

Towards A National Operational Philosophy For The Employment of Military Special Operations Forces

A Case Study by Colonel August G. Jannarone

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TOWARDS A NATIONAL OPERATIONAL PHILOSOPHY FOR THE
EMPLOYMENT OF MILITARY SPECIAL OPERATIONS FORCES

SUMMARY

Since colonial times, the United States has conducted military special operations. Irregular, unorthodox units were and are characterized by small size, stealth, autonomy, adaptation, and innovation. Their use has ranged from commando raids to individual missions of intelligence collection or sabotage, and from disrupting major enemy forces in war to assisting Third World allies in countering subversive insurgency and terrorism. They attract and retain people with a passion for action, intense mission focus and resourceful, if unconventional, approaches to their tasks. Personalities, opinions and military skills are strong within the community.

The post-Vietnam major reduction of the special operations forces (SOF) of all the military Services, was followed in the late 1970's through today by a regeneration and reorientation: to increasingly sensitive, politically mandated and controversial missions, both strategic and tactical. For seven years the media, Congress and Pentagon have produced voluminous and disparate opinions and policy approaches to revitalizing and refocusing these forces, for low intensity conflict, crisis response, and major contingency/general war roles. There is much disagreement within national security policy circles and the military Services over unified joint doctrine, operational concepts, and organizational arrangements -- especially for command, control and direction during nationally tasked non-war missions.

If an operational philosophy (distinct from doctrine, policy and strategy, but as a touchstone for them) could be expressed--embodying the most agreed beliefs, attitudes and concepts of practitioners--national level decision makers would have a basis for appropriate and consistent judgements on the use of these limited and uniquely capable forces. In an effort to generate such a philosophy, over 70 interviews were conducted, most on cassette tapes, with practitioners, retired experts, non-military analysts, government officials and academics. A goal of about 110 interviews is still being pursued, as is a follow-on literature search.

Preliminary findings made in this paper: there is a wide range of informed opinions on SOF roles, missions and employment concepts; a narrow range of converging views suggests an operational philosophy can be developed; there is nearly unanimous opinion that the need is great; and, current SOF theory and practice is deficient, often dangerous, and not fully supporting national security interests.

Colonel August G. Jannarone, USAF

June 1986

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This brief recitation serves to illustrate a problem unique to SOF. In situations short of war they must be prepared to operate independently of conventional forces if necessary, and respond rapidly in a well orchestrated manner. In a war, regardless of its intensity, SOF must be effectively integrated into the overall effort, and must be utilized in a way that fully exploits their unique capabilities. Given the range of scenarios for which they train, it is no wonder that the original SOF motto was "Anything, Anytime, Anyplace, Anyhow".¹

I. INTRODUCTION

A heated defense policy debate has continued for almost six years on the quantitative adequacy, operational effectiveness, and management of United States military units that are designated "Special Operations Forces", or "SOF" (the omnipresent shorthand reference). In addition to much Pentagon bureaucratic posturing, there have been several aggressive attempts by the Air Force to rid itself of its few SOF helicopters by transfer to the Army; significant increases of Army and Navy SOF; and crisp exchanges between and among the Department of Defense (DOD), Congress, and the military Services. The major issues: command and control, joint strategy, resources allocation, and force utilization.²

To observers of defense policy formulation, the basic problem may appear to be Pentagon internal disagreement over development, organization, and control of some additional SOF forces, with the Congress curiously proposing solutions. This is unfortunately correct, although insufficient as a description of the larger problem which is rather opaque to the public and most of the military.

The fundamental problem, which this paper addresses, is that the United States government has no clear or generally understood operational philosophy for the employment of SOF in military or political-military roles overseas. Further, this deficiency effectively denies the National Command Authority a high level of confidence in the efficient employment or mission success of SOF when they are applied across the spectrum of conflict³ in security assistance, contingencies, or major interstate warfare involving the United States (See Figure 1).

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CONFLICT IN THE 1980'S

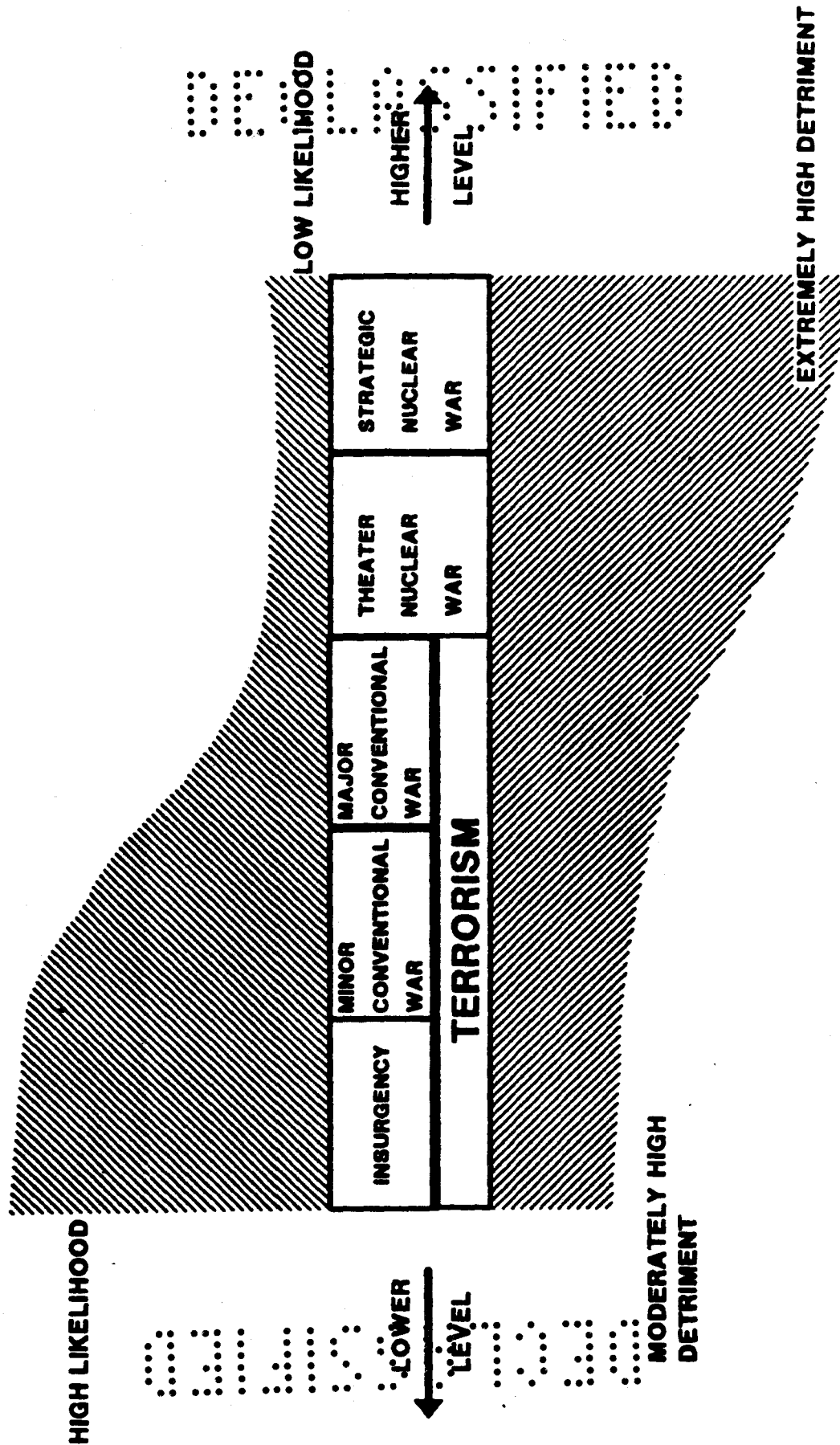


Figure 1. The Spectrum of Conflict

A parallel issue, and a concern in its own right, is that although the optimum doctrinal employment of SOF occurs in what is currently labelled "low intensity conflict", this is precisely where the least effective planning and national decision-making concerning the SOF community are taking place. The reasons for this are political as well as structural, and include traditional suspicion of elite forces; a history of ad hoc poorly structured governmental responses to crises; and public intolerance of protracted, low intensity commitment of military forces abroad.

As with examination of any national security issue in defense or foreign policy, one's attention is in part drawn to the relationship of the issue to the principal and continuing American strategic goal--deterrence. Surprisingly little has been written, in open source or classified literature, on SOF capabilities in support of deterrence, while much has been offered on their uses in crisis response. These capabilities are considered in the paper, as a natural consequence of the research, and some suggestions are made.

Section II (The Nature of Military Special Operations) examines those features of special operations that distinguish them, as a class of military activities, from those performed by conventional (non-special operations, as opposed to non-nuclear--here and throughout the paper) military forces. The characteristics of the missions assigned to SOF are discussed and a mission taxonomy is suggested (at Figure 2).

In Section III (Attitudes, Concepts and Operational Perspectives) consideration is given to the type of people involved in SOF, and to the skills and attitudes they develop and bring to bear in their duties. Irregular or unorthodox approaches to their missions and training are often a source of friction with their conventionally trained and focused superiors in Service hierarchies. A few examples are given in this section.

Section IV (Policy, Strategy, Doctrine and General Confusion) deals briefly with national level requirements that precede and largely predetermine the design, organization, and roles of unique military forces such as SOF. The intersection of SOF characteristics and capabilities with national level military and political views on appropriate force employment is discussed.

Section V (The Specialist verses Generalist Irony) considers the decision environment wherein the equipping, training and orientation of SOF for anticipated tasks occur. It is here

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MISSION TAXONOMY FOR SPECIAL OPERATIONS FORCES (SOF)

<u>MISSIONS</u>	<u>PRE-HOSTILITY</u>	<u>LOW-INTENSITY</u>	<u>MID-INTENSITY</u>	<u>HIGH INTENSITY (GENERAL WAR)</u>
<u>COLLECTIVE SECURITY</u>				
- INTERNAL DEFENSE AND DEVELOPMENT	X	X	X	X
- COUNTERINSURGENCY	X	X	X	X
- MOBILE TRAINING TEAMS	X	X		
- CIVIL AFFAIRS/CIVIC ACTION	X	X	X	X
<hr/>				
<u>HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE</u>	X	X		
<hr/>				
<u>DIRECT ACTION</u>				
- STRATEGIC INTELLIGENCE	X	X	X	X
- TACTICAL INTELLIGENCE		X	X	X
- TARGET ACQUISITION		X	X	X
- INTERDICTION		X	X	X
- PERSONNEL RECOVERY	X	X	X	X
- COUNTER-TERROR OPERATIONS	X	X	X	X
- SABOTAGE	X	X	X	X
<hr/>				
<u>UNCONVENTIONAL WARFARE</u>				
- GUERRILLA WARFARE		X	X	X
- SUBVERSION	X	X	X	X
- SABOTAGE	X	X	X	X
- ESCAPE AND EVASION			X	X
<hr/>				
PSYCHOLOGICAL OPERATIONS	X	X	X	X
<hr/>				
DECEPTION	X	X	X	X
<hr/>				

Figure 2. SOF Roles and Missions

that we logically should look for the art of the possible and the regime of the appropriate to merge, forming a basis for an employment philosophy.

Lastly, some conclusions are drawn (Section VI) from the preceding analysis, and suggestions are made as to the necessary next steps toward distilling an operational philosophy for SOF employment. The foreign affairs practitioner and defense planner alike should understand the implications of employing these non-conventional forces to deter, train, advise, or fight, in terms of political impact at home and abroad, as well as of field operational outcomes.

During the research phases of this project, in-person oral interviews with over 70 SOF experts or analysts were sought and granted. The broad interview topic was the requirement and basis for an operational philosophy for the employment of SOF. Another 9 people wrote letters describing their views, because distance or time constraints prevented oral interviews. Annex A lists the interviewees with dates and interview locations; Annex B, the letter writers; and Annex C offers the question-based interview profile which served as a framework for soliciting the views and opinions of the respondents.

These busy civilian and military professionals gave willingly of their time and thoughts, and unanimously regarded this preliminary step as a useful start. Many urged that it be followed with necessary further work that could lead in time to the goal of drafting an operational philosophy held as valid and useful by both practitioners and national security leadership.

When close at hand, make it
appear that you are far away;
when far away, that you are near.
Anger his general and confuse him.

Sun Tzu (The Art of War)

II. THE NATURE OF MILITARY SPECIAL OPERATIONS

Part of the historical background to contemporary SOF of the United States military Services is the heritage of special purpose forces, often regarded as military elites due to demanding selection criteria, voluntarism, difficult and complex training, and hazardous, highly sensitive assignments. Today's

special operators trace lineage or operational techniques from units such as Merrill's Marauders, Darby's and Rogers' Rangers, Generals Stillwell's and Wingate's jungle fighters in Burma and China, the Air Commandos, Frogmen, Marine deep reconnaissance teams, and other colorful combat units. They fought with great courage and distinction in hostile environments and complex circumstances. An important theme that recurs in histories of the units is their creation, or their transformation from conventional units, to do certain operational things that were inappropriate, impractical or impossible for conventional forces. These "things", usually labelled as "special mission requirements", typically demanded smaller, highly trained and integrated units, provided with weapons and equipment appropriate to unique mission objectives. They relied upon stealth and surprise to survive, operate and succeed in hostile territory -- and hopefully to extract themselves upon completion of their missions.

In the context of declared wars or other major armed conflict, such forces had a fairly clear charter for their operational roles, and there was plenty to do for all types of committed American forces. They worried little over niceties of definition and doctrine and concentrated on preparation and mission execution in pursuit of high payoff and very high risk objectives. In World War II, there was a general, although not invariable, division of duties between the OSS (Office of Strategic Services) which handled support of resistance/partisan movements, sabotage, subversion, intelligence and political warfare; and uniformed military units such as Commandos, Rangers and special reconnaissance teams which performed deep strikes, raids, captures and the like. There were crossovers and cooperation, but in the main the OSS was an intelligence and clandestine (including covert, or "plausible denial") activities organization operating through small teams--often individuals. Military special units were generally larger, stayed behind enemy lines only for the time required to complete discrete missions (target destruction, rescue, capture, reconnaissance, etc.), and tended to work directly or indirectly in support of conventional military forces and commanders.⁴

The OSS, which of course had numerous military operators assigned, was a non-uniformed "paramilitary" organization--it did certain military-style force applications under legal and political circumstances beyond that "permitted" regular military forces under the existing rules of war. Its work with people on all sides of the conflict in many countries, to collect intelligence, disrupt the enemy politically as well as physically, and to psychologically stress him, made it other

Organization

than a conventional armed force. The uniformed military elite units that operated behind enemy lines came to be known as "special" forces. In a sense, when World War II ended, so did the relative clarity and validity of this distinction. Through the late 1940's and 1950's, in concert with American policy and national security strategy, the military had special forces in limited numbers, and the CIA had the charter and organization for paramilitary activities, clandestine intelligence, and covert operations. However, the behind-enemy-lines roles of the OSS saboteurs and resistance supporters became the style of operations doctrinally expected of the post-World War II military SOF as well.

During the 1950's military special operations forces, principally the Army's "Special Forces", included Europeans with military or resistance backgrounds and superb language skills, who became citizens and had some hope for the ultimate freedom of the Eastern European countries from the Soviet hegemony. Our strategic concepts then included assisting in the development or growth of latent resistance movements, should a conflict become unavoidable in Europe. Also, these soldiers (and some Air Force and Navy units) would be able to seriously disrupt and delay Warsaw Pact military forces should any attack be made on NATO territories. In contrast, the CIA had, and retains the charter for foreign intelligence: "peacetime" covert actions, most clandestine intelligence collection, and recruitment of agents or encouragement of nascent resistance elements. Hoped for synergism benefiting military special operations forces would occur when armed conflict began and previously recruited agents would assist infiltrating special operators in locating targets, rescuing and recovering captives, supporting guerrillas, etc. In the 1980's there is little expectation of developments, political or military, that would reinvigorate this strategic concept for much of the Warsaw Pact. The obvious hope is that it will never be necessary to attempt.

The policies and activities leading most directly to the military special operations forces of today began in 1961, when President Kennedy demanded of a reluctant Pentagon, the development of "unconventional warfare" forces. They were to be capable of supporting America's Third World friends by assisting them in countering internal subversion, externally inspired political violence, and communist supported or directed subversive insurgency--revolutionary warfare or wars of national liberation, in the socialist lexicon. In a few years the United States had regenerated its 1950's Army Special Forces or "Green Berets", Navy Special Warfare Forces (the SEAL or Sea, Air, Land teams, and underwater demolition teams, or UDT), and

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the Air Force Air Commandos. The 'counterinsurgency' era of the 1960's had begun, and President Kennedy's "Knights of the Green Beret" (so named for the headgear they were awarded as a rite of passage and standard item of military uniform wear) served in many countries as trainers, advisors and even combat partners. They worked with counterpart forces and paramilitary troops where U.S. interests and those of the hosts coincided. The major SOF doctrines, concepts and, to a degree, the operational perspectives of today were in good measure shaped by the energy and experimentation of the practitioners of the 1960's.

However, the experiences of Vietnam, especially from about 1965 on, amounted largely to non-doctrinal and suboptimal employment of SOF. The war became too congested with large, visible conventional forces, and national politics severely curtailed the use of special operations forces where they were designed and prepared to operate--in the heartland of North Vietnam, the state sponsoring, supporting and ultimately co-opting the revolution in South Vietnam. The post-Vietnam political-military problems of international terrorism and widespread low intensity conflict have been catalysts for major changes in Service doctrines, joint politico-legal planning assumptions, and national strategic concepts. This was no where more true than in the special operations mission areas, which were literally redefined by the Services and the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) at frequent and unplanned intervals.

The current definition of "Special Operations" in the Department of Defense Dictionary reads:

Operations conducted by specially trained, equipped, and organized DOD forces against strategic or tactical targets in pursuit of military, political economic, or psychological objectives. These operations may be conducted during periods of peace or hostilities. They may support conventional military operations, or they may be prosecuted independently when the use of conventional forces is either inappropriate or infeasible.⁵

This is so broad, even to the initiated, as to be of little more than an assertion that unconventional, specially designed forces exist for use in pursuit of ends that may be other than purely military. Yet this offers a subtle key to the nature of SOF today; the suggestions of use across the spectrum of conflict, and of independent operations are revealing. Another JCS publication, dealing exclusively with special operations, specifies the principal sub-concepts or roles:

Classification

Special Operations

Special operations may include unconventional warfare (UW), counterterrorist operations, collective security/foreign internal defense (FID), psychological operations (PSYOP), direct action missions, and intelligence (strategic and tactical) reporting.⁶

It is important to note that in contrast to conventional forces, which are designed and employed in combat to find, fix, engage and destroy their hostile counterparts, special operations forces are much more directly connected with national political, economic or psychological objectives. These are areas of activity where the political authorities in national leadership positions determine strategy as well as objectives, and thus a different planning relationship is presumed to--and in fact does--exist between the national security leadership and SOF. Some long time observers of the national security process feel that SOF should be specifically designated a National Command Authority asset, due to their utility in responding to certain volatile, rapidly changing political-military crises. With emphasis on limited, precise, clandestine and/or deniable force application, or merely to rapidly achieve an American presence of low profile, these forces may be of major value in foreign crisis management.⁷

The acronym SOF, or the term "special operations forces", refers to existing Army, Navy and Air Force units that are designed for low visibility, clandestine, or covert (meaning palusible denial is available to the U.S. government) military and other operations in hostile or politically sensitive areas. The principal skills taught to SOF personnel are very special variants of light infantry, combat swimming and diving, and fixed wing and helicopter flying skills. Usual basic qualifications for Army Special Forces and Rangers, Navy Sea-Air-Land (SEAL) teams, and Air Force Combat Controllers and Combat Weathermen include parachuting, man-portable weapons use, communications, demolitions, night (and all weather, all terrain) operations, remote area self-sustainment and survival, and navigation. Other SOF units train their personnel instead in psychological operations (PSYOP) and civil affairs, specialized intelligence and targeting, and remote or combat environment training, logistics, planning and command-control-communications. Total numbers of SOF can be misleading because ground or maritime team operations typically involve fewer than a dozen men, and aircraft generally operate singly or in pairs. However, pre-mission planning, training and rehearsals, intelligence and command and control (with supporting telecommunications) personnel range from a few dozen specialists

Special Operations

to hundreds. This is necessary to adequately prepare and support a mission team, or aircraft, or to conduct long term training of friendly personnel in a host country.

The current total of SOF unit-assigned personnel for all the military Services is about 15,000, with an additional 18,000 in the reserves or national guard units. This is far less than one-tenth of one percent of active duty DOD military manpower. The FY 86 budget for these forces is approximately 1.2 billion dollars, which represents about one-third of one percent of the DOD budget.⁸ Within these numbers are some hollow places. Yet they are dramatically greater than in 1975, when the post-Vietnam atrophy reduced the budget to less than 100 million dollars, and practically erased the Air Force units. Currently in the Army's Special Forces for instance, "A" Team--primary tactical unit of 12 men--strength in several groups has declined to an average of 7 or 8 men, due to efforts to field a new group, and plans for yet another. In fact:

The Army's adherence to its current manpower ceiling may be politically popular, but it renders figures of "X" number of Special Forces teams (or light infantry divisions) illusory. In one extreme case a unit is actually expanding its "paper strength" in numbers of teams while projecting a decline in anticipated personnel loss verses gain ratio. This problem is, of course, beyond the scope of the small sections on the respective service staffs who are attempting to keep faith with their services' Master Plan commitments. But it is not difficult to understand how Department of Defense and Congressional SOF overseers remain skeptical of service attitudes.⁹

The issue of numbers and budget dollars must be seen in the context of traditional and more recent assignments made by the Services, DOD and the unified Commanders-in-Chief to the SOF community. These assignments, or roles and missions, require training, equipment, and regional specialization (languages, area familiarity, exercising, and rotational personnel and unit assignments) that come at great cost per capita, in relationship to conventional force soldiers, sailors and airmen. A summary view is useful, and Figure 2 presents the principal roles and missions for training and operations, and suggests that a great number of them are applicable to all levels of conflict, as well as to periods of peace, or "pre-hostilities".

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One of the most respected men in the field of special operations, and other fields of military endeavor, is retired U.S. Army Lt. General Samuel V. Wilson. General Wilson's many commands included the 6th Special Forces Group and the Defense Intelligence Agency. His long experience and study of special operations issues caused him to produce a set of basic characteristics of the forces. He believes that political considerations (domestic and foreign) are far more significant in deciding to use SOF, and in the specifics and consequences of their use. The objectives of employment are different than in employment of conventional military forces. In conventional ground combat, for example, the commander's objective is frequently a key terrain or cultural (man-made) feature, that will provide a physical advantage for his unit. This might be a better observation point or advantages in firing weapons (improved field of fire). This in turn assists in reaching the Clausewitzian goal of imposing one's will upon the enemy.¹⁰

On the other hand, with ground actions in special operations the target is usually a human being or group, and the goal is essentially to influence attitudes and/or behavior. Thus, a particular special operation is a message to a defined and predetermined target audience, i.e., propaganda of the deed. Special operations can have tactical military value, but in the majority of instances the political value of the outcome is of paramount importance. The expectation that SOF personnel can effectively handle this concept of political-military operations and its execution is due to the much stricter selection standards than for conventional forces, and a much greater per capita investment in training, equipping and exercising. They are brought to much higher levels of preparedness, and correspondingly more is expected of them.¹¹

In conversations on the subject of special operations, almost invariably terms that refer to very exact employment actions will be heard: precise, surgical, pinpoint, finite, etc. They refer to doctrinal and policy expectations of SOF to deal with an assigned task and target(s) in a very discrete and perhaps restrained manner, so as to limit or avoid altogether collateral damage or casualties. Additionally, the ability to get to where the job is and return unseen, or unidentified, is understood to be necessary for achievement of the precision desired. As an example, a Navy SEAL team may be asked to swim into a port and seriously disable a ship to prevent its departure for a given period of time. The constraints upon the team might include avoidance of any casualties on the ship, and assurance that the ship will not sink. To the authorities directing the mission, political considerations regarding the port country, ship registry, cargo or personnel aboard may be such that only disabling of the ship is desirable.

Perhaps more familiar because of the tragic frequency of the issue, are the kinds of actions a counter-terrorist specialized SOF unit might undertake. In the case of a seized and grounded aircraft, or a building in which hostages are held, the unit must be able to: approach and position themselves undetected, instantly and cleanly force or blow open doors or windows, and accurately distinguish between terrorists and hostages while disabling and disarming the terrorists. In contrast, a Special Forces team might have to parachute into a country, navigate to an area, enter a hydroelectric power station and disable the generators--by disabling the cooling system or introducing some chemicals or fibers with special properties into the electrical field, etc. The desired mission outcome here is to temporarily deny a certain capability--electrical power.

As a final example of mission-dictated precision requirements, an Air Force special operations aircrew commonly must fly at a few hundred feet above the terrain for hours, navigating through valleys and over mountain ridges at night to arrive at a short, dirt landing strip within 2 minutes of a predetermined time. A landing must be accomplished with no lights, on the first attempt, to enable an operational team and its equipment to leave the back of the aircraft at the moment it comes to a stop. This is followed by an immediate turn around and reverse direction takeoff for the low level flight to another tactical landing or to an airbase.

The issue of precision, and the predictability that it permits in terms of mission design, is a central concept, and a major distinguishing characteristic. Conventional forces, by their different training, larger sizes, and weaponry are unsuited to the types of operations suggested above. Related to precision is the innovative and adaptive approach to operating in constantly changing and imperfectly known hostile environments. SOF personnel generally must improvise to accomplish their tasks. It is these independent and self-reliant features, especially improvisation, that elicit admiration and scorn from the conventional military. Typical of conventional force reaction is the comment of an Air Force colonel recently that SOF are considered a bit wild and "...good killers but bad officer candidates."¹²

Americans traditionally distrust elite forces, especially, when they do not perceive the nation to be at war or serious risk, and they dislike secrecy. This sets SOF forces up for misunderstanding outside of the military establishment as well as within, where they are short on numbers, proponency and career prospects. What they do provide, nonetheless, is quick

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reacting, light, self-sustaining, small forces that can deploy and employ with stealth or low visibility. Their missions require the measured and limited application of violence, or the delivery of instruction and advice to indigenous friendly forces, either of a government or in opposition to one. They also give potential aggressors a lot to think about: unseen penetration of a country, encouragement of internal dissidents, risk to high value facilities, and threats to individual leaders.¹³

Special Forces have always been
the bastards of the Army.

Brig. General Donald Blacburn, USA (Ret)

There's nothing special about
special operations.

USAF Colonel, Military Airlift Command HQ

The SEALs have had to focus on
providing operational support to
the Navy's fleets, especially
since the end of Vietnam combat;
it's an organizational survival
issue for us.

SEAL officer, currently serving

III. ATTITUDES, CONCEPTS, AND OPERATIONAL PERSPECTIVES

In the opinion of a Navy SEAL officer now serving on the joint special operations staff of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS), it is the incredibly demanding training that volunteers endure to become SEALs (and not all can endure) that is the basis for a good special operator; much more than the necessary traits of mind and passion for action that attracts men initially. His opinion, developed over a career in Naval and joint special operations, is that special operators are

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intelligent, but not brilliant; they are very alert, both mentally and physically, and are quick learners of new things. It is their "applied intelligence" rather than exceptional intellectual capacity that leads to proficiency in the specialized military arts of the business, and to the ability to make important and difficult decisions under stress, and alone when necessary.¹⁴

These men tend to express themselves physically, at work and play, and have learned through their initial and continuing training (in the SEALs, Special Forces and Rangers, and Air Force Combat Controllers) that they can push themselves to and beyond preconceived limits of endurance. It is operating at this edge of individual capacity that permits the development of critical leadership ability and a sense that any assigned, rational, and clearly defined mission is within their power to accomplish. A corollary to this mindset is that special operators are very inquisitive, questioning and demanding of their leaders. They want to know the background to a mission, and its rationale; the "why" of the assignment. This is part of an intense mission focus that is seldom seen in conventional units. It is possible because special operators are driven to succeed on a personal and unit basis, and want to be able to pursue workable alternatives in mid-mission when plans frequently are overtaken by events. They feel that if they know "why," and have been given all the constraints and rules of engagement, they can formulate alternative ways to accomplish the mission.¹⁵

Another SOF expert, and a serving officer on the Air Staff, also emphasizes that special operators have a intense sense of mission, which is probably reinforced by the small, tightly knit and self-contained nature of the operational elements (including the aircrews). The autonomous mode of operation is viewed as threatening by some conventional forces leaders, and there is a tension between the logic of necessity and the Services' perceived need to ensure effective control. This operational autonomy both permits and requires adaptation and improvisation, which are characteristic; it also lends impetus for internal development of the arts of stealth, low profile presence, and unseen technical execution, which are collectively referred to as clandestine "tradecraft." While the vast majority of SOF personnel are honorable and ethical, this officer underlines that there are temptations in work that proceeds of necessity in secrecy, with wide latitude for exercising judgement. In his view, scrupulous conduct is required especially of SOF personnel so as not to compromise confidence held in special operators by the conventional military community, upon which the long term welfare and viability of the special operations discipline depend.¹⁶

In the Army and Navy particularly, and to a lesser extent the Air Force (which does not cultivate a specific career pattern) SOF people tend to be more experienced in and dedicated to their line of work due to their voluntarism, training and greater opportunities to employ their skills than is generally available in conventional units. They have a wider set of skills to draw upon, as they were first qualified in the conventional military arts basic to their Service and branch, and then accepted as SOF volunteers.¹⁷

In comparison with a formed and ready conventional force unit, a SOF unit is composed of somewhat older, considerably more mature, and more highly trained and experienced people. They tend to be rather content in their work, and are comfortable with a relative anonymity--they seem not to need external reinforcement of their status as unique professionals. On the surface this appears contradictory with a self-concept of elite military forces. But their maturity and the nature of their operational techniques (surprise and stealth as aids to survival due to their small unit sizes in comparison to adversaries) incline them in this direction. Also, the label of elite is applied from the outside of the military in large part. Within, special operators are viewed as technical specialists with a great deal of training beyond basic Service skills, a fact which is often resented by conventional commanders. This extra training, experience with special equipment and weapons, and the necessity to do their own planning as small units, stimulates the imagination. Thus a large part of the difference between SOF and conventional personnel is the additional capabilities learned and developed, which may be more significant than the natural talents of the SOF volunteer.¹⁸

The training, tasking and targeting of SOF is normally directed to missions that are strategic in nature, and typified by high risk to the operators, toward an end of high gain for the tasking authority, which is generally no lower than a military theater (unified) Commander-in-Chief and frequently at the national level. In practical terms this means that SOF are expected to affect things (computer) in critical facilities (a major railroad switching center) that are denied to conventional forces (deep within enemy territory) but could have a major impact on the conventional battle (disruption of enemy railroad traffic scheduled to reinforce his forward combat forces). This example relates to operations where SOF is working ahead and independent of, but coordinated with and in support of conventional commanders. It is an all too infrequent example of correct wartime targeting. The U.S. military establishment is

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well prepared for conventional conflict where units are in essentially constant contact with opposing forces, either attacking, holding ground, or withdrawing. The nation is inadequately prepared for special operations, at most levels of conflict, and deficiencies are glaring in clandestine air transport, targeting schemes, and numbers of foreign language qualified personnel for most regions. This causes some Army and Air Force SOF personnel to adopt a more cautious and less aggressive posture than might normally be expected.¹⁹

As military forces of any description spend the great majority of their time in training as individuals and units, their approaches to these activities are revealing of their capabilities and their selections of actual operational methods. A few examples may illustrate how SOF often antagonize their conventional colleagues by their methods, usually unintentionally---although not always. Special Forces teams have two sergeants (of the 12 assigned members on a full team) with advanced field medical training, to care for their teammates in combat, and to teach these skills to indigenous personnel in their assigned operating areas when employed. To simulate closely the shock, trauma and physical characteristics of gunshot wounds, goats or sheep are occasionally used as targets to be wounded by gunfire, then as surrogate human patients for the team "medics." This practice has antagonized conventional Army officers and animal rights organizations. However, it is often a preliminary to the assignment of medics to emergency rooms where they serve under supervising physicians to treat gunshot and other trauma injuries in large civilian hospitals.

Air Force Air Commandos (now generally known as SOF aircrews) perform more than half of their training at night, practicing low level, darkened aircraft, terrain masked (i.e., hiding from radars by flying on the far side of mountains) flight. This combination of techniques is unique in the Air Force and requires intense and highly interactive crewmember work. The turbo-prop aircraft are often the object of disparaging remarks from the fast, high flying jet crews, especially before they are asked to locate and "attack" these SOF aircraft. After they have tried, however, they often recant, as their equipment, conventional training and skills are usually inadequate to deal with this challenge unaided. The SOF helicopters, also specially designed for treetop night flight and small landing areas, have unnerved more than a few fighter and conventional transport pilots by their sudden and unexpected appearance, or disappearance.

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The Navy SEALs are arguably the most physically fit and technically skilled combat performers overall, and have a great deal of confidence in their abilities. The author was witness to the response of a SEAL platoon (12 men) to a challenge made by Air Force security policemen and survival training experts in the state of Washington, many years ago. The venue was the obstacle-ridden field through which tens of thousands of Air Force and other personnel have crawled during survival evasion, and escape training, in an attempt to avoid capture and incarceration by the "enemy" instructors. The night exercise is heavily stacked against the trainees, and the flares, smoke devices, and barbed wire are a few of the obstacles that make successful avoidance of capture a very rare outcome--perhaps one trainee out of a hundred on any evening. The SEAL team indicated it could pass through undetected, and the challenge was accepted by the Air Force people, who doubled their usual cadre in the field. In 45 minutes, the entire SEAL team had transited the obstacle field undetected, noiselessly tied and gagged 4 instructors, and disabled virtually every pyrotechnic and mechanical device.

Special operations forces are designed to support national policy through force or non-force applications at any point(s) across the conflict spectrum, either independently or as adjuncts to the activities of conventional military forces. Their training in foreign languages, most especially within the Army's Special Forces which are regionally oriented, facilitates their employment in other cultural milieu where remote area operations and collaboration with guerrillas or counter-insurgency forces are necessary to the assigned mission. As important as any other distinction is the role of trainer or advisor to friendly forces, where leverage is obtained by virtue of a force multiplication effect, i.e., an "A" Team can train other trainers, which in certain circumstances and regions can produce thousands of guerrilla combatants. These forces may be able to achieve results that are in the national interest of the United States, but which would be politically inappropriate or undesirable if pursued by direct application of American forces.²⁰

The great bulk of American security assistance today remains wedded to conventional weapons and operational methods, and is relatively uninvolved in insurgency issues and military support to nation building efforts by friendly Third World regimes. The Defense Department reflects an American bias in favor of high technology weapons, and against human intensive or politically sensitive activities. We are an impatient people who eschew long term commitments, even those devoted to training, advising and assisting roles. This cultural attitude has important

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consequences for doctrine, force design, and training of the special operations units, and poses policy dilemmas at the national level for Service staffs and Department of Defense planners.²¹

Whatever else may be learned from the Vietnam experience, it is clear that in a free society such as the United States, legal and moral issues, both real and spurious, are central to the successful conduct of a war, intervention, or other extraordinary initiative of the kind involving special operations.²²

IV. POLICY, STRATEGY, DOCTRINE AND GENERAL CONFUSION

Since the cessation of United States military involvement in Vietnam (1973), disagreement and confusion over the policy purposes, force structure, military doctrine for, and employment of SOF have characterized the interagency (as well as the public-media-academic) discourse on these unique military units. There is an overabundance of political, military and private citizen opinions on what these forces should, could or will do, and on the command and control of their activities, with most of the perspectives being arrived at retrospectively. But most views exhibit little projection based upon current political realities or the requirements of national security today, and tomorrow.

It would seem that even the most sincere and informed discussants in this tangible discourse do not sufficiently appreciate what the author sees as an undeniable and probably accelerating trend: the increasingly political character of the future employment of SOF. It is noteworthy that the functions and venue underlying the 1960's creation of these forces--low intensity/low visibility combat and security assistance training, in the Third World--are not compelling for many observers as increasingly more appropriate to judicious, contemporary application of SOF for deterrent purposes. A partial explanation would certainly include the previously noted, tortuous and virtually continuous redrafting of operational concepts, doctrine and terminology by the military departments and the Service staffs.

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Presumably, military (read here as Department of Defense, or DOD) policy for any forces and their employment regime, follows the long accepted logic train of threat(s)-requirements-forces-resources-costs, which ultimately is expressed in the budget specifics of each military Service and the Five Year Defense Plan (FYDP)). Ideally, this sequence begins with the views and requirements stated by the unified and specified Commanders-in-Chief (for the Pacific, Europe, Atlantic, Central/South America and northeast Africa/southwest Asia; and by Readiness Command, Strategic Air Command, Military Airlift Command, North American Aerospace Defense Command, and Space Command) and ends with the provision to them of forces that are generated, or reorganized, and appropriately trained and equipped to be combat effective for them. The military reformers would argue--and often convincingly--that the "system" is neither effective nor cost conscious in the attempt. In special operations force planning and generation, even the terms of reference are in dispute, due to lack of common baselines for policy, doctrine and strategies. Despite this circumstance, the Secretary of Defense (SECDEF) recently reasserted that the provision of sufficient resources for SOF revitalization (or "resuscitation", many would contend) remains a high DOD priority:

Weinberger reminded the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the military departments, and his own staff in a 31 January memo that DoD "in 1983 established as its goal the completion of the revitalization process (for SOF) by the end of Fiscal Year 1990. I reaffirm that goal," he said, "and direct the Services and Defense Agencies to give this effort the priority necessary to ensure its successful completion." Weinberger directed the Services and DoD agencies to submit by March 31st an interim report detailing what steps it would take to meet these objectives in DoD's current five-year plan. He added that the "final updated SOF Master Plans" will be submitted 31 July (1986).²³

If this commentary on the DOD development of its SOF policy is not encouraging, the development of even a rough consensus within the relevant sections of the National Security Council staff has apparently proved equally elusive.

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Consideration of strategy with respect to SOF is never a single strand issue, in that geography, operational context and national objectives (in terms of political outcomes) precede and largely predetermine the planning, preparation and employment of people or units. Forces designed to operate in political gray areas, where "violent peace" or "low intensity conflict" seem appropriate contextual labels, must be supported, directed and controlled with great sensitivity for domestic and international law, foreign perceptions (friends, neutrals and adversaries), and the ever present/ever changing calculus of risks, costs and benefits. SOF activities overseas, whether invited or as a result of clandestine infiltration, might be described as para-political as easily as paramilitary. Military special operations (as distinct from political activities and/or paramilitary operations assigned to the CIA) in the foreseeable future will not be a decisive factor in major interstate conflict, even if national politics, defense policies and national or theater strategies allowed for optimum "doctrinal" employment. However, for the United States and its Third World friends/allies, timely, intelligent and limited SOF applications can deter certain types of aggression and can contribute importantly to the containment, limitation, or acceptable termination of low intensity, low visibility conflicts.

A national strategy, or concept of operations, for SOF might have as a basic underpinning the desire to deploy and employ them principally in pre-hostilities periods. This depends on how accurately intelligence and political judgements can estimate the likelihood of hostilities which would not be in the American national interest. In this political-military arena, quasi-legal circumstances might well obtain, and the choice of SOF, or decision to employ, would likely be based on the perception that leverage is necessary and inaction would lead to less desirable developments. Often, the desire and the possibility to avoid using highly visible conventional military forces are pivotal, and the support and permissions necessary from other countries (overflight, landing, transit, operations in or from) are obtainable only on the presumption that low visibility or plausibly deniable limited forces are involved.²⁴ To a significant degree, Congress and the American public dislike indirect, secret and open-ended commitment of military forces, and they generally distrust elite units. These powerful constraints modify strategic planning and often result in the reactive, more visible, trans-hostilities mode of employment--where most of the designed capabilities and inherent advantages of SOF are less effective, or no longer applicable.²⁵

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It is the author's opinion that armed conflicts throughout the rest of this century will not diminish in number. They will become increasingly a mixture of insurgencies or other forms of anti-government movements, limited conventional conflicts, unconventional (primarily counter-insurgency) warfare and terrorism of many types including state sponsored. In Third World areas, movement from and between these conflict types will be common, with sequencing, coexistence or temporary cessation as features. Surrogate or proxy forces for large powers will become more common, in declared or deniable forms. It is in this complex, volatile and disturbing environment of political-military contests between state and non-state actors that the military instrument of national power must be prepared to operate, at least as effectively as in major conventional warfare. Perhaps serious JCS or DOD attention to doctrinal development--up to now largely the province and practice of the conventionally trained and inclined staffs of the Services--as a joint process, and particularly for joint SOF, can be a bellwether for preparation and posturing of conventional forces for this evolving operating environment.

Military doctrine has several categories and is constructed both horizontally and vertically. That is, it prescribes support functions, training and preparation for combat, as well as operations (deployment, employment, reconstitution, etc.) in combat circumstances. Doctrine is basically an ordered explication of the FUNDAMENTAL principles and rules for the preparation and employment of forces, based upon combat experience, study, testing, exercising and experiment. While authoritative for each Service, it requires professional judgement in application--you need to know when deviations are necessary, and why. Through doctrine, guidance is provided for the organization, training, equipping, direction and employment of forces in the accomplishment of major operational tasks (e.g., air-to-air combat while on the attack, or the defensive; coordination of weapons firing from multiple sources in support of friendly ground forces; deployment of naval surface ships within a surface action group for best results in anti-air operations, etc.).

Only in the past seven or eight years have efforts proceeded systematically to formally establish special operations joint doctrine. The work has been arduous and the progress slow, but there have been measurable results, especially in training and common-user equipment (especially communications and electronics). Characteristic of special operations is its multi-medium and thus multi-Service environment, including allied SOF participation. This makes production of a coherent,

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unilateral (or all-Service) doctrine difficult, and if viewed as an all-encompassing prescriptive body of guidance, nearly impossible: each operational situation is different, requiring tailored strategy and tactics. What in fact may be required is a doctrine so flexible, and so facilitative of inventive strategies and tactics, that it will only faintly resemble existing military doctrines for other mission areas. In fact, there is no precedent, as this requirement strains the seams of definition and concept in doctrinal development.

Most military joint doctrine is a compromise between Service doctrinal elements and often lacks the perceived "authority" of Service doctrine, which has behind it specialized Service staffs and the power of the budget. Joint doctrine will continue to rely on the accommodation of different views and operational concepts and will be effective only to the degree that compliance is seen as mutually beneficial and operationally sound. Examples of difficulties include amphibious operations for conventional forces (Army vs Marines) and long range clandestine airlift of special operations ground teams (Air Force vs Army). The resolution of issues and blending of practices required for sound and flexible doctrine cannot be accomplished wholly within the special operations community, or the military. There must be national level objectives and strategies, enunciated by the elected political authorities, that deal with national non-war interests and necessary involvements of SOF.

Our fundamental national security objective is now, and should remain, the maintenance of peace with freedom. For the general direction and guidance of the Armed Forces, national security policy contains three principal military elements: deterrence; a defensive military posture; and maintenance of combat capabilities adequate to terminate conflict on terms favorable to the United States.²⁶ According to assigned functions and possessed capabilities, all military forces (including SOF) are directed and operate within the sense of this guidance. Deterrence is generally the most hotly debated aspect of defense policy because it is viewed by many as a monetary sinkhole, and in any analysis, is only measurable upon the circumstance of its failure. More simply put, we're never sure when deterrence is working, but its failure is dramatically evident. The military SOF can be viewed as elements of both strategic and tactical deterrence, and sometimes as both simultaneously. An example would be the publicized and highly successful Army Special Forces training and advisory activities in Liberia in 1981 and 1982. The tactical deterrent aspect was the development of operational

capabilities within Liberian ground forces useful for internal defense; the strategic aspect was the perception by potentially hostile external forces that Liberia had an involved, resolute ally in the United States.

There is a perhaps understandable, if lamentable, blurring of military policies, doctrines and strategies (most particularly the CINCs warfighting "campaign" strategies) at the highest national political levels. The decision-makers there are action oriented and involved in crisis resolution--they will look for workable solutions to the current problems, and have little time for the niceties of tightly wound doctrine or elegant strategy. Long range planning seems a poorly developed area, which leads to ad hoc recourses and time-compressed action plans, that often pass for policy and strategy.

One manifestation for the SOF community is the heavy reliance on certain SOF units for response to terrorist actions abroad. It seems unlikely, in fact, that highly qualified law enforcement units, such as those possessed by the FBI, would be tasked. This seems to be discarding a politically useful option in certain geopolitical circumstances. In general, however, the view of SOF is that of a military response force which is small and low profile, and which can be applied to prickly, developing problems, perhaps as an expendable force. There may be no memory within the National Security Council of specific capabilities for non-violent applications that once equally characterized SOF: military civic action, foreign internal defense training (as opposed to the conventional, stylized military training teams currently prevalent) at unit and individual levels, counterinsurgency instruction and advice, etc. In other words, the deterrent or preventive aspects of pre-hostilities force options are not greatly valued for Third World response options.²⁷

What then is the assessment of the SOF practitioner and his organization from national political and military levels, as can be currently deduced? It appears that the answer to this question would be anecdotal, complex, and perhaps of limited utility. The view of a directly concerned U.S. Representative is revealing:

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...the entire range of interdiction activities in support of civilian law enforcement is a natural for the special operations wing. Intelligence collection, analysis, dissemination, targeting, detection, surveillance, apprehension support, and advisory duties with friendly foreign military forces--all are activities which our reserve component special operations personnel can perform in peace-time while actually building combat readiness for the wartime mission....The national war on drugs is one of the single most critical tasks we face as a country--and our concept would designate the best (SOF) in our military force structure to support it....We have just about arrived at the conclusion that SOF can never be utilized correctly or with optimum benefit while its chain of command terminates in some committee or ad hoc working group in the Joint Chiefs. They don't understand you, won't allocate the resources to you from the individual Services, and can't employ you effectively on operations run out of the National Command Authority.28

The only difference between high and low intensity warfare is the means, both qualitative and quantitative, employed to achieve the intended goal. Both types of war require analysis and forecasting, both require volumes of preparation of varied manpower and material, both require the political sagacity to acquire and hold allies and friends so that the obvious preponderance of one's own side hopefully acts as a deterrent to any combination in opposition.29

V. THE SPECIALIST VERSES GENERALIST IRONY

Instantaneous telecommunications clearly have altered the patterns and pace of diplomacy and political decision making in a revolutionary and still accelerating fashion. The United States National Security Council (NSC) with staff and supporting

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communications, has become the focus of international situation assessment for the Federal Government. The NSC staff identifies, characterizes, and orchestrates national responses to foreign political and military developments. A common approach is crisis management, and a response option component is frequently military power projection, e.g., AWACS (airborne radar, communications, and command-control aircraft) deployment, aircraft carrier repositioning, military shows of force or combined exercising with friendly forces abroad. The decision to deploy, and eventually to employ SOF, in situations such as terrorism or in support of "freedom fighters" or friendly government counter-insurgent forces, typically results from crisis response decision-making. It only infrequently flows from on-going, detailed threat or opportunity evaluation within long range planning.

If SOF are now viewed as convenient, low visibility, limited force firemen for terrorism and other irksome situations, it is due at least in part to a lack of knowledge and experience at national levels in alternate and earlier SOF uses with potential for higher payoffs, i.e., deterrence or exploitation of political-military opportunities. It is also due to the willingness of the SOF community to do any available work in order to "save" the limited force structure--presumably for the doctrinal employment that will eventually be directed. Thus, counter-terror, other forms of direct action (U.S. unilateral raids or rescues), and slices of conventional force work (Grenada, military training teams for infantry weapons and tactics, intelligence collection in remote or contested areas) have become the principal peacetime operational tasks requested by the CINCs and directed by the National Command Authority.³⁰

This turn of events is as recent as the end of the Vietnam conflict, and is in part a result. The traditional main role of joint special operations forces, particularly the Green Berets and SEALs, is that of conducting unconventional warfare, or training friendly forces in its interrelated components--guerrilla operations, evasion and escape, sabotage, subversion.

SOF were not turned loose in North Vietnam; much of their activities were involved in patrolling and collecting intelligence in other hostile or contested areas, and blocking or interdicting Viet Cong and North Vietnamese force movements. They did have ample opportunity to train South Vietnamese

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counterpart forces and tribal people, and to operate directly against the enemy throughout much of Indochina. However, the suboptimization, and the frictions with U.S. conventional forces and commanders that resulted, produced a national military view that SOF had to be carefully controlled and placed in support of major conventional forces. This view, combined with the inarguable combat skills and clandestine operating capabilities of SOF led to the assignment of tasks and gradual manipulation of previous policy and doctrine in a manner that "generalized" the employment regime. This diluted the previous specialization of the forces for area specific and culturally sensitive autonomous operations of long duration. The set of roles that developed, as much by politics and accretion as by design, is represented in Figure 3.

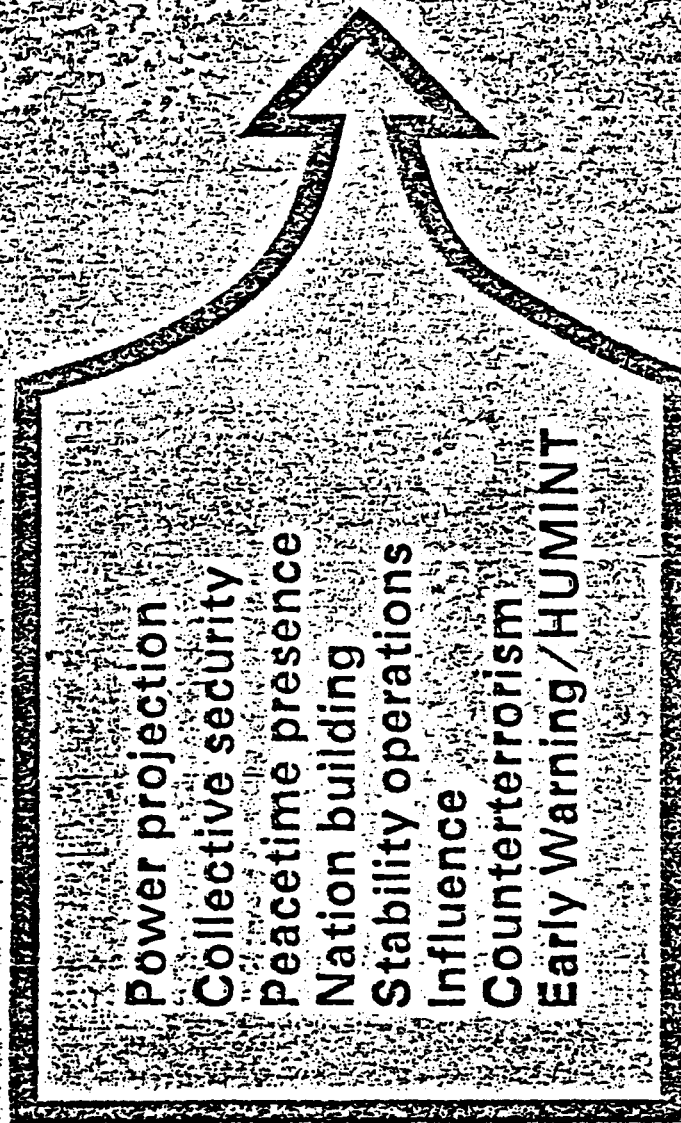
In comparison to most conventional (and all nuclear) forces, SOF have a very high peacetime--or cold war, low intensity conflict, violent peace, subbelligerent, pre-hostilities, etc., etc.--utilization, due to their conduct of foreign force training, counterpart exercising, and unique war preparation activities (such as practicing to locate and work with indigenous forces, in their language and with their weapons, and those of the assumed enemy). The human-intensive nature of their capabilities to train, organize or target groups of foreigners, can make their employment a rather direct extension of American politics, and many believe SOF are consequently best treated as a national level asset, especially prior to any declaration of hostilities. If, in fact, the training of guerrillas or counter guerrillas is conducted, or terrorists are engaged, than SOF are a form of expression of national political will, which may begin secretly and end with wide international visibility. This argues for carefully chosen, high priority missions, which are preceded by cautious planning of tasks and targets, and a good assessment of the costs, risks, and benefits--of success or failure.³¹

The question of appropriate use of unorthodox military forces is neither new nor trivial. The guerrilla, for example, is as old as the history of warfare; he evicted Napoleon from Spain and Portugal, and took all of China from an ally of the United States. All modern armies plan to mobilize or co-opt guerrilla forces, and to protect themselves and their rear support areas from hostile guerrilla activities. Although the United States' military history since colonial times shows almost continual experience with irregular warfare and

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SPECIAL OPERATIONS FORCES

Traditional +
UW role



1980's

Figure 3: SOF Roles in the 1980's

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paramilitary units, our society today, without a declared war or unambiguously labelled hostile aggressor, is uncomfortable with conflict in the shadows. One of our great former practitioners and writers on unconventional warfare, psychological operations and counterinsurgency offered this view on how the nation's leadership must judge and decide about "special warfare" as one foreign policy tool:

There is and will be debate and wide difference of opinion concerning the emphasis which should be placed upon the allocation of manpower, training time and resources to support special warfare. There can be no pat answer to such a problem. Emphasis is and must be a function of continuing estimates of those tasks which lend themselves to accomplishment by special warfare means. Such estimates cannot be military alone but, of necessity, must involve all pertinent political, economic, and psychological aspects of our national strategy.³²

It would appear that the predicate question may be: exactly what is the national strategy for complex issues such as low intensity conflict, competition with the Soviet Union in the Third World, or the nature and amount of support the United States should provide to other countries for the development or advanced training of their counterterrorist forces. It seems appropriate that the specific areas for SOF contributions to any strategy should be selected subsequent to its formulation. Too often, far too often, and with disastrous consequences, SOF tools have been used because they were available and could serve as a basis for rapid policy development.

Military contingency and general war planners throughout DOD have to deal with major dilemmas in planning for SOF employment; the security assistance, counterterrorism and crisis response planners can at least assume the nationally directed availability of operationally ready SOF units. The contingency planners for the unified commanders (CINCs) know that their stated and approved requirements for SOF units will be incompletely satisfied due to deficient force structure, equipment shortfalls (especially aircraft) and the expectation that the first CINC to fight will be hard to refuse, when he asks for a disproportionate share of the total SOF force structure. All the CINCs plan to use SOF very early, usually first, in major combat scenarios for their theaters. The uses range from collecting strategic or tactical intelligence, to delaying/disrupting/diverting major enemy combat forces, and

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destructive deep attacks on specific high value targets. These include communications, leadership structures, air defense, key transportation facility components, and a range of very sensitive--and very difficult to locate--targets well behind enemy lines. It is practically self-evident that SOF units have extraordinary training and planning burdens. The average SOF organization, in all the Services, is tasked for combat operations in 2 theaters and many countries therein, and is expected to possess the requisite languages and foreign area sensitivities.

There is a line of reasoning among national security policy--makers which sees SOF as especially well trained and equipped for a wide range of politically charged assignments in the Third World, and for counterterrorism in particular. This has bred a curious "general" reliance on a nominally "specialist" (again, unconventional warfare and foreign training) military force. Further, it has involved the Congress directly in preserving and expanding SOF force structure and equipment, often at the distress of the Services. The past seven years of rediscovery and "revitalization" of SOF, as a result of counterterrorism requirements and CINC warfighting deficiencies in deep penetration/disruption of potential enemies, have resulted in a 400% budget increase. The virtually constant open source and media coverage of Congress verses the Services verses DOD schemes to enhance the nation's SOF capabilities (read "budget," with little structural analysis of doctrinal and conceptual relevance for future employment) has had career SOF professionals cringing. Specialist should not be equated to elitist, and splashy press coverage of unique units is antithetical to secret, intensive and essential preparations for the full plate of missions assigned or anticipated.

A number of policy analysts at the Rand Corporation have worked with the author on characterizing the contemporary national level expectations of SOF. One of them concludes that SOF is either a special support (wartime) asset that serves as a force multiplier, as in guerrilla development, or diversionary attacks; or as a versatile (non-war) device for achieving short term military, intelligence or occasionally diplomatic objectives in unforeseen contingencies where there is insufficient time to mobilize more traditional/conventional efforts. The national level decision environment (for example at the NSC) probably makes some implicit SOF related assumptions and explicit calculations when seriously anticipating that the U.S. government will act in a situation of high priority. Early on, it would seem that no effective substitute capabilities (in

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type, level and readiness) are considered quite as available, and that SOF is often assessed as most likely to be able to achieve the designated employment (or show of force) objectives in the fastest, most effective or most complete manner. In any case, there should be a commitment within the Administration at least, to follow through, i.e., to exploit the use of SOF in the directed mission by other concurrent or sequential military and diplomatic measures.³³

Special operations missions must be determined at the top national political level, as they are clearly political, and usually strategic. In the "gray area" nature of most conflicts today, conventional forces have minimum useful application. The objective of SOF use is to degrade or eliminate some specific advantage or capability of an adversary. Thus, SOF are appropriate where a military response is needed but where war is not desired; special operations are conducted, war is waged.³⁴

VI. CONCLUSION

The preceding analysis of the state of theory on military special operations reveals a wide range of opinions, a narrow area of convergence of views--on descriptive, tactical and technical aspects--and a glimpse of consensus as to the essentials of an operational philosophy.

It is instructive and mildly surprising that SOF practitioners (whose composition and character have changed significantly over the past 15 years) are disturbed over misunderstanding and misutilization by national level taskers. Yet they have been unable or unmotivated to produce a comprehensive statement of theory, joint doctrine, or philosophy for special operations. The elements of experience, professional knowledge and ability to articulate are still widely available in the community, but factors such as perceived

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reactions of conventional superior and isolated areas of quite satisfied operators have militated against such an undertaking. Additionally, the proportion of career practitioners in SOF units is lower than in the past, and daily operational and training concerns leave little time for unofficial research, analysis and comprehensive formulations.

According to the senior serving joint special operations officer, the operators and their capabilities are often misused, due to a lack of understanding by tasking authorities. This has certainly been exacerbated in the past by secretive and arrogant attitudes of some SOF personnel, (who nonetheless were, and are, self-sacrificing to a rare degree, and intensely committed to their mission). Wartime roles and basic concepts of employment are generally understood, within and outside of the SOF community, and even outside of the military. However, peacetime uses are much more complicated, and more political-military than military. Areas such as counterterrorism are intertwined with other national response elements, and thus have very different concepts for operations. In overseas security assistance or collective security roles, SOF activities must be integrated with the efforts of the U.S. country team and with the host nations' programs and priorities. Finally, the JCS should provide the primary advice and recommendations on all national military responses, including SOF, which has attracted many others who would act as advisors to national leaders.³⁵

The letters and interviews with practitioners, analysts and others revealed some common beliefs, attitudes and concepts, to be sure. But the variations in opinion, and thinness of discussion in certain areas (such as military civic action, USAF SOF low technology foreign assistance or advisory roles, and appropriateness of covert and/or intelligence operations) indicate the need for further research and interviews.

Summary assessments, offered by some respondents after replying to the 9 questions, ranged from views of the special operator as a guerrilla and perpetrator of dirty (but nationally necessary) tricks on adversaries of the United States, to a military-political-diplomatic Renaissance man (or woman) who could carry the day in most pre-hostilities or low intensity conflict challenges. The truth, or the optimum style of employment, may lie between these views; it may instead be found through a different type of analysis, or in another dimension of political-military theoretical constructs.

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A reader-sensitive summation of opinions from the bulk of the interviews and letters is offered in (Figures 4 and 5), which follow. Figure 4 presents the author's professional understanding of the major categories of SOF non-war activity (the 6 uppercase column headings), with the most common and important (lower case) sub-categories that were reflected in the question responses and supplemental offerings of the interviewees.

The terms are treated or defined in earlier sections of the paper or are familiar to diplomats and other non-military officials in national security policy and operations. An exception may be "special activities," which refers to very sensitive tasks of an intelligence nature, or to Presidentially authorized, specific covert activities. Certain forms of military deception could also be represented here. Finally, the most bothersome term is "low intensity conflict," which continues to bedevil the military departments, DOD, State and the informed public with its inclusive, ambiguous nature. Its use here merely refers to non-war conflict, including armed hostilities, that are limited in objectives, geography, weaponry, forces and frequency of (small unit) combat. It also comprehends psychological and political conflict.

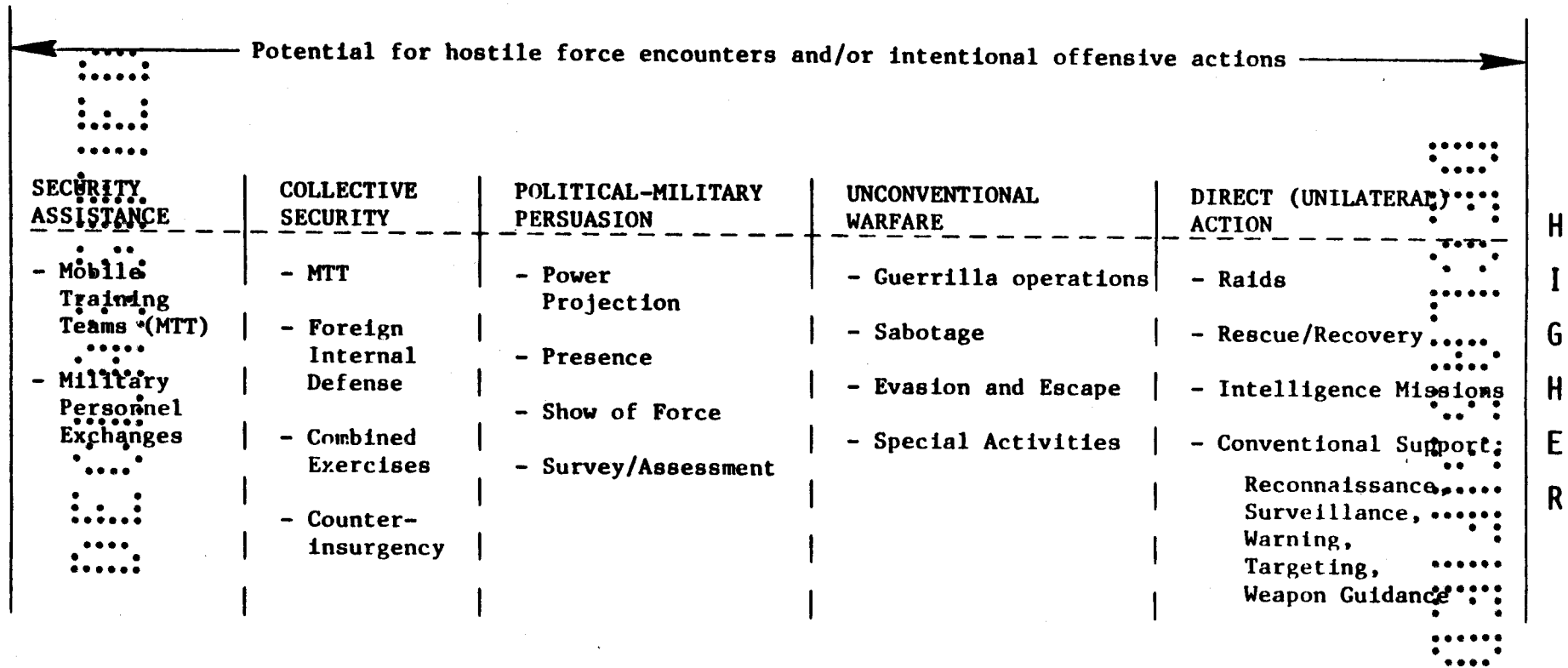
Figure 5 is the creation of Colonel Dallas Cox, U.S. Army, when he was the Deputy Director of the Joint Special Operations Agency in the Pentagon. It is a thoughtful and useful suggestion on how national security practitioners and political authorities might view the complex relationships between political, diplomatic, military, legal and public realms at different intensities of political-military (or military-political) competition and conflict. It serves as a good graphic representation of parallel or closely sequenced major considerations for national decision-makers, and offers a comprehensive framework within which to place the use of SOF. Most interviewees responded favorably to this concept when they studied it, after their interviews.

This paper and the research that preceded are preliminary and necessary steps to further work by the author and others to facilitate, within the special operations community and its associates, the thinking, writing, and active dialogue that can produce an operational philosophy for the employment of SOF. Such a philosophy must be comprehensive but clear, internally consistent, rational and relatively brief in written expression. It is conceived as a welcome, useful guide, or decision making aid, to national level security policy makers and tasking authorities. At this juncture, a pattern for

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SPECIAL OPERATIONS EMPLOYMENT SPECTRUM IN LOW INTENSITY CONFLICT

Figure 4. SOF Employment in LIC



CONFLICT, INTEREST, INTENT AND CAPABILITIES

	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
C O N F L I C T	NORMAL DIPLOMACY	POLITICAL/ ECONOMIC SANCTION	SUBVERSION SABOTAGE TERRORISM COUPS	INSURGENCY	LOW INTENSITY CONVEN- TIONAL WARFARE	MID INTENSITY CONVEN- TIONAL WARFARE UW	HIGH INTENSITY CONVEN- TIONAL WARFARE UW	THEATER NUCLEAR WARFARE UW	STRATEGIC NUCLEAR WARFARE UW
I N T E R E S T	DYNAMIC WORLD ORDER	ECONOMIC/POLITICAL WELL-BEING/ACCESS AMERICAN JUSTICE ----- SYMBOLS OF SOVEREIGNTY (TIME SENSITIVE)			TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY		SURVIVAL		
I N T E N T	"DECLARED PEACE" WAR POWERS, CLARK AMEND, ETC. ----- EXECUTIVE LEGISLATIVE					POPULAR		DECLARED WAR (LEGAL NECCISITY)	
C A P A B I L I T Y	DIPLOMACY SOF	DIPLOMACY SOF			QUICK REACTION TF	GEN PURPOSE/STRATEGIC FORCES			
					DIPLOMACY SOF	DIPLOMACY SOF			
	POLITICAL-MILITARY					MILITARY-POLITICAL			

Figure 5. Political-Military Policy Matrix

VII. NOTES

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1. Senator William S. Cohen (R-ME), "Fix For A SOF Capability That Is Most Assuredly Broken", Armed Forces Journal International, (Washington, D. C.), January 1986, p. 42.
2. Bill Keller, "Conflict in Pentagon is Seen Harming Commandos' Units", The New York Times, January 6, 1986, pp. A1, A10.
3. The "spectrum of conflict" is a commonly used abstraction with many military writers today. Typical graphic representations attempt to order types and intensities of conflicts with a horizontal depiction, and suggest detriment and/or risks of these conflicts on a vertical scale. I have used Figure 1 in lectures for several years.
4. Interview with Colonel Dallas L. Cox, U.S. Army, 31 January 1986, Washington, D. C. Colonel Cox has over 20 years of Army Special Forces service including commands at numerous levels, and is widely acknowledged as a major conceptual thinker in the field of special operations.
5. JCS Publication 1, "Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms", U. S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D. C., 16 March 1984, p. 132.
6. JCS Publication 20, Volume II, "Joint Unconventional Warfare Operational Procedures", (S), U. S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D. C., June 1978, p. 25.
7. Interview with Mr. Benjamin F. Schemmer, 25 February 1986, Washington, D. C. Mr. Schemmer is Editor of the Armed Forces Journal International, an important monthly magazine that reviews defense policy, forces and equipment issues. He has U. S. Army infantry experience and has devoted considerable time as a journalist to the SOF controversies.
8. Evan Thomas, "A Warrior Elite for the Dirty Jobs", Time Magazine, January 13, 1986, p. 16.
9. Ross Kelly, "U. S. Special Operations Revisited", Defense and Foreign Affairs, October 1985, p. 32.
10. Letter from Lt. General Samuel V. Wilson, USA (Ret.) to author, dated 19 February 1986, Arlington, Virginia.
11. Ibid.

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12. Bill Keller, "Essential, They Say, But 'Repugnant'", The New York Times, 20 January 1986, p. A-9.
13. Interview with Captain Ronald K. Bell, USN, 23 January 1986, Virginia Beach, Virginia. Captain Bell currently commands Naval Special Warfare Group #2, in Little Creek, Virginia.
14. Interview with Commander Ronald E. Yeaw, USN, 14 March 1986, Washington, D. C.
15. Ibid.
16. Letter from Lt. Colonel Norton A. Schwartz, USAF, to author, dated 16 February 1986, Oakton, Virginia.
17. Interview with a serving senior Army special operations careerist who has requested non-attribution, Fort Bragg, North Carolina, 4 February 1986.
18. Interview with Lt. Colonel James G. Magee, USMC, 2 February 1986, Camp Lejeune, North Carolina. Lt. Colonel Magee has unique and extensive experience in the Marine Corps and in the joint Services environment as a special operator, staff officer, planner, and director of clandestine training and employment activities with national level importance. He is one of the most experienced serving Marine officers in the field of military special operations and related intelligence functions.
19. Letter from Major Ward T. Willis, USAF, 28 February 1986, Wright-Patterson AFB, Ohio, to author.
20. Interview with Colonel Ray E. Stratton, USAF (Ret.), 10 February 1986, Hurlburt Field, Florida. Colonel Stratton, recently retired, served for several years immediately preceding his retirement as the Commandant of The USAF Special Operations School. This academic training institution provides instruction in the interrelated fields of unconventional warfare, and offers courses at the highest security classification levels in terrorism/counter-terrorism, psychological operations, counterinsurgency, crisis management, special operations planning, and cross cultural communications. He is a leading thinker and writer on the issues of low intensity conflict, joint special operations, and the role of military power as an element of national responses to political crises.

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21. Ibid.
22. William V. O'Brien, "Special Operations in the 1980's: American Moral, Legal, Political and Cultural Constraints", in Special Operations in U. S. Strategy, edited by Frank R. Barnett, B. Hugh Tovar, and Richard H. Schultz, Washington, D. C.: National Defense University Press, 1984, pp. 55-56.
23. Deborah Gallagher Meyer and Benjamin F. Schemmer, "Congressional Pressure May Force Far More DoD Dollars For Special Ops.", Armed Forces Journal International, Washington, D. C., April 1986, p. 20.
24. Interview with Colonel Leonard H. Butler, Colonel, USAF, 11 February 1986, Hurlburt Field, Florida. Colonel Butler commands the USAF's only active duty special operations aircraft wing and is a principal leader in the joint SOF community. His view is that the national authorities are likely to increasingly rely on SOF for reactive use in crises and contingencies, especially for counter-terrorism and related sensitive requirements. He sees as a principal challenge, the ability of the joint SOF to operate within existing command, control and communications structures of the Services and JCS, while keeping the lowest possible profile--hiding in the crowd of conventional forces and structures--so as not to alert hostile onlookers when an operational move is directed.
25. Interview with Colonel Ray Stratton, USA, op cit.
26. Report of the Secretary of Defense, Caspar W. Weinberger, to the Congress, Department of Defense, Washington, D. C.: Government Printing Office, February 1984.
27. Interview with Colonel William J. Kornitzer, Jr., USAF, 19 February 1986, Mary Esther, Florida. Colonel Kornitzer commands the USAF's Second Air Division, currently the senior all-SOF unit in the Air Force, having cognizance over all active duty and Reserve SOF units, in the United States and overseas. Colonel Kornitzer has a distinguished and varied career in air rescue and special operations, participating as a pilot in the Son Tay rescue attempt in 1970 and in other sensitive operations of national consequence.

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28. Congressman Earl Hutto (D-Florida), speech to the annual reunion of the Air Commando Association, Hurlburt Field Florida, 12 October 1985, p. 3.
29. Professor Frank N. Trager, "Low Intensity Conflict: U.S. and Soviet Responses", an unpublished paper presented at Loyola University, Chicago, Illinois, 18 November 1979, p. 37.
30. Interview with Mr. R. Lynn Rylander, Office of Special Planning, Principal Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs, Department of Defense, Washington, D. C., 6 March 1986.
31. Ibid.
32. Brigadier General William P. Yarborough, U.S.A. (now retired, as Major General), "Unconventional Warfare: One Military View," in a special issue, "Unconventional Warfare," of the Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, Volume 341, May 1962, p. 7.
33. Letter from Mr. Philip J. Romero, The Rand Corporation (dept of Economics), Santa Monica, California, to the author, dated 18 February 1986.
34. Interview with Mr. Brian M. Jenkins, of the Rand Corporation, (Santa Monica, California), conducted in Pacific Palisades, California, 19 January 1986.
35. Interview with Major General W. H. Rice, USMC, Director, Joint Special Operations Agency, OJCS, The Pentagon, Washington, D. C., 7 March 1986.

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VIII. ANNEX A

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IN-PERSON AUDIO CASSETTE-TAPED INTERVIEWS CONDUCTED BY THE AUTHOR:

1. Aderholt, Harry C., Brig. Gen., USAF (Ret.), 15 Feb 1986, Fort Walton Beach, Florida.
2. Bell, Ronald K., Captain, USN, 23 Jan 1986, Virginia Beach, Virginia.
3. Brenci, Robert L., Colonel, USAF, 12 Feb 1986, Hurlburt Field, Florida.
4. Buchan, Glenn D., Ph.D., Rand Corp., 20 Jan 1986, Santa Monica, California.
5. Butler, Leonard H., Colonel, USAF, 11 Feb 1986, Hurlburt Field, Florida.
6. Coan, John G., Lt. Col., USA (Res), 30 Jan 1986, Washington, D. C.
7. Cox, Dallas L., Colonel, USA, 31 Jan 1986, Washington, D. C.
8. Crivelli, Joseph L., Major, USA (Res), 31 Jan 1986, (tape made by Major Crivelli and mailed to author).
9. Davidson, Thomas E., Lt. Col., USAF, 27 Feb 1986, Washington, D. C.
10. Dewar, John D., Colonel, USA, 3 Feb 1986, Ft. Bragg, North Carolina.
11. Fraley, Harold J., Colonel, USA, 4 Feb 1986, Ft. Bragg, North Carolina.
12. Harris, William R., J.D., Rand Corp., 18 Jan 1986, Santa Monica, California.
13. Hosmer, Stephen T., Ph.D., Rand Corp., 4 Mar 1986, Washington, D. C.
14. Jenkins, Brian M., Rand Corp., 19 Jan 1986, Pacific Palisades, California.
15. Kornitzer, William J., Jr., Colonel, USAF, 19 Feb 1986, Mary Esther, Florida.
16. Lewis, Leslie K., Ph.D., Rand Corp., 20 Jan 1986, Santa Monica, California.

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17. Magee, James G., Lt. Col., USMC, 2 Feb 1986, Camp Lejeune, North Carolina.
18. Mainord, William R., Colonel, USAF, 12 Feb 1986, Hurlburt Field, Florida.
19. Moyle, Gregory W., Lt. Col., USAF, 24 Jan 1986, Arlington, Virginia.
20. Naslund, Willard E., Col., USAF (Ret.), 20 Jan 1986, Santa Monica, California.
21. Parks, W. Hays, J.D., Col., USMC (Res), 4 Mar 1986, Arlington, Virginia.
22. Pellicci, Jack, Col., USA, 17 Jan 1986, Memphis, Tennessee.
23. Rice, W.H., Maj. Gen., USMC, 7 Mar 1986, Washington, D.C.
24. Roberts, James N., Lt. Col., USAF, 7 Mar 1986, Washington, D.C.
25. Rylander, R. Lynn, 6 Mar 1986, Washington, D.C.
26. Schemmer, Benjamin F., 25 Feb 1986, Washington, D. C.
27. Sloan, Stephen, Ph.D., 20 Feb 1986, Maxwell AFB, Alabama (tape made by Dr. Sloan and mailed to the author).
28. Stan, Peter J.E., Ph.D., Rand Corp., 18 Jan 1986, Santa Monica, California.
29. Stratton, Ray E., Col., USAF (Ret.), 10 Feb 1986, Hurlburt Field, Florida.
30. Tompkins, Thomas C., Major, USAF (Ret.), 20 Jan 1986, Santa Monica, California.
31. Yeaw, Ronald E., USN, 14 Mar 1986, Washington, D. C.
32. Haas, Michael C., Lt. Col., USAF, 18 April 1986, Arlington, Virginia. (Tape made by Lt. Col. Haas and mailed to the author).
33. Takos, William N., Captain, USAF, 11 May 1986, Tucson, Arizona. (Tape made by Captain Takos and mailed to the author).

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IX. ANNEX B

LETTERS TO THE AUTHOR, RECEIVED IN RESPONSE TO HIS INQUIRIES:

1. Allen, Patrick D., 3 Feb 1986, Santa Monica, California.
2. Clark, Robert L., Lt. Col., USAF, 21 Jan 1986, Naples, Italy.
3. Guilmartin, John F., Jr., Lt. Col., USAF (Ret.), 7 Feb 1986, Houston, Texas.
4. Magee, James G., Lt. Col., USMC, 22 Jan 1986, Jacksonville, North Carolina.
5. Romero, Philip J., 16 Feb 1986, Santa Monica, California.
6. Schwartz, Norton A., Lt. Col., USAF, 16 Feb 1986, Oakton, Virginia.
7. Takos, William N., Capt., USAF, 19 Dec 1985, Howard AFB, Panama.
8. Willis, Ward T., Major, USAF, 28 Feb 1986, Wright-Patterson AFB, Ohio.
9. Wilson, Samuel V., Lt. Gen., USA (Ret.), 19 Feb 1986, Arlington, Virginia.

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X. ANNEX C

RESEARCH PROJECT INTERVIEW PROFILE

JOINT U.S. SPECIAL OPERATIONS FORCES (JSOF) OPERATIONAL PHILOSOPHY:

A clear and logical statement of the most central beliefs, attitudes, and concepts of special operations practitioners for the employment of their core capabilities in military or political-military roles (as nationally directed).

INTERVIEW GROUND RULES AND ASSUMPTIONS OF THE PROJECT:

1. A tape recorder will normally be used, unless the interviewee objects.
2. Only unclassified discussion will be attributed, quoted or paraphrased, with permission of the interviewee.
3. JSOF Operational Philosophy is assumed to be quite different in substance from "policy, doctrine, strategy or tactics," although interrelationships exist.
4. Non-violent JSOF applications are included in a complete operational philosophy, e.g., military civic action, foreign military forces training, demonstrations/presence, security assistance implementation, humanitarian/disaster relief operations, intelligence collection.
5. A pre-interview or follow-up (unclassified) written statement of the interviewee's essential idea of a JSOF Operational Philosophy is solicited -- along with permission to quote/paraphrase.

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS:

1. In today's world, what do you see as the principal nationally directed or CINC directed roles or missions for JSOF?
2. In your view, are these roles or missions the traditional ones?

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3. What are the NEW or contemporary JSOF roles or missions, as you understand them?
4. Do you believe there is a useful, practical distinction between conventional and special military operations? If so, how would you express the difference(s)?
5. Do you have in mind certain military, or political-military, operations or activities that are more appropriately conducted by JSOF than by any other military forces?
6. Do you, or SOF practitioners you know personally, have readily identifiable beliefs or attitudes about the employment of SOF?
7. Can you briefly list the 4 or 5 chief distinguishing characteristics of JSOF, as they appear to you?
8. What characteristics would have to be present in an overseas military or political-military situation, either violent or non-violent, for you to conclude that the use of JSOF should be directed?
9. Can you explain for me your current idea of an operational philosophy for the employment of JSOF in military or political-military roles or missions?

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