

## **Strategic Ways | Lines of Effort**

Our Lines of Effort link multiple tasks united by the logic of purpose to achieve these strategic goals.

**1. Transform ARSOF** – This approach allows USASOC to recognize new, or existing, problems that current capabilities cannot adequately address. USASOC’s force modernization efforts are mutually supporting the Army, and the Joint Force’s objectives in the employment of new technologies, operational methods, and organizational approaches. USASOC will contribute to and at times lead Army and Joint Force experimentation events. Activities associated with this effort include actions designed to identify future requirements and develop solutions to future challenges through concepts, doctrine, organization, training, materiel, leadership, personnel, facilities, and policy. Our triad partnership (SOF, Space, and Cyber) will break down barriers to operating across these new and contested domains to deliver unique options. Development of the triad conceptually, as well as experimentation, nests under this LOE, as do our modernization efforts in next-generation precision strike, unmanned systems / robotics / AI, counter unmanned aerial systems, and contested communications.

**2. Generate ARSOF** – USASOC assesses, mans, trains, equips, educates, sustains, and delivers Army Special Operations Forces to protect national interests and **enable the Joint Force across the competition continuum**. These responsibilities and associated activities nest under the logic of force generation and developing our **People as our Platform**. We must work hard to acquire and retain the force of tomorrow by focusing on support to Army recruiting efforts, the wellness and care of our people and their families, as well as leader development and talent management.

**3. Posture ARSOF** – Activities along this line of effort include all tasks that enable irregular warfare campaigns to support integrated deterrence or other joint force strategic ends. Specific focus areas include **optimizing force structure** to enable **CONUS-Based Operational Support** to the Unified Combatant Commands and developing habitual relationships or formal agreements among Allies and JIM Partners to promote **trans-boundary threat-focused cooperation**. Our forward posture and prepositioning efforts will increase readiness, fulfill contingency and partner-building demands, reduce deployment timelines, integrate institutional training forward, improve ARSOF’s interoperability, and enable ARSOF to respond more effectively to crises. To set ARSOF for “gray zone” campaigns we will establish a persistent **Trans-regional Irregular Warfare Headquarters**.



## **Means | Capabilities and Resources**

To achieve the strategic goals, USASOC will leverage every resource at its disposal and, when necessary, seek additional resources and partnerships to reduce risk and deliver value to the Nation. USASOC will expand the global access, placement, and influence of our forces, generational relationships with Ally and Partner forces, funding, authorities, ARSOF-unique capabilities, and our ARSOF units in accordance with our strategic ways.



### **1st Special Forces Command (Airborne)**

1st Special Forces Command (Airborne) provides tailorable, scalable, purpose-built ARSOF units of action that are specially selected, trained, and equipped to conduct Irregular Warfare (IW) in complex environments across the competition continuum, across all regions, and in all domains. As masters of the indigenous approach, units are culturally astute, regionally oriented, globally networked, and forward-postured to enable generational relationships with Partners and Allies and a deep understanding of the operational environment. Army Special Operations Forces are at the point of need to respond, inform, assist, or enable Joint Force and multinational Partners. 1st Special Forces Command also provides the Army foundation of a deployable Special Operations Joint Task Force – Contingency (SOJTF-C) to plan and execute irregular warfare campaigns.

### **U.S. Army Special Operations Aviation Command (USASOAC)**

The U.S. Army Special Operations Aviation Command provides precision rotary wing aviation and Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAV) for special operations worldwide. Aviators and crewmembers are highly trained to maintain and operate the most advanced helicopters and UAV systems. The 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment is the Nation's premier tactical denied-area penetrating force, specially selected and trained to operate in high-risk and politically sensitive areas where others cannot go. They also provide advisory support to enhance the aviation capabilities of our Allies and Partners.

### **The U.S. Army John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School (USAJFKSWCS)**

The U.S. Army John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School at Fort Bragg, N.C., is one of the Army's premier education institutions, managing and resourcing professional growth for Soldiers in the Army's three distinct special operations branches: Special Forces, Civil Affairs, and Psychological Operations. The Soldiers educated through USAJFKSWCS

programs are using cultural expertise and unconventional techniques to serve their country in far-flung areas across the globe. More than anything, these Soldiers bring integrity, adaptability, and regional expertise to their assignments.

On any given day, approximately 3,100 students are enrolled in USAJFKSWCS training programs, and every year SWCS produces over 12,000 Special Operations Forces. Courses range from entry-level training to advanced warfighter skills for seasoned officers and NCOs.



### **75th Ranger Regiment**

The 75th Ranger Regiment is the Army's premier light infantry force. Painfully light and disproportionately lethal. The Ranger Regiment is an agile and flexible force capable of executing a myriad of complex, joint special operations missions in support of U.S. policy and objectives. Today's Ranger Regiment is the Army's premier raid force. Each of the three geographically dispersed Ranger battalions is always combat-ready, mentally and physically tough, and prepared to fight. Their capabilities include air assault and direct-action raids, seizing key terrain such as airfields, destroying strategic facilities, and capturing or killing enemies of the Nation. Rangers can conduct squad through regimental size operations using a variety of infiltration techniques including airborne, air assault, and ground platforms. Rangers are specially selected and trained to operate in high-risk and politically sensitive areas where others cannot go. The Regiment remains an all-volunteer force with an intensive screening and selection process followed by combat-focused training. Rangers are resourced to maintain exceptional proficiency, experience, and readiness.

### **USASOC HQ**

The United States Army Special Operations Command generates and sustains Army Special Operations Forces to conduct worldwide Special Operations across the range of military operations in support of the Geographic Combatant Commanders, U.S. Ambassadors, and other agencies as directed.

### **USASOC Force Modernization Center**

The USASOC Force Modernization Center leads concept development, future warfare analysis and studies, science and technology, concepts and experimentation, requirements determination, and capabilities integration within USASOC.

## Information Warfare Center

The Information Warfare Center is a CONUS-based, operationally focused organization 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.

## Trans-Regional Irregular Warfare Headquarters

The Trans-Regional Irregular Warfare Command will synchronize irregular warfare operations, activities, and investments aligned against threats. The command will combine robust information, intelligence, and analytical capability to look across gaps and seams to enable the Joint Force to pursue threats across all domains.

## Space-Cyber-SOF Triad

The Space-Cyber-SOF Triad describes an interdependent and mutually supporting relationship between cyberspace, space, and SOF. Special operations often rely upon the information advantage provided by cyberspace and space capabilities to see, sense, and stimulate to influence relevant populations or strike deep into the physical nodes of an adversary's system and assess the results. Cyberspace operations may rely on SOF's physical access and placement to deliver effects. Cyberspace, space, and SOF are unique in their global reach, persistence, endurance, and responsiveness. The cross-domain convergence of capabilities enables effects at all levels and can be seamlessly integrated into irregular warfare campaigns.



## ARSOF Roles and Missions

Civil Affairs Operations | **CAO**

Civil-Military Operations | **CMO**

Counterinsurgency | **COIN**

Counter Terrorism | **CT**

Counter Threat Finance | **CTF**

Counter Threat Networks | **CTN**

Foreign Internal Defense | **FID**

Military Information Support Operations | **MISO**

Security Force Assistance | **SFA**

Special Reconnaissance | **SR**

Stability Operations | **SO**

Unconventional Warfare | **UW**



# CONCLUSION

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We will modernize our enterprise to operate in all domains and dimensions, generate and sustain the world's best Army Special Operations Forces, and reinforce our global posture to maximize competitive advantage in competition, respond effectively in crises, and set conditions for the Joint Force in conflict.

Irregular Warfare operations, activities, and investments form the foundation of our contribution to integrated deterrence, campaigning, and building warfighting advantage. The forces and capabilities we develop will support Joint Force Commanders to impose costs and doubt on our adversaries to deter war as part of a whole of nation effort.

# **SOF TRUTHS**

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- ♣ **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 assistance**



ARMY SPECIAL  
OPERATIONS FORCES  
**STRATEGY**  
2 • 0 • 3 • 0

