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SPEC FI:
THE UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS AND SPECIAL OPERATIONS

by

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December 1998

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ABSTRACT

Throughout its history, the United States Marine Corps has demonstrated itself to be a hybrid force, capable of conducting operations within both the conventional and unconventional realms of warfare. This tradition has continued to the present day with the current Marine Expeditionary Unit (Special Operations Capable). The purpose of this thesis is first to assess Marine Corps hybrid operations in specific historical cases in order to rate the Marine Corps' historical performance in such roles. Secondly, the thesis will provide an assessment of the current MEU(SOC) program, with emphasis placed on its relevance in current and future operations, as well as deconfliction with established Special Operations Forces (SOF) that fall under the auspices of the United States Special Operations Command (USSOCOM).

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I. INTRODUCTION

A. BACKGROUND

Following the failed hostage rescue attempt in Iran at Desert One in 1980, the Department of Defense appointed an investigative panel chaired by the former Chief of Naval Operations, ADM James L. Holloway, to uncover the causes of failure and to provide recommendations for improving American special operations capabilities.[1] The debacle at Desert One was the culmination of a decade-long period of neglect and degradation of American special operations forces (SOF). This period was marked by significant budget cuts for the special operations community and increasing levels of distrust between SOF and conventional military forces.[2] The Holloway Commission's findings led to a renewed effort within the American military to restructure and improve its special operations capabilities.

The bombing of the Marine barracks in Lebanon and the clumsy success of combined elements of SOF and conventional forces in Grenada in 1983, were further indications of the need for improvements in American special operations. Consequently, "in 1983, the Secretary of Defense directed each military service and defense agency to review their existing special operations capabilities and develop a plan for achieving the level of special operations capability required to combat both current and future low intensity conflicts and terrorist threats."[3] The culminating effect of this direction was the establishment of the United States Special Operations Command (USSOCOM) and the

[1] *United States Special Operations Command: 10th Anniversary History*, HQ USSOCOM, 1997, p.1.
[2] *Ibid.*
[3] Marine Corps Order (MCO) 3120.9A, Nov 24, 1997.

implementation of the Marine Amphibious Unit (Special Operations Capable) [MAU(SOC)] concept, both in 1986.

Redesignated as MEU(SOC)s in 1988,[4] this combined arms package, trained and equipped to conduct certain special operations in addition to a broad range of conventional operations, has become the cornerstone upon which the expeditionary Navy-Marine Corps team is built. While not designated special operations forces per se, these units provide regional Commanders-in-Chief (CINCs) with the ability to conduct missions throughout the spectrum of conflict, from peacekeeping to large-scale conventional combat. It is this capability that makes the MEU(SOC) concept unique. While possessing conventional characteristics, the MEU(SOC) maintains an ability to execute certain special operations and do so as an independent entity, from the sea, without the need to await support from outside the area of operations. As such, the MEU(SOC) presents itself as a "hybrid force." That is, a force capable of conducting operations within both the special and conventional realms.

The purpose of this thesis is to examine the hybrid model of warfare, and to assess whether a hybrid force is better suited to engaging in such warfare, as opposed to a conventional force teaming with a special operations force solely for the purpose of conducting hybrid missions. This will be accomplished by examining the Marine Corps hybrid model, evaluating its strengths and weaknesses, and assessing its ability to satisfy present and future military requirements. Further, it will address the debate surrounding

[4] ALMAR 023/88 announced the change in MAGTF designations from "amphibious" to "expeditionary" "to more accurately reflect Marine Corps missions and capabilities . . . are not limited to amphibious operations alone."

the special operations capabilities of the Marine Corps, including general arguments advanced by traditional SOF proponents.

B. METHODOLOGY

After first defining hybrid warfare and hybrid forces, an historical longitudinal study of Marine Corps hybrid operations is conducted in order to examine the contention that hybrid warfare and the hybrid force concept are nothing new to warfighting, or to the Marine Corps. The cases selected for study are The Seminole Wars, World War II, and the Vietnam War, as these campaigns best represent those in which the Marine Corps displayed effectiveness in both special and conventional operations. Furthermore, the cases are representative of the entire spectrum of conflict, ranging from low-intensity conflict (LIC) to high-intensity conflict (HIC) and represent conflicts in which the Marine Corps hybrid force was inextricably linked, operationally and logistically, to the United States Navy. As such, the cases serve as tough tests for the hybrid model theory and provide insight into the viability of the Marine hybrid model in future conflict. This is possible considering that the Marine hybrid model will continue to prepare for operations throughout the spectrum of conflict and will remain inextricably linked to the United States Navy. Each study will provide a description and assessment of both the conventional and special characteristics present within each conflict, followed by an assessment of the effectiveness of the hybrid force compared to that of the stand-alone conventional and special forces. This comparative analysis will serve as the measure of effectiveness for the hybrid model. This historical study will provide the basis for assessing the Marine Corps' effectiveness as a hybrid force, as the successes/failures of the past may provide insight into the ability of such a force in the present and on into the

future. Following the case studies, MEU(SOC) history, organization, and training will be discussed. Finally, the conclusion will provide an assessment of the Marine Corps as a hybrid force, including an explanation of the limitations and capabilities thereof, and recommendations regarding future structure, employment, and interoperability with Naval Special Warfare Command (NAVSPECWARCOM) and United States Special Operation Command (USSOCOM).

C. HYBRID WARFARE

1. Definitions

In order to provide a satisfactory definition of hybrid warfare, it is necessary to first define the two elements which, when combined, comprise hybrid warfare. These elements are special and conventional operations.

Special operations as defined by Joint Pub 1-02 are

> Operations conducted by specially organized, trained, and equipped military and paramilitary forces to achieve military, political, economic, or psychological objectives by unconventional military means in hostile, denied, or politically sensitive areas. These operations are conducted during war and operations other than war, independently or in coordination with operations of conventional or other non-special operations forces. Political-military considerations frequently shape special operations, requiring clandestine, covert, or low visibility techniques and oversight at the national level.[5]

Conventional operations differ from special operations "in degree of physical and political risk, operational techniques, mode of employment, independence from friendly support, and dependence on detailed operational intelligence and indigenous assets."[6] Hybrid warfare (Fig. 1) is that which lies in the interstices between special and

[5] *Joint Pub 1-02*, "Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms," 1 December 1989.
[6] *Ibid.*

conventional warfare. This type of warfare possesses characteristics of both the special and conventional realms, and requires an extreme amount of flexibility in order to transition operationally and tactically between the special and conventional arenas.

2. History

There is nothing new about the concept of hybrid operations or their utility in conflict. The combination of closely coordinated special and conventional operations has impacted the outcomes of numerous military campaigns. An American historical example of an extended campaign wherein hybrid warfare proved crucial to success is the American Revolution.

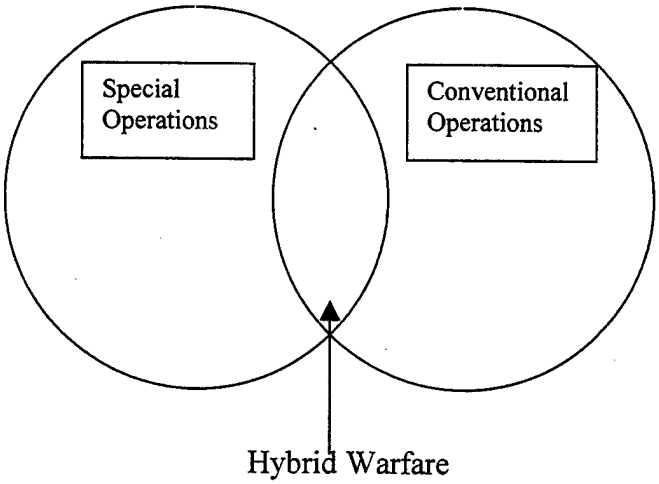

Figure 1. The Hybrid Model of Warfare.

Many historians argue that the United States would have done better and perhaps have won the American Revolution more quickly had they fought strictly a guerrilla campaign against the clearly conventional British forces. Indeed, officers in the Continental Army debated the issue with General Washington. "Washington rejected the counsel of Major General Charles Lee, who believed that a war fought to attain

revolutionary purposes ought to be waged in a revolutionary manner, by calling on an armed populace to rise in what a later generation would call guerrilla war. Washington eschewed the way of the guerrilla, and where he was in personal command the revolutionaries never resorted in any significant measure to blurring the rules of war."[7] Washington believed that his ability to field a uniformed and organized force was essential to building a perception of legitimacy in the eyes of the world community. "Washington's insistence on creating a European-style professional army to wage war on the European pattern reflected his apparent fear of the tendency of irregular war, with its violations of the international rules of war . . . as well as his specific concern to guard the dignity of the American cause as an essential part of the new nation's claim to equality of status among the nations of the world."[8] Moreover, while the American forces lost more conventional engagements than they won, when they did win it had a much greater impact on the perceptions of the international community. The significance of the victory at Saratoga in drawing the French and Spanish into the war on the American side is well known. It is not clear that this support would have existed had the United States conducted its military operations in an unconventional manner.

Major General Nathanael Greene, however, maintained no such reservations in employing irregular forces, and his combination of his regulars with irregular forces of Francis Marion, Thomas Sumter, and Andrew Pickens, served as the first American example of hybrid operations. "Greene pointed out that the guerrillas and the regular army could team up to help each other. The guerrillas could harass Cornwallis with swift

[7] Russell F. Weigley, "American Strategy from Its Beginnings through the First World War," in Peter Paret (ed.), *Makers of Modern Strategy: From Machiavelli to the Nuclear Age*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986, p. 410.

raids against his far-flung outposts and long lines of communication; at the same time, Greene's army could pose enough of a threat so that Cornwallis would not risk turning all his power upon the raiders."[9] The utility of such a combination proved incredibly valuable during the American campaign in the south. In the political and military environment of today's world, it is not unlikely that a future enemy will act in a manner similar to that of the highly successful General Greene.

3. Future

As we approach the 21st century, many historians and theorists have attempted to predict what future warfare will look like. Some of the most widely regarded models of future warfare have come from such people as Martin van Creveld and Alvin and Heidi Toffler, to name a few.[10] These models often describe a world in which conflicts are increasingly fought between states and non-state actors, as well as between technologically and militarily developed states against underdeveloped or emerging states. The future of warfare as described by these authors, as well as many others, possesses a number of unconventional characteristics, including the use of guerrilla tactics, terrorism, and perhaps information warfare or even weapons of mass destruction (WMD). In order to fight such a war, the American military of the future will need to be able to respond to such threats in an equally unconventional manner.

The need for conventional forces and capabilities, however, will not go away. The threat of a conventional engagement, while not necessarily likely in the near term, is not out of the question, as the potential exists for states to emerge with large conventional

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[8] *Ibid.*, p. 412.
[9] John Arquilla (ed.), *From Troy to Entebbe: Special Operations in Ancient and Modern Times*, Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1996, p. 85.

armies. The possession of such forces by emerging countries often provides them legitimacy within world politics, as witnessed in the case of the American Revolution. A state solely employing unconventional tactics may quickly be characterized as a "rogue" state, and consequently suffer from a lack of respect and legitimacy in the world community. Very often, however, states that possess large conventional forces, whether in addition to or in lieu of unconventional forces, will be viewed by the world community as being a legitimate military power in its own right. The ability to organize, train, and equip large conventional armies says something about a state's economic capabilities, its ability to maintain order and discipline, and it's perceived military power.

This blend of conventional and special methods can be employed throughout the strategic, operational, and tactical levels of war, and is described as follows in FMFM-1 (Fleet Marine Force Manual), *Warfighting*:

> Low-intensity conflicts are more probable than high-intensity conflicts. Many nations simply do not possess the military means to wage war at the high end of the spectrum. And, unless national survival is at stake, nations are generally unwilling to accept the risks associated with wars of high intensity. However, a conflict's intensity may change over time. Belligerents may escalate the level of violence if the original means do not achieve the desired results. Similarly, wars may actually de-escalate over time; for example, after an initial pulse of intense violence, the belligerents may continue to fight on a lesser level, unable to sustain the initial level of intensity.[11]

As such, the force of tomorrow has to be prepared to fight and win in combat environments possessing varying degrees of conventional and unconventional characteristics. Furthermore, I contend that hybrid warfare will be the *modus operandi* for most emerging and belligerent states and non-state actors. This hybrid warfare

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[10] See Martin van Creveld, *The Transformation of War*, New York: Free Press, 1991; and Alvin and Heidi Toffler, *War and Anti-War: Survival at the Dawn of the 21st Century*, New York: Warner Books, 1993.

environment may be best confronted by a hybrid force, that is, a force capable of conducting missions within both the conventional and unconventional realms of warfare.

D. HYBRID FORCE

Throughout American military history there has often been a reluctance to employ unconventional forces. This reluctance can be attributed to any number of reasons, including: doubts about the utility of SOF by conventional commanders, due to organizational culture differences; ignorance of unconventional capabilities; and the belief that conventional forces are just as capable of completing particular missions, etc.[12]

> Autonomous organizations experienced difficulty in integrating operations with GPF because of bureaucratic rivalries and overspecialization. SOF employed in immature organizations experienced high levels of integration, but suffered heavily from misuse. The current division of SOF and GPF into distinct organizations has increased effective integration in deliberate operations. However, organizational barriers still exist which hinder the full integration of forces within the more demanding arena of full contingency operations.[13]

As a consequence, unconventional and conventional forces both have been utilized inappropriately from time to time. These problems, however, have not erased the utility of employing special and conventional forces together. Indeed, in many cases it is required for mission success. For example, "few SOF units possess the support structure for sustained operations and most depend on GPF for at least strategic mobility and logistical support."[14] A standing hybrid force, however, should be less susceptible to either being misused or underused. Maintaining both viable conventional and

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[11] *Warfighting*, FMFM-1, Washington, DC: Headquarters, United States Marine Corps, 1989, p. 21.
[12] For a discussion on "The Military and Political Costs of Elite Units," see Eliot A. Cohen, *Commandos and Politicians: Elite Military Units in Modern Democracies*, Harvard Center for International Affairs, 1978, pp. 53-79.
[13] Captain Michael M. Kershaw, The Integration of Special Operations and General Purpose Forces, Masters Thesis, Naval Postgraduate School, 1994, p.xiv.
[14] *Ibid.*, p.1.

unconventional characteristics, the hybrid force is unified in its culture, bureaucracy, and its mission goals. Moreover, missions assigned to a hybrid force can be determined by the commanders within the force, vice politicians or high ranking officers of a strictly conventional or unconventional background who invariably display a great deal of preference for the type of force from which they came. As such, there is a greater likelihood that the unit within the hybrid force that is most capable of successfully conducting the mission will actually be assigned the mission.

Organizationally speaking, the American military services, with the exception of the Marine Corps, are not structured as hybrid forces. The Army, Navy, and Air Force each maintain conventional and special elements separately. The distinctiveness of Special Operations Forces is further indicated by the existence of a specific unified command, the United States Special Operations Command (SOCOM). Consequently, when conducting missions within the hybrid realm, these services must either extend the typical mission limits of the special or conventional assets, or integrate elements from each for the purposes of the hybrid mission. While there are numerous examples of successful integrated operations,[15] such operations must overcome bureaucratic obstacles as well as personal biases in appropriately employing the elements from both the special and conventional areas.

The Marine Corps MEU(SOC) on the other hand, presents itself as a mobile, logistically independent, sea-based hybrid force capable of performing missions throughout the spectrum of conflict. Throughout its history, the Marine Corps has been assigned myriad missions that have been considered special in nature. Clandestine raids,

[15] See Kershaw for a thorough study of integrated operations.

riverine warfare, and counter-guerrilla warfare, are but a few such missions. Their highly disciplined and versatile brand of fighting has often made them the force of choice in conflicts that are defined in today's terms as Military Operations Other Than War (MOOTW) and Special Operations. Today's Marine Corps continues to emphasize the importance of being able to confront such challenges.

> The Marine Corps, as the nation's force in readiness, must have the versatility and flexibility to deal with military and paramilitary situations across the entire spectrum of conflict. This is a greater challenge than it may appear; conflicts of low intensity are not simply lesser forms of high-intensity war. A modern military force capable of waging a war of high intensity may find itself ill-prepared for a "small" war against a poorly equipped guerilla force.[16]

This historical and current relationship with MOOTW and special operations, however, has not detracted from their conventional capabilities. Today's MEU(SOC) serves as a modern reminder of this tradition.

While a later chapter is dedicated to the history, organization, capabilities, and limitations of the MEU(SOC), it is appropriate at this time to define the term for the sake of clarity. The DoD dictionary defines the Marine Expeditionary Unit (Special Operations Capable) as

> A forward deployed, embarked US Marine Corps unit with enhanced capability to conduct special operations. The Marine expeditionary unit (special operations capable) is oriented towards amphibious raids, at night, under limited visibility, while employing emission control procedures. The Marine expeditionary unit (special operations capable) is not a Secretary of Defense-designated special operations force but, when directed by the National Command Authorities and/or the theater commander, may conduct hostage recovery and or other special operations under in extremis circumstances when designated special operations forces are not available.

[16] *Warfighting*, FMFM-1, p. 22.

Its organization is such that the forces which will be utilized for special, conventional, and hybrid missions come from the same background and training, have no bureaucratic obstacles to overcome, and are less subject to misuse by a commander due to personal biases or ignorance of force capabilities and limitations. Having specifically trained together as a hybrid entity prior to deploying, the strengths, limitations and capabilities of each component of the MEU(SOC) is more likely to be known and appreciated by its commander than in an ad hoc integrated force.

Considering the above discussion, the chapters that follow will answer, by means of comparative case study, the following questions:

1. As a hybrid force, are the Marines capable of successfully conducting missions within both the conventional and special warfare realms, and does their history in such operations provide them the foundation upon which to build future success in hybrid warfare?
2. What are the limitations of the Marine Corps in carrying out such missions?
3. Do redundancies exist between the MEU(SOC) and certain SOF elements, and if so are these redundancies dangerously ambiguous or a complementary expansion of resources for a combatant commander to employ?
4. How can the Marine Corps and SOCOM improve issues of interoperability in order to better fight what in the future will be an inherently joint approach to combat?
5. Is the MEU(SOC) hybrid warrior concept one that should be adopted as a model for future warfighting by the other services?

II. THE SEMINOLE WARS

A. BACKGROUND

In the early nineteenth century, American expansionists looked eagerly to the lands to the south and west of them. The recently acquired lands of the Louisiana Purchase were still barely touched and, with the end of the War of 1812, the government could again focus on expanding the territory of the United States. This expansionism, however, was met with resistance by the many American Indian tribes still inhabiting much of this "unsettled" territory. In the south, violent territorial disputes between American citizens in Georgia and Indian tribes (namely the Seminoles) in the Spanish territory of Florida occurred with increasing regularity. The Georgians, eager to settle the fertile farming lands of Florida

> . . . felt that Florida belonged to the United States as a foot belongs to a leg. Moreover, the Spanish government was responsible for the Indians but lacked the power to control them. Since the United States government could not, or did not, restrain its settlers along the Florida border, there were numerous clashes between the American whites and the Indians living in Spanish territory.[17]

Southern Americans were further angered by the Seminole policy of lending assistance to escaped slaves. Escaped slaves had settled in Florida since the late 18th century, and existed among the Seminoles in separate communities, as well as slaves, in what has been described as a "benign sort of bondage."[18]

These border clashes increased in frequency and magnitude during the second decade of the 19th century with both sides enjoying varying levels of success. Unfortunately for the Seminoles, their successes did little more than anger the white

[17] John K. Mahon, *History of the Second Seminole War*, Gainesville, FL: University of Florida Press, 1967, p.19.
[18] *Ibid.*, p.20.

settlers and provoke them into further skirmishes. The disputes culminated in what was to become the First Seminole War.

B. THE FIRST SEMINOLE WAR

The First Seminole War commenced in November of 1817 and lasted until 1819. While continual border skirmishes were perhaps the predominant factor in starting the war, two specific events provided the sparks required to ignite a war between the United States and the Seminole Indians. The first was an attack on a supply ship and its naval escort bound for Fort Scott in southwest Georgia via the Apalachicola River through Florida. Fort Scott was maintained for the purpose of guarding the border with Florida. Located in thick wilderness, it was most easily accessible by means of the Apalachicola River. The attack was conducted from a fort along the river manned by African-American allies of the Seminoles. The fort was subsequently destroyed by the Americans, resulting in a devastating loss to the Seminoles of 300 allies in addition to the fort itself.[19]

The second event was the refusal of the Americans to comply with an ultimatum issued by Chief Neamathla of the Mikasuki sect of the Seminole tribe. The ultimatum stated that any Americans caught trying to cross the Flint River from Fort Scott to the Indian held village of Fowltown would be annihilated.[20] The subsequent American challenge to the ultimatum led to the initial firefight of the First Seminole War.

The war continued for two years and was fought primarily through conventional means under the leadership of General Andrew Jackson. With a force of 3,500, of which

[19] *Ibid.*, p.24.
[20] *Ibid.*, p.24.

2,000 were Creek warriors, Jackson overcame the Seminole opposition rather easily.[21] The Seminoles, short on arms and ammunition, were unable to sustain a strong resistance against Jackson's force. Consequently, "Jackson became free by late April, 1818, to direct his force toward what in his eyes had always been the main business of the expedition: to take Florida away from Spain."[22] This goal was attained in May 1818 when Jackson captured the city of Pensacola and unseated the Spanish government. After many debates in Washington over the political ramifications of keeping the newly acquired territory with regard to relations with Spain, Florida became U.S. territory in 1819. Colonists immediately began entering from the north, forcing the Seminoles to move south into regions unsuitable for their agricultural economy. The transition of the territory from Spanish to American hands would eventually lead to the decimation of the Seminole tribe in Florida.

C. THE SECOND SEMINOLE WAR

1. Background

The Second Seminole War commenced in 1835 and would continue for seven years. The primary cause of the war was Indian resistance to the relocation policy of the United States. Having succeeded in confining the Seminoles to a reservation at the conclusion of the First Seminole War, problems occurred throughout the 1820s that demanded a more permanent solution to the Indian "problem" in Florida. These problems centered on disagreements between the Indians and the whites over the Treaty of Moultrie Creek and the restrictions of the Indians to their reservation. White men illegally hunting on the reservation, Indians wandering off the reservation in search of

[21] *Ibid*, p.25.

food, etc., led to increased tensions. "A steady flow of petitions from white communities kept before the federal government the urgent need to get the Indians out of Florida. At the same time the Indians' cost to the government ran high, for Congress continued to appropriate money to keep them from starving."[23] Consequently, negotiations with the Seminoles opened up again, concluding in the Treaties of Payne's Landing and Fort Gibson. Under the terms of these treaties, the Seminoles were to vacate the lands allotted them in the Treaty of Moultrie Creek within three years, unite with the Creek Indian nation, and move to territory west of the Mississippi. The Seminoles did not embrace the treaties with open arms. Confusion and disagreement over the true meanings of the treaties led to accusations on both sides that the other was not keeping up their end of the deal. The Indians, reluctant to move to the reservation in the first place, became increasingly irritated and hostile at the proposition that they relocate. Ultimately, the Seminoles refused to abide by the treaties and a new war erupted.[24]

The nature of the ensuing war was largely unconventional, as the terrain and climate of Florida were, by-and-large, incompatible with conventional operations. Florida was largely unpopulated wilderness with rivers, swampland, and streams dominating the landscape. "Aside from a few points along the coast and fewer still in the interior, it was scarcely better known than Africa."[25] Such geography would prove difficult to the conventional American army in maneuvering their large forces about the terrain. "Equal with terrain in impact upon the course of the war was the climate."[26] The summers, with their high temperatures and humidity, fatigued the American soldiers

[22] *Ibid.*, p.25.
[23] *Ibid.*, p.73.
[24] *Ibid.*, p.86.

greatly and contributed to a great deal of illness spreading throughout the troops. Other seasons were only slightly better in providing the Americans a suitable fighting climate. "Nothing about the weather was certain except that it would not snow."[27] The terrain and climate in fact, proved more deadly to the Americans than the Seminole. "Of 4,191 U.S. regulars who participated in the war, 350 were killed in action and 1,116 suffered non-battle deaths."[28] Furthermore, the Americans suffered great logistical difficulties due to their unfamiliarity with working in such large numbers in such a harsh environment. Hired Indians or African-Americans accomplished most of the American scouting. While familiar with the terrain, these scouts could not always be trusted for their motives.

The Seminoles on the other hand, along with their African-American allies, were intimately familiar with the terrain and used it to their advantage. The Seminoles enjoyed the ability to choose where and when to engage the enemy, and very often were able to escape from an engagement more-or-less intact. As such, the Second Seminole War possessed all of the characteristics of a typical counter-guerrilla conflict. Nevertheless, fighting as a hybrid force, the Seminoles kept the Americans militarily bewildered and were able to stave off defeat for seven years. Even then, it was starvation that forced them into submission, rather than military defeat.

2. The Enemy as a Hybrid Force

The Seminole Indians were skilled warriors capable of posing a threat as both a large-scale conventional and small sized guerrilla forces.

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[25] *Ibid.*, p.129.
[26] *Ibid.*, p.129.
[27] *Ibid.*, pp.129-130.
[28] Mark Freitas and Braddock W. Treadway, *Stygian Myth: Riverine Operations Against the Guerrilla*, Masters Thesis, Naval Postgraduate School, December 1994, p. 43.

> The Seminoles used units of various sizes to conduct their guerrilla campaign. Initially, large forces were employed to conduct offensive operations against settlements and forts. Once the U.S. commenced the ground offensive campaign, the Indians shifted towards small unit defensive operations which used tactics of terror, ambush, and the raid. However, the Indians were still capable of launching major operations with riverine forces that numbered as many as 200 warriors.[29]

Two early confrontations in the war demonstrated the Indian ability, or willingness, to fight conventionally. The first of these would come to be known as Dade's Massacre.[30] En route to Fort King Major Francis L. Dade and his detachment of eight officers and one hundred enlisted men were ambushed on December 28, 1835, by a band of one hundred and eighty Indians.[31] The Indians

> kept up so heavy a fire that the trunks of trees were later found to be full of lead, and the logs of breastworks solid with rifle bullets of small caliber. Under this hot blast, the defenders dropped one by one, shot in the forehead or neck. The living stood in blood . . . Finally, by four o'clock, not a white man was left standing.[32]

The second example of Indian conventional capability occurred three days later at the Battle of Withlacoochee. General Duncan Clinch, in an effort to employ the services of volunteers whose enlistment's were due to expire on January 1st, attempted to conduct a surprise attack against Indians located in the vicinity of Fort Drane. His combined force of regulars and volunteers pursued an Indian band that, unbeknownst to Clinch, was laying in wait on the opposite side of the Withlacoochee River. The Indians waited until half of Clinch's force had crossed the river before they attacked. Having effectively split Clinch's forces, 250 warriors attacked those that had crossed the river as they rested in a clearing. While a few successful bayonet charges were made by the Americans, the

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[29] *Ibid.*, p.42.

[30] For a thorough account of Dade's Massacre, see *Massacre!* by Frank Laumer, Gainesville, FL: University of Florida Press, 1968.

Indians, "because of their better use of cover . . . held their casualties far below the whites, 3 killed and 5 wounded against 4 whites killed and 59 wounded."[33] The Battle of Withlacoochee, coupled with Dade's Massacre, brought hostilities with the Seminoles to the forefront of concerns in Washington. To the Seminoles' benefit, these engagements also " . . . created in the army the erroneous impression that the Indians could be brought to fight in large groups, more or less white-style."[34]

Once the conventional American ground offensive began, the Seminoles directed their operations in a predominantly irregular manner. Using the terrain to their advantage, the Seminoles successfully executed small unit tactics throughout the war. Raids and ambushes of specific forces and supply bases proved very effective. As described by one soldier involved in the war, "the Indians were not so dull as to be swallowed up by an overwhelming force! Their mode being to attack only small bodies, and to allow the larger companies to pass through."[35] As will be seen in following paragraphs, Seminole unconventional tactics puzzled and frustrated even the most adept American military commanders.

As a hybrid force, the Seminoles were capable of conducting hybrid operations with conventional and unconventional tactics being employed simultaneously. "On August 6, 1840, the Indians launched an amphibious raid after nightfall over 30 miles of open water. One hundred and thirty-five Seminoles attacked a supply base located on

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[31] Mahon, pp.104-106.
[32] *Ibid.*, p.106.
[33] *Ibid.*, p.111.
[34] *Ibid.*, p.112.
[35] John Bemrose, *Reminiscences of the Second Seminole War*, ed. by John Mahon, Gainesville, FL: University of Florida Press, 1966, p.89.

Indian Key Island and repelled the subsequent relief effort."[36] It is important to note that the Seminoles very rarely operated at night. Doing so under these circumstances and succeeding is a tribute to the Seminoles' versatility and hybrid capabilities.

3. Conventional Operations against the Seminole

Conventional operations against the Seminoles proved ineffective throughout the Second Seminole War. The conventional tactics failed at defeating the Indians in a conventional military campaign as they were designed to do by such prominent military tacticians of the time as General Winfield Scott. However, they contributed to the defeat of the Indians by causing attrition among the warriors and use of scarce ammunition stocks.

American conventional operations in the war were epitomized by the actions of General Scott. Appointed as commander of forces in Florida in early 1836, Scott had proven himself an effective military commander and tactician, but

> . . . he was neither trained for nor amenable to Indian warfare. Scott did not favor the rough dress of the wood fighters, nor did he approve of taking to trees as the natives did. He had after all copied from the French the drill manuals then used by the United States Army, and was thoroughly steeped in European methods of warfare. He had no experience with any other kind.[37]

Scott pursued an end to the war by means of a one-time, large-scale, definitive campaign, designed to flush the hostile Indians into the northern part of the territory where they could be more easily engaged by white troops.[38] In pursuit of these ends, three grand columns were to converge on the point where the main body of Seminole warriors was thought to be positioned. Impeded by terrain, hampered by Seminole

[36] Freitas and Treadway, pp. 43-44.
[37] Mahon, pp.140-142.

harassment and their unwillingness to engage the whites as a concentrated force, and lack of communication between Scott and the other two wings, Scott's campaign failed. Each of the three wings suffered from the difficulty of terrain and did not have the opportunity to engage large bands of Indians as planned. "The grand campaign had not resulted in the death of as many as sixty Indians . . . As for his command, the horses were broken down by weather and hard use, measles and mumps were rampant among the volunteers."[39] Scott's campaign was seemingly doomed from the start.

> The Indians were too mobile and too vigilant to be caught between the slow-moving, noisy columns trying to converge upon them. To have ended the war in one campaign would have required the invention of a new method of using soldiers against Indians on a large scale. It would have been necessary to undo all the training of both the regulars and the volunteers. Small parties of rangers, equipped to live off of the land, to operate separately yet keep in touch with each other, were probably the only solution. And they were all but out of the question at that day and time. Considering the novelty of the problem, the lack of knowledge of terrain, the unprepared state of the military, the need to gather large quantities of supplies in a hurry, the terrible conditions of transport, the foul weather, and the determined nature of the foe, it is surprising that Scott got his three wings into the wilderness and back again at all.[40]

Scott's campaign, in its failure, did little more than expend valuable resources and instill confidence into his Indian adversaries. "The plan proved an utter failure, the general having drawn it upon the carpet before his comfortable fire, allowing for no impassable country, thereby showing a great lack of the tactics needed for Indian bush fighting."[41]

Seminole tactics frustrated Scott and proved effective in thwarting his efforts. "Unwilling to strike in strength at one of the main wings, they hit all three around the

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[38] *Ibid.*, p.143.
[39] *Ibid.*, p.157.
[40] *Ibid.*, p.166.
[41] Bemrose, p. 88.

edges."[42] The inability of any of Scott's wings to engage the enemy in mass led to the breakdown of his entire campaign. Ironically, while he realized the ineffectiveness of his campaign, he was certainly not going to alter the tactics that he employed. "The kind of war he understood was that in which one did not fire at the enemy except when he had offered himself in battle."[43] The three wings returned to Fort Brooke fatigued, frustrated, and unsuccessful in ending the war in one grand campaign.

4. Special Operations against the Seminole

Special operations against the Seminole were perhaps best represented by the exploits of Colonel William S. Harney. In two specific instances Harney conducted special operations with some success.

The first such instance was in April 1838. Ordered by General Jesup to pursue the Seminole leader Sam Jones, Harney took one hundred men into the swamp to accomplish the mission. They traveled on horseback as the terrain would allow and shifted to log canoes to traverse the murky waterways of the swamp. On April 24, 1838, Harney's men spotted and engaged the Indians as they sat at a camp. Both the warriors and Harney's men took to the trees to fight. "After a brief gunfight, the defenders began to yield ground, and finally broke cover and ran."[44] The battle resulted in only one Indian killed and one captured. Harney's troops were exhausted due to the heat and difficulty of terrain. While the battle did not yield the desired casualties, it did prove the effectiveness of a relatively small force operating independently through unconventional maneuver to surprise and engage the enemy.

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[42] Mahon, p.158.
[43] *Ibid.*, p.152.
[44] *Ibid.*, p.239.

Harney continued his unconventional practices, as witnessed by his actions two years later in the war. Having been overrun by the Seminoles in 1839 while he and his troops were at a trading post near the Caloosahatchee River, Harney yearned for revenge against the Seminole. "During December 1840, the colonel made use of a runaway black slave . . . to plan a raid against the unsuspecting Indians. Acquiring 16 canoes from the Navy's riverine force, Harney embarked 90 men for a punitive expedition deep inside the Everglades."[45] Along the way, Harney encountered a number of parties of Seminoles in canoes. After overtaking and capturing a number of the canoes, Harney ordered the warriors hanged on the spot. It is also said that at times when Harney's guide seemed lost, Harney forced captured squaws to lead the way by threatening to hang their children. To his credit, he never carried through on this threat.[46] Discovering the concentration of Seminoles he had hoped to find, Harney disguised his men as Seminoles (in spite of orders prohibiting such activity) to ensure surprise. An hour or two after sunrise, Harney's force engaged the Seminoles on an island in the Everglades. Thinking the white-man incapable of penetrating so far into the Everglades, the Indians were taken by complete surprise. "The riverine force killed most of the warriors and destroyed the encampment. Upon departing, the colonel hung the dead bodies of the Indian leaders from nearby trees as a reminder of the massacre at the Caloosahatchee River."[47] Harney's expedition lasted twelve days and accomplished what most other American forces were unable to do: strike the Seminoles deep in their own territory by complete surprise.

[45] Freitas and Treadway, p.28.
[46] Mahon, p. 283.
[47] Freitas and Treadway, p.28.

The unconventional tactics employed by Harney certainly met with some success. The small unit irregular tactics, particularly in the riverine environment, proved very effective in bringing the Seminole to battle. The Seminoles were very often taken by surprise by these forces as they did not expect the white men to fight in such a manner. Having grown used to seeing large awkward columns advancing in the wilderness, the Seminoles were surprised by suddenly being challenged in the environment that had always provided them refuge, the swamps and rivers of Florida.

Harney's tactics, while effective, did suffer from a few limitations. These limitations were his reliance on captured or defected Seminoles for intelligence and field guidance, and his inability to engage in sustained operations in excess of more than two weeks or so. The first problem resulted in what was often questionable information, and always raised the possibility that the informant or guide had ulterior motives in leading Harney and his men one way or another. The second problem resulted in an inability to maintain pursuit of the Indians after their dispersal from a battle area. Harney and his men, in conducting independent irregular operations, were separated from all support activities. Consequently, their endurance in the field was limited to what their plans called for as opposed to what the circumstances may have offered.

5. Marine Corps Hybrid Operations against the Seminole

Marine Corps operations in the Seminole War possessed both conventional and special characteristics. While the operational command of the conventional and special elements of the Marine Corps was separate, the Seminole War case remains valid in assessing the Marine Corps as a hybrid force. Their administrative chain of command was the same and, due to the size of the Marine Corps and its desire for employment, the

Marine Corps presented itself as a hybrid force capable of working as an integrated team with both the Army and the Navy. Colonel Archibald Henderson, the Commandant of the Marine Corps, had been struggling for some time in Washington to better define the roles and missions of the Marine Corps, as well as to bring the Corps the respect he felt it deserved from the bureaucrats on Capitol Hill. With the onset of hostilities against the Seminoles, Henderson saw the opportunity to display the value of the Marine Corps in combat. "Having successfully exploited Marine corps bravery in the War of 1812 for twenty years, Henderson knew that the most impressive argument for his Corps' survival was that Marines could fight."[48] A proponent of the Marine Corps maintaining its traditional missions as ships guards and Navy yard sentries, Henderson also believed he could enhance the reputation of the Corps by employing it in roles involving active field service.[49] Consequently,

> Marine Corps participation in the war had a dual character. The ships guards on Navy vessels on patrol and blockade duty participated in landing operations, a function already well developed . . . The second type of Marine Corps mission was more novel – extended land service as a temporary part of the Army.[50]

a. Conventional Aspects of the Hybrid Force

Colonel Henderson himself led the conventional elements of the Marine Corps in the Second Seminole War. Arguing that the use of a Marine Corps regiment would save the government money in its war effort, President Jackson assigned the Marines to Brigadier General Thomas Jesup's army at Fort Mitchell, Alabama who at the

[48] Allan R. Millett, *Semper Fidelis: The History of the United States Marine Corps*, New York: The Free Press, 1991, p.70.
[49] *Ibid.*, p.70.
[50] *Ibid.*, p.70.

time were engaged in fighting the Creeks.[51] As hostilities with the Creeks were drawing to a close by the time of his arrival, Henderson was prepared to return to Washington when Jesup decided to take the Marine regiment with him to fight the Seminoles. After all, "Henderson's men had proved capable of field service; their camp discipline was excellent and their disease problems minimal."[52]

The combat capabilities of Henderson's men were only tested once during his time in Florida in the Battle of Hatcheelustee. Ordered by Jesup to pursue a band of Seminoles taking refuge in the Big Cypress Swamp, Henderson commanded a composite brigade of Army regulars, Marines, Georgia volunteers, and Indians.[53] Organized as the Second Brigade of the Army of the South, Henderson and his men engaged the Seminoles on January 27, 1837 in the vicinity of Hatcheelustee Creek. "The volume of fire which ensued was battle-size, but otherwise the action was formless. The soldiers overran an Indian camp where they captured one hundred ponies, half of them loaded with packs."[54] The battle continued as the Marines pursued the Indian band into the Big Cypress Swamp. The brigade then engaged the Seminoles across a stream, with a number of officers heroically fording the stream on a log in pursuit of the enemy. The result of the battle, as far as enemy casualties were concerned, was five Indian non-combatants and twenty-three former slaves captured, with the warriors successfully escaping.[55] Marine casualties were six killed. "Henderson's own conduct eventually won him a brevet promotion to brigadier general, and his men fought with skill and

[51] *Ibid.*, p.70.
[52] *Ibid.*, p.71.
[53] *Ibid.*, p.71.
[54] Mahon, p.198.
[55] *Ibid.*, p.198.

enthusiasm."[56] The battle also resulted in negotiations with important leaders of the Seminole tribe at which "both sides agreed to a suspension of hostilities until February 18."[57]

b. Unconventional Aspects of the Hybrid Force

The special elements of the Marine Corps in the Second Seminole War were those serving as security guards aboard the vessels operating in the riverine warfare environment as members of the so called "Mosquito Fleet" under the command of Navy Lieutenant McLaughlin. McLaughlin's Mosquito Fleet was a hybrid force in its own right, possessing elements from the navy, army, and Marine Corps capable of conducting sustained riverine operations.

"Riverine warfare is a specialized form of combat neither naval nor military, but a blending of the two, conducted in a riverine environment."[58] The nature of this environment demanded a hybrid force to ensure success. The conventional aspects of the Mosquito Fleet lied primarily in the logistical and command and control capabilities which were contributed to the fleet by conventional navy assets, while the unconventional assets were the combined navy and Marine riverine strike force that would sweep through the Indian villages.

McLaughlin recognized the importance of exerting force and pressure on the Seminole within his own terrain. To do this in a sustained manner, McLaughlin took operational command over not only the riverine strike force, but also the vessels of the offshore and coastal blockade force. "For the first time since the beginning of the war,

[56] Millett, p.71.
[57] Mahon, p.199.

the naval commander could direct all operations within his area of operations, which now included the Everglades."[59] This centralized command and control allowed McLaughlin the flexibility required to deal with the Seminoles. McLaughlin was able to use coastal assets for surveillance and gunfire support, as well as draw them in for large-scale pincer type movements when the opportunity availed itself. Simultaneously, he was able to coordinate the movements of his riverine force in a variety of different sized boats and canoes.

McLaughlin was also able to conduct joint operations with Colonel Harney, resulting in a very effective counter-guerrilla force. This integration provided for the ability to take free navigation of the rivers away from the Indians, and to hit their camps and villages. "This unified riverine force capability exploited all the elements of the combat process to strike at the Seminole Indians nerve center. This nerve center [center of gravity] was the Indian society: the people, the village, the crops, and the cattle herds."[60]

> The highlight of the Mosquito Fleet came during its final expedition in February 1842. By simultaneously deploying two separate units from the west and east sides of the Everglades, McLaughlin's "Task Force" planned to conduct a pincer movement over the course of 60 days. Living in dug-out canoes and foraging for food from the interior, the riverine force demonstrated a capability for sustained operations that demoralized the Indians . . . This "total war" against the Seminole nation deep within its sanctuary, reduced the Indians to basic food gathering techniques for subsistence.[61]

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[58] George E. Buker, *Swamp Sailors: Riverine Warfare in the Everglades, 1835-1842*, Gainesville: The University Presses of Florida, 1975, pp. 5-6.
[59] Freitas and Treadway, p.34.
[60] *Ibid.*, p.49.
[61] *Ibid.*, p.29.

D. CONCLUSIONS

As we have seen, the Seminole Wars possess characteristics that range throughout the spectrum of conflict. The Seminoles, as a hybrid force, were capable of presenting themselves in many ways to the American enemy. While their tactics largely relied on unconventional guerrilla maneuvers, they did prove quite capable in conventional tactics as well. If nothing else, Seminole conventional operations forced the Americans to continue to operate in large cumbersome numbers in order to be prepared to fight a conventional engagement if necessary. Indeed, the Seminole conventional operations perhaps served best at perpetuating American military wishful thinking that a large-scale conventional engagement could be had with the Seminoles in which their warriors could be defeated once and for all.

As for the Americans, while conventional and special operations conducted independently were effective in contributing to the ultimate defeat of the Seminoles, it is clear that the most effective force was the hybrid example of the United States Marine Corps. Conventional operations as conducted by General Winfield Scott proved utterly ineffective. As stated by John Bemrose in speaking of Scott, " . . . there is no doubt of his generalship against a well-disciplined army . . . but the Indians were always attacking and harassing the skirts of his army and he was not the man to descend to their low cunning and unchivalrous system of warfare. I think it evident that Gen. Scott sought to subdue them by the weight and sight of his armies."[62] The special operations of Colonel Harney certainly met with greater success. Harney was able to bring the Seminoles to battle, and proved to the Seminole that the fight could be brought to him in the very area

[62] Bemrose, p.92.

that he had felt most secure. The success of these special operations, however, were overly dependent upon intelligence from questionable sources and were incapable of sustained operations should the need arise. The hybrid force, however, enjoyed the greatest amount of success. The conventional components of the Marine Corps under the command of Colonel Archibald Henderson proved to be effective in extended field operations that proved essential in producing negotiations with the Seminoles. The unconventional components serving within Lieutenant McLaughlin's Mosquito Fleet proved invaluable in uprooting the Seminoles from the riverine environment and forcing the tribe into capitulation. The reasons for the hybrid success in comparison to the strictly conventional and special tactics are twofold. The first reason is that the unified command and control of the hybrid force allowed for more productive engagements and greater control of the forces involved. Secondly, the hybrid force possessed the flexibility to cope with the Seminoles in situations across the spectrum of conflict. This flexibility included the ability to draw from supplies and obtain required logistical items from supply elements assigned to them specifically.

III. WORLD WAR II: THE PACIFIC THEATER

A. BACKGROUND

The Pacific Theater of World War II saw the United States and its allies pitted against the capable and efficient Japanese war machine. Following their seizure of Shanghai and Nanking in China, the Japanese turned their sights on numerous islands spread throughout the Pacific. The Japanese placed great value in acquiring these islands, for three primary reasons. First, the possession of the islands in the central and south Pacific would provide them natural resources that had recently been denied them by the United States in response to Japanese aggression in China. Second, the Japanese hoped to stifle continued Chinese resistance by cutting off supplies and support reaching the Chinese by way of allied-held islands. Finally, the Japanese planned to establish a defensive perimeter around their new conquests from which to defend against the inevitable attacks of the United States and its allies. By May of 1942, six months after beginning the war with a surprise blow against the U.S. Navy at Pearl Harbor, the Japanese had taken possession of Hong Kong, the Gilbert Islands, Guam and Wake Island, Singapore, the Netherlands East Indies, and the Philippines. Confident that their attack on Pearl Harbor precluded an effective American response for at least a year, the Japanese extended the boundaries of their defensive perimeter in the north to the Aleutian Islands, to Midway Island in the east, and in the south to the Solomon Islands and New Guinea.

The American response to the attack on Pearl Harbor occurred more quickly and with much greater zeal than the Japanese had anticipated. With their carrier and submarine force unscathed, the Americans were able to commence retaliatory efforts

against the Japanese shortly after the attack on Pearl Harbor. While the Americans enjoyed little success in the six months following the attack, their response was timely and significant enough to prevent the Japanese from fully fortifying their new conquests and defensive boundaries. Consequently, it was at Midway and in the Solomon Islands where the Americans took the offensive in the Pacific campaign against the Japanese.[63]

The purposes of the American campaign were many. First, initial American aims were to halt Japanese advances and prevent them from seizing the Philippines and other American territories. Of additional concern were British-held territories that were valuable in providing military resources to the allied war effort against Germany.[64] Second, the Americans had become increasingly concerned with the security of Australia and New Zealand. The value of these allies in defeating Japan was great, specifically with regard to their operational and strategic value in providing a location from which to launch air strikes against the outermost Japanese holdings. "Army planners saw Australia as a 'second Britain,' an island bastion from which to mount air and naval attacks on the Japanese forces thrusting into the Netherlands East Indies."[65] Third, the Americans hoped to deny the Japanese the industrial and military benefits of the natural resources that were provided by these islands. Lastly, with the seizure of each island the Americans were able to rob the Japanese of their ability to forward stage military assets (primarily air and naval) in support of further conquests. Simultaneously, the Americans were providing for their own development of airfields and seaports from which to attack Japanese holdings and ultimately mainland Japan.

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[63] For a thorough discussion on the War in the Pacific, see Ronald H. Spector, *Eagle against the Sun: The American War with Japan*, New York: The Free Press, 1985.
[64] Millett, p. 352.

The nature of the war in the Pacific was very conducive to hybrid operations. The jungle terrain of the Pacific Theater, as was the case in the Seminole Wars, would prove very difficult for maneuvering and engaging the enemy with large forces. Furthermore, the terrain was well suited to the conduct of hybrid tactics by the enemy, and was cumbersome for strictly large-scale conventional forces.

Large forces were desired, however, due to the attritional nature of the campaigns in the Pacific. The amphibious assaults that were to take place in the Pacific were devastatingly attritional and required a great deal of force in order to be effective. While the Marine Corps approached this brand of warfare with a great deal of forethought, beginning with prewar planning as early as the 1920s, practical application of the new doctrine with new technologies did not occur until just before the commencement of hostilities with Japan.[66] As was the case with riverine warfare in the Second Seminole War, the technical execution of amphibious operations in the Pacific would prove as challenging as the foe himself.

This chapter will address the campaign in the Pacific against the Japanese in terms of the enemy as a hybrid force, and will provide a comparative discussion of American conventional, unconventional, and hybrid responses to the enemy. We will see, as in the case of the Second Seminole War, that it is again the Marine Corps hybrid model that enjoys the most success against the enemy.

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[65] *Ibid.*, p. 357.

B. THE ENEMY AS A HYBRID FORCE

As stated previously, the terrain of the islands in the South Pacific campaigns was well suited for the utilization of hybrid tactics by the Japanese. While defending a beachhead against an amphibious assault, the Japanese could fight in large numbers utilizing all available conventional assets to stave off the oncoming assault. These assets included artillery, armor, aircraft, and large formations of conventional infantry. From these defensive positions, the Japanese could retreat into the mountainous jungle terrain that was typical of the South Pacific islands and wage guerrilla-type operations against the allied forces. Referring to the Japanese tactics, Lieutenant Colonel Merritt "Red Mike" Edson was quoted as saying, "What they have done is to take Indian warfare and apply it to the twentieth century. They use all the Indian tricks to demoralize their enemy."[67] In addition to the thick brush of the jungle environment, the islands also possessed numerous caves that the Japanese used to devise underground networks and hideouts from which they could stage deadly ambushes and *banzai* attacks. The Japanese used these tactics with great effectiveness in defending the islands of Peleliu, Iwo Jima, and Okinawa. Having established strong defensive positions on each of these islands, the Japanese would wait for the Marines to land on the beach before unleashing tremendous firepower against them. The effect of their patience was twofold. First, it provided the Marines a false sense of security as their waves proceeded to the beach. Describing the ship-to-shore movement of the Marines at Iwo Jima, Allan Millett says, "Under a pale blue sky flecked with clouds, and cooled by a strong, salty breeze, the invading Marines

[66] For an interesting discussion on Marine Corps innovation with regard to amphibious warfare, see the section on "Peacetime Innovation" in Stephen Peter Rosen's *Winning the Next War: Innovation and the Modern Military*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991.

might have thought the landing was a painless maneuver."[68] Secondly, it forced the Marines to land large amounts of men and equipment in a small area that provided the Japanese seemingly limitless targets at which to concentrate their fire. On Iwo Jima, the Marines packed almost thirty thousand men, hundreds of guns, vehicles, and tons of supplies, all under heavy artillery fire into a beachhead that measured 3,000 yards long and between 1,500 and 700 yards in depth.[69] By nightfall of the first day, the Marines had suffered nearly 2,300 casualties.[70] Realizing that counterattacks against such numbers ashore would be fruitless, Japanese commanders would eventually concede the beach to the Marines and wage a deadly unconventional war fought from the caves and pillboxes that covered the islands.

The Japanese proved very efficient in conducting night raids, ambushes, and suicide attacks. These tactics plagued the allies as they attempted to clear the islands of Japanese defenders. Perhaps the most effective unconventional tactic of the Japanese was the use of special-attack suicide operations, or the *Tokko*, which were conducted by land, sea, and air.[71] Though effective, this tactic was employed too late in the conflict to prevent Japan's ultimate defeat. "The *Kamikazes*, the only sizable *Tokko* forces used, first went into action in late 1944 and showed devastating potential, with American and British naval units never able to devise a sound defense against them . . . If developed earlier, as the fortunes of the war shifted against Japan in late 1942, the *Tokko* . . . might

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[67] Jeter A. Isely and Philip A. Crowl, *The U.S. Marines and Amphibious War: Its Theory, and Its Practice in the Pacific*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1951, p. 145.
[68] Millett, p. 429.
[69] *Ibid.*, p. 429.
[70] *Ibid.*, p. 429
[71] D. Clayton James, "American and Japanese Strategies in the Pacific War," in Paret, p. 718.

conceivably have proven so costly to the Allies that a negotiated peace would have been possible."[72]

Combining the tactics of a large-scale conventional force and a guerrilla force in this manner, the Japanese, though ultimately unsuccessful, took a heavy toll on the allied forces. Utilizing hybrid tactics, the Japanese proved to be superior to the allied forces in many facets. "They proved more adept at night fighting both on the ground and at sea, utilized a higher proportion of their personnel in combat rather than in service and support roles, and generally demonstrated a stronger will to fight than did their adversaries when forces of similar size and firepower engaged each other."[73]

The Japanese did not limit their employment of hybrid tactics to the islands of the south Pacific. In the China-Burma-India (CBI) theater it was the Japanese employment of hybrid methods in capturing Burma that ultimately inspired Wingate's notion of "forming highly mobile units (long-range penetration groups [LRPGs]) that would be inserted deep behind the Japanese lines by gliders and transport aircraft and supplied from the air. It was assumed that this method would allow the LRPGs to outmaneuver the Japanese and attack their lines of communications at will."[74] The Japanese had proven very capable of conducting outflanking movements against the cumbersome allied units with highly maneuverable forces. Indeed, throughout the campaign in the CBI Theater, the Japanese 18th Division, utilizing conventional and unconventional tactics, existed as a constant menace to the Merrill's Marauders.

[72] *Ibid.*, p. 718.
[73] *Ibid.*, p. 718.

C. CONVENTIONAL OPERATIONS AGAINST THE JAPANESE

The large-scale conventional amphibious landings conducted by the Marines during 1944-45 exemplified conventional operations against the Japanese. Ironically, it was at this stage of the war that the Japanese were most effectively employing hybrid tactics. The operations were predominantly conducted without the use of the Raider Battalions that had proven so valuable at Guadalcanal and Bougainville. Consequently, conventional infantry had to perform clearing missions against well-defended caves that may have been better cleared by the highly mobile and well-armed Raider units. Additionally, the use of Raiders for these purposes may have allowed for the clearing of the caves either before or during the conventional landing.

The Marine Corps assault on Peleliu in 1944 serves as an excellent example of the high cost that resulted through the employment of a strictly conventional force against a hybrid enemy. Assisting the Japanese in their defense of Peleliu was the geography and climate of the island. These factors played as deadly a role in the battle as the bravery and tenacity of the Japanese defenders.

> Peleliu's terrain and the Japanese defense force combined to make the 1st Marine Division's campaign one of the most trying of the Pacific war . . . A volcanic island of limestone and coral, Peleliu provided the Japanese with a trackless maze of small hills, cliffs, caves, and pinnacles from which to cover the flat south end of the island with fire. Swamps, thick jungle, and heavy scrub made movement difficult for attacking troops. The ground was so hard that foxholes could not be dug, and the heat and humidity hovered around the 100 degree mark. To defend this paradise, the Japanese had sent a crack infantry regiment with tanks and light artillery. Including naval base troops and service units, the Peleliu garrison numbered ten thousand and could draw reinforcements from neighboring islands . . . The Japanese had built hundreds of cave and bunker positions with connecting tunnels and multiple firing positions . . .

[74] Gary J. Bjorge, *Merrill's Marauders: Combined Operations in Northern Burma in 1944*, Fort Leavenworth, KS: Combat Studies Institute, U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, 1996, p.6.

> The Japanese defense plan, moreover, did not anticipate massive counterattacks or a decisive struggle at the beaches; knowing he could no longer count on air and naval relief, the Japanese commander decided to wage a war of attrition against the Marines from the caves. Such tactics would nullify much of the advantages of American supporting arms and make the battle infantry against infantry.[75]

The assault on Peleliu by the Marines commenced on September 15, 1944. "Weather was excellent; the sea was calm and there was almost no surf. In addition to naval gunfire the troops enjoyed the benefit of direct air strikes on the beaches immediately prior to the landing."[76] Once ashore, however, conditions for the Marines deteriorated rapidly. Amphibious tractors (amtracs) were met with devastating fire as they hit the beach creating a difficult situation for follow-on-waves of vehicles and the offloading of infantrymen. "Artillery and mortars punished the amtracs from the reef to the beach, and the marines scrambled from their vehicles into the face of heavy machine gun fire and more shelling."[77] The situation on the beach grew increasingly precarious for the invading Marines as the fire of the Japanese created a traffic jam of sorts on the beachhead. With vehicles, equipment, and men crowding the beach over an approximate 4,000-yard arc, the Japanese "pounded the position with mortar fire, scourged its front with more fire, and threw tanks against the most advanced positions. By the time the first day ended, the division was barely holding and had lost nearly 1,300 men, or more than twice as many as its staff had predicted."[78] While the Japanese took a heavy toll of Marines, they were ultimately beaten back from the beach and forced to fight from their well-established defensive positions. Vicious fighting continued over the next two weeks

[75] Millett, pp. 420-421.
[76] Isely and Crowl, p. 403.
[77] Millett, p. 421.
[78] *Ibid.*, p. 422.

as the Marines fought to clear the island of the Japanese defenders. "To eliminate probably six thousand Japanese defenders, the division lost nearly four thousand of its own men, and the 1st Marines ceased to exist as a combat regiment."[79]

The Japanese, now cleared from the southern and northern portions of the island (including the airfield), commenced a deadly unconventional campaign against the Marines from cavernous mountains of the Umurbrogol Ridge.

> Against the Umurbrogol caves, there were no easy approaches. When tanks and artillery *could* reach a cave, they were used with effect, and Marine Corsairs and dive bombers . . . flying from Peleliu's airfield, pounded the caves with bombs and napalm.[80] Nevertheless, the final battles fell to the Marine infantry, which sealed the caves with demolitions and flamethrowers. Amid the shattered scrub trees and crumbling coral cliffs, bitter small-unit battles eroded both American and Japanese strength and endurance. When the 1st Marine Division finally left the fight . . . the division had lost 6,336 Marines and had spent nearly 1,600 rounds of infantry and artillery ammunition to kill each Japanese soldier.[81]

The employment of hybrid tactics by the Japanese proved to be very costly for the conventionally-oriented Marines. Able to resort to unconventional tactics once conventional defense of the island failed, the Japanese proved very effective in causing a great number of casualties. Though ultimately unsuccessful in their defense of the island, the Japanese hybrid model was effective, deadly, and would prove menacing for the remainder of the war.

D. SPECIAL OPERATIONS AGAINST THE JAPANESE

American special operations against the Japanese are best exemplified by the actions of Merrill's Marauders. Having been inspired by the success of Wingate's Chindits, the Joint Chiefs of Staff authorized the establishment of the 5307th Provisional

[79] *Ibid.*, p. 422.
[80] Emphasis added.

regiment as an all-volunteer force code-named GALAHAD.[82] The 5307th would soon become better known as "Merrill's Marauders" in honor of their commander, Brigadier General Frank D. Merrill. Composed of three battalions of volunteers whom had previously served in the Solomon-New Guinea campaigns, the Marauders engaged in and won five major battles and seventeen minor engagements against the Japanese.[83]

The Marauders were assigned to the Asian Theater for many reasons both political and military. "The United States saw China's geographic positions and large manpower pool as great assets. America believed that it was possible to improve the Chinese Army so that it could make a positive contribution to the coming offensive against Japan."[84] Furthermore,

> . . . American and British planners envisioned Chinese forces and U.S. forces in the Pacific converging on the Canton-Hong Kong area. Once emplaced there, these forces would drive north to liberate north China and establish staging areas for operations against Japan. The year 1947 was set for operations against Japan proper. Retaking northern Burma and constructing the Ledo Road south through Myitkyina to the old Burma Road was a fundamental part of this strategic plan, in that the road would bring supplies for the Chinese forces that would move toward Canton from the northwest.[85]

Also worth noting is campaign commander Lieutenant General Joseph Stilwell's contempt for the British efforts in the China-Burma-India (CBI) theater. Disagreements between the Americans and British in the CBI Theater began with the development of command relationships and continued throughout the campaign on numerous levels. Many Americans, including Stilwell, also questioned British motives and enthusiasm in

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[81] Millett, pp. 422-423
[82] Arquilla, p. 282.
[83] Joel Nadel with J. R. Wright, *Special Men and Special Missions: Inside American Special Operations Forces 1945 to the Present*, London: Greenhill Books, 1994, p. 24.
[84] Bjorge, pp. 2-3.
[85] *Ibid.*, pp. 5-6.

the CBI Theater. The British placed little value in this theater due to their lack of confidence in Chinese troops and their belief that that Chinese participation would not significantly contribute to the effort against the Japanese. Convinced that the British were concerned more with maintaining their colonial possessions than defeating the Japanese by the most expedient means possible, Stilwell set out on self-initiated campaign of discrediting the British politically and militarily.

Further complicating matters for Stilwell was his need to deal gingerly with coalition forces fighting under brutal circumstances against an equally brutal enemy.

> As the only American combat unit within the combined force, Galahad could not avoid being given the special burdens that came from being Americans. Their presence was required to form viable multinational task forces when the units of other countries could not or would not work together alone. Their participation in operations was necessary to encourage the units of other nations to stay in the struggle and to fight hard.[86]

As a consequence of these political and military circumstances, the Marauders were condemned to a series of assignments which resulted in their being overused, misused, and abused.

The Marauders initially demonstrated their remarkable worth in engaging the Japanese 18th Division in two arduous jungle battles at Nampyek Nha and Nhpum Ga. Each of these battles weighed heavily on the Marauders as they were in constant pursuit of the enemy and very short on nutrition and rest. Following their surprising successes against the Japanese, the Marauders were due a well-deserved period of rest. This respite, however, never materialized. Under pressure from the Joint Chiefs of Staff and members of the coalition to seize and hold Myitkyina in "this dry season," Stilwell was

[86] *Ibid.*, p. 45.

forced to act fast.[87] "Since the tactical situation and nature of the forces under his command meant that Myitkyina could only be reached and attacked by a task force lead by the 5307th, the die was cast."[88] As quickly as they had sat down, the Marauders were off again to seize the strategically valuable airfield at Myitkyina. After crossing the 6,000-foot Kuman Mountains, the Marauders arrived at Myitkyina within three weeks catching Japanese defenders off guard and seizing the airfield with little difficulty.[89]

> The men of the 5307th thought that this victory meant they would be released form their hardship, but – despite earlier promises – it was not to be. Again, tactical necessity and the nature of combined operations made it impossible to relieve them. Instead of being flown out, they were committed to a positional battle against a growing Japanese force that was vigorously defending the town of Myitkyina and threatening to recapture the airfield.[90]

Miraculously, the Marauders again emerged victorious. Malnourished, diseased and completely exhausted, the Marauders were rendered inoperative. The Marauders had suffered over 400 battle casualties and nearly 2,000 casualties from dysentery, typhus, malaria, psychoneurosis and other diseases.[91] "A week after Myitkyina fell, on 10 August 1944, the 5307th, utterly worn out and depleted, was disbanded."[92]

E. MARINE CORPS HYBRID OPERATIONS AGAINST THE JAPANESE

1. Unconventional Aspects of the Hybrid Force

Marine Corps special operations organizations were largely inspired and modeled after the successful Commandos of Great Britain's Royal Marines. "The British commandos executed raids against German installations on the European continent and in

[87] *Ibid.*, pp. 32-33.
[88] *Ibid.*, p. 33.
[89] Arquilla, p. 285.
[90] Bjorge, p. 40.
[91] Nadel, p. 25
[92] Bjorge, p.2.

Africa. The raids suggested a certain audacity which had an immediate appeal in the United States, especially after Pearl Harbor, during the six months when American fortunes were very low."[93]

One of the greatest proponents for the establishment of special units within the Marine Corps was none other than President Roosevelt. "When war came, President Roosevelt wanted commando-like formations. He was influenced in this by Prime Minister Churchill and, no doubt, by Captain James Roosevelt USMC (the President's son), who, in January 1942, wrote to his Commandant proposing marine units of commandos, stressing in his letter the value of guerrillas in China as well as British experience."[94] The President's support of special units was met with a great deal of resistance from Marine Corps leadership. General officers, from the Commandant down, criticized the idea citing issues such as manpower shortages and redundancy as being reasons to not establish the units. The Commandant, Major General Thomas Holcomb, stated that,

> The organization, equipment, and training of infantry units of the Marine Divisions should, in practically all respects, be identical to that of the 'Commandos' . . . In general, it may be stated that the training of all units in the two Marine Divisions prepares them to carry out either offensive operations on a large-scale, or small-scale amphibious raids of the type carried out by 'the Commandos.'[95]

Echoing the negative sentiments of the Commandant was Major General Holland M. Smith, commanding General, Amphibious Force, Atlantic. General Smith "opposed the raider concept on philosophical grounds, noting that all Amphibious Force, Atlantic

[93] Charles L. Updegraph, Jr., *U.S. Marine Corps Special Units of World War II*, Washington, D.C.: Historical Division, Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps, 1972, p.1.
[94] James Ladd, *Commandos and Rangers of World War II*, Trowbridge, Great Britain: David and Charles Publishers, 1989, p. 122.
[95] Updegraph, p. 2.

Marines could be trained in raiding techniques by their own officers if it were deemed important."[96] In essence, General Smith was suggesting "a view that would become increasingly common among senior Marine officers, namely, that there was no task that the 'elite' raider units could perform any more effectively than regular line units."[97] General Alexander A. Vandegrift, at the time Commanding General of the 1st Marine Division, lamented over the taking of valuable officers and men. "Merritt Edson, armed with appropriate orders, arrived to comb our units for officers and men deemed suitable for his 1st Raider Battalion . . . Neither General Holcomb nor I favored forming elite units from units already elite . . . Edson's levy against our division, coming at such a critical time, annoyed the devil out of me, but there wasn't one earthly thing I could do about it."[98]

Despite the resistance from Marine Corps leadership, the raider battalions, initially formed as the 1st and 2nd Separate battalions on January 6 and February 4 1942.[99] The formation of special units did not end with the establishment of the raider battalions. The Parachute Battalions, the Glider Group, the Barrage Balloon Squadrons, and the Defense Battalions were all developed in an effort to provide the Marine Corps the ability to respond to any contingency. Many of these units were inspired by the successes of such units in the European Theater. As the British commandos had inspired the birth of the raiders, German successes with paratroops and glider units encouraged the development of similar units in the Marine Corps. Due to the geographical challenges and the nature of warfare in the Pacific Theater, however, only the raiders and the

[96] *Ibid.*, p. 2.
[97] *Ibid.*, p. 2.
[98] *Ibid.*, p. 5.

parachute battalions were employed effectively. With regard to the latter, the parachute battalions fought gallantly, often at the side of the raider battalions, but never made one combat jump during the war.

"The basic mission of the two new raider units was threefold: to be the spearhead of amphibious landings by larger forces on beaches generally thought to be inaccessible; to conduct raiding expeditions requiring great elements of surprise and high speed; and to conduct guerrilla type operations for protracted periods behind enemy lines."[100] Chosen to lead these two units were Lieutenant Colonels Merritt "Red Mike" A. Edson (1st Raider Battalion) and Evans F. Carlson (2nd Raider Battalion). "Edson had served in France in World War I, had been a Marine pilot, captain of the Marine Rifle and Pistol Team, and an observer of the Sino-Japanese hostilities around Chaipei, China. Carlson had traveled extensively with the Chinese (Communist) Eighth Route Army guerrillas and had observed their tactics and organizations."[101]

One of the greatest assets of the raider battalions was that they prompted:

> a constant reappraisal of troop organization, and an ability to realign forces either permanently or for specific short-term objectives. The raider units were characterized by intense review of weapons and tactics and a willingness to adapt to rapidly changing circumstances. Raider operations were envisioned as requiring forces in increments of company strength, hence the alignment around a company base of fire by organizing weapons platoons in each company.[102]

The number of Marine raider units would increase as the war progressed. Before the end of the war the 1st Marine Raider Regiment, the 2nd Marine Raider Regiment (Provisional), and four Marine Raider Battalions (1st-4th) would be formed and see action in the Pacific

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[99] Ladd, p. 122.
[100] Updegraph, pp. 3-4.
[101] *Ibid.*, p.3.

Theater. Of these units, the 1st and 2nd Raider Battalions under Edson and Carlson enjoyed the most success.

2. Conventional Aspects of the Hybrid Force

Conventionally speaking, the Marine Corps had developed and trained in new methods of amphibious warfare since the conclusion of World War I. The need to develop an amphibious assault capability arose from the lessons of the Spanish-American War and World War I. In the former,

> the relatively easy victory over Spain did not conceal the fact that the fleet was incapable of sustained operations even in waters as close as those of Cuba, and the projection of American power far into the Pacific as a result of Commodore George Dewey's victory at Manila Bay made the problem of acquiring bases even more acute. Dewey himself remarked afterward that had he had under his command a force of 2,000 marines he could have forced the surrender of the Spanish army and occupied the city of Manila with comparative ease. This he claimed would have cleared the way for subsequent occupation of the islands by the United States Army and would probably have prevented the native insurrection which took so many years to quell. [103]

In the latter, the British and Australian debacle at Gallipoli served as a haunting reminder of the cost of ineptitude in amphibious warfare. Plagued by problems caused by terrain, intelligence, poor logistical support for the troops once ashore, and poor planning, the operation at Gallipoli was an utter failure. "The general conclusion was that large scale amphibious operations against a defended shore, especially if conducted in daylight, were almost certain to be suicidal."[104]

As a result, the Marine Corps engaged in an approximate 20-year revitalization effort to develop amphibious capabilities. Training, logistics, and equipment were

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[102] *Ibid.*, p. 6.
[103] Isely and Crowl, pp. 21-22
[104] *Ibid.*, p.20.

revolutionized to serve the purposes of newly developed Marine Corps doctrine during the years leading up to the start of the Second World War. Infantry, armor, artillery, air, naval gunfire, and logistics were all organized to support the large-scale amphibious operations that the Marine Corps envisioned as being their future role in warfare. By the time the war with Japan started, the Marine Corps was ready to test its newly developed conventional capabilities in combat. The Pacific Theater proved to be the perfect testing ground.

3. Hybrid Operations

Hybrid operations, as employed by the Marines in World War II, found their origins in experiments conducted by the Marine Corps in the 1930s. "Throughout the decade of the thirties, the Marine Corps experimented with the concept of the raider-type forces, generally as elements of larger operations."[105] This concept was reinforced during exercises in 1941 at New River, North Carolina. Operating there for the first time as an organization, the Raider Battalion's mission "was to include reconnaissance, feints, raids, secondary landings or diversions, and night landings for any of these purposes, or to act as a covering force for the entire division in delivering flank attacks aimed at hostile communications or at reserves in the rear of the main beach defenses, and in other similar activities."[106] The results of these exercises were soon to be tested in combat.

While many of the more notorious Marine operations in the Second World War were largely conventional in nature, it was in the Solomon Islands, namely in Guadalcanal and Bougainville, where the Marine Corps proved very effective in utilizing hybrid tactics. Utilizing a blend of conventional and unconventional tactics, the Marine

[105] Updegraph, p.1.

Corps, along with constant support from the Navy, was able to gain and maintain control of the strategically valuable Solomon Islands. From the seizures of Guadalcanal in the south, to Bougainville in the north, the newly established Raiders were combined with elements of the Parachute Battalions, and successfully fought in concert with conventional infantry and support units. In the initial assault on Guadalcanal, conventional units stormed the beach on Guadalcanal proper while the 1st Raider Battalion simultaneously struck Tulagi, which had been the seat of the British Solomon Islands Government.[107] In the meantime, the 2d Raider Battalion led by Carlson was conducting a diversionary raid on Makin Island. At Bougainville in late 1943, the composition of special and conventional marine elements was again essential to success. While conventional elements were preparing for an assault on Bougainville on November 1st, a successful diversionary raid was conducted on the island of Choiseul by elements of the 1st Parachute Regiment under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Robert H. Williams, with Lieutenant Colonel Victor H. Krulak commanding its 2d Battalion.[108] "Get ashore on Choiseul, the general ordered, and stir up the biggest commotion possible, 'Make sure they think the invasion has commenced . . .' It was a most unusual raid, 656 men, a handful of native guides, and an Australian coastwatcher with a road map."[109] The diversion not only held off the Japanese while the real invasion occurred at Empress Augusta Bay in Bougainville, but also resulted in the deaths of at least 143 Japanese to 9 marines killed, 15 wounded, and 2 missing.[110] Perhaps the most notorious marine hybrid

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[106] Isely and Crowl, p. 65
[107] Updegraph, p. 8.
[108] Captain John C. Chapin, *Top of the Ladder: Marine Operations in the Northern Solomon Islands*, Washington, D.C.: Marine Corps Historical Center, 1997, p. 9.
[109] *Ibid.*, p. 9.
[110] *Ibid.*, pp. 10-11.

force engagement, however, occurred at what would come to be known as "Edson's Ridge".

Having seized control of the Japanese airstrip on Guadalcanal by early August 1942, the Marines were continually challenged by the Japanese in their efforts to retake the airfield as well as the entire island. The strategic value of the airfield to both sides was significant. For the Japanese, retaking the airstrip would serve as a springboard for retaking the island and protecting the rest of the Solomons from the Americans. For the Americans, maintaining possession of the airstrip and island would be crucial to fulfilling their "climb up the Solomon ladder." As fighting in and around the Solomon Islands continued, the importance of air superiority increased. American aircraft carriers were suffering great losses in the area, threatening to deny the Americans with the vital air assets required for reconnaissance, shipping strikes, close air support, and supply delivery. Consequently, the possession of the airfield (named Henderson Field after its capture) was extremely important in these roles being fulfilled despite the inadequate condition of the carrier fleet in the area.

In an effort to regain control of the airfield, the Japanese launched a series of attacks against the Americans in September 1942. The attacks were conducted by elements of a Japanese brigade "totaling some 6,000 men and named after its commanding officer, Major General Kiyotake Kawaguchi," culminating during 12-14 September.[111] Defending the airstrip was a combined force of raiders and parachutists under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Edson. This force was provided conventional

[111] Isely and Crowl, p. 141.

support from amphibious tractors, engineers, pioneer battalions (shore party battalions) and, most importantly, artillery.

> The raiders and paratroopers were placed in hastily constructed defensive positions astride a ridge which rose just south of the airfield and stretched southward into the jungle. Engineers, pioneers, and amphibian tractor personnel covered the flanks of this newly and as yet only partially established series of small defensive points, tying up in so far as possible with the beach flanks to the east and west. Thus in effect the marines had developed something which Vandegrift would later formalize in an operation order – a perimeter or cordon defense, roughly rectangular in shape, entirely surrounding the airfield.[112]

The ensuing battle, "by far the most serious up to that point in the land campaign, quickly became a legend, with considerable justification."[113]

While, estimates of the size of the Kawaguchi Brigade prior to the battle ranged anywhere from 4,500 to 6,000, it was clear that Edson and his men were outnumbered by a factor of at least two to one. "It seems fair to say that the few hundred Marines on the ridge that night faced about fifteen hundred Japanese soldiers – difficult odds under any method of calculation."[114] Staving off a number of attacks over the course of three days, the Marines were able to successfully withdraw, regroup, and counterattack with great effect. The value of conventional support was witnessed throughout the engagement. In one instance, "the sheer weight of the Kawaguchi assault drove the marines back to the northern edge of Edson's Ridge. Just below them lay the airfield; but the Kawaguchi assembly areas were raked with artillery fire, which despite poor cartographic data and the necessity of firing 105-millimeter howitzers at under the minimum range, performed

[112] *Ibid.*, p. 143.
[113] Jon T. Hoffman, *Once a Legend: "Red Mike" Edson of the Marine Raiders*, Novato, CA: Presidio, 1994, p. 206.
[114] *Ibid.*, p. 206.

superbly."[115] Edson was also reinforced by the Second Battalion, Fifth Marines during Kawaguchi's strongest efforts.[116] This conventional support proved crucial to the American success. Kawaguchi's men, wounded, tired, and demoralized, were unable to overcome the effects of the artillery and infantry support provided to Edson. By September 15th, "the Raiders and Parachutists walked off the ridge in the morning and left 2/5 to mop up the battlefield and bury the Japanese dead."[117] The price of victory was not cheap. Raider losses were put at 135 men, and those of the Parachutists at 128. Of these, 59 were dead or missing in action.[118] The benefits reaped, however, were great: " . . . only a remnant of the Kawaguchi Brigade was left, a broken group of men who, harassed by aircraft, tramped through the jungle . . . and joined other starving and malaria-infested Japanese."[119] More importantly, Henderson Field was protected, ensuring the security of Guadalcanal for the Americans and their ability to provide the necessary air support for continued operations in the Solomon Islands. Edson would be awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor for his actions.

F. CONCLUSIONS

In assessing the effectiveness of the Marine Corps hybrid model in the Solomon Islands compared to that of Merrill's Marauders in Burma and Marine Corps conventional operations in Peleliu, it must be noted that distinct differences do exist between the cases, specifically in terms of geography and time. Furthermore, each area provided the United States and Japan with different amounts of access to supplies, logistics, and support. With regard to timing, the Solomon Islands campaign occurred

[115] Isely and Crowl, p. 144.
[116] *Ibid.*, p. 144.
[117] Hoffman, p. 205.

shortly after the start of American involvement in the war, whereas the landing at Peleliu occurred at a very desperate time for the Japanese. That said, however, the performance and effectiveness of the hybrid force in the Solomon Islands provides strong evidence that, in its allowing for greater flexibility, it would have performed better than the special and conventional assets fighting the Japanese independently in the Pacific theater. While the percentage of losses suffered by the raiders and parachute battalions was high, it is likely that a larger force of strictly conventional infantry would have suffered even greater losses. Lacking the mobility and flexibility of the smaller hybrid force, the larger conventional force would likely have found it harder to withdraw, regroup, and attack, with the same level of efficiency as Edson's forces. Possessing conventional support should they need it, the special assets of the Marine Corps hybrid force were better able to conduct the missions assigned to them without fear of being misused or abused. As seen in the Battle of Bloody (Edson's) Ridge,

> several factors contributed to the American victory over a numerically superior foe. One important aspect was the availability of firepower . . . The batteries of the 11th Marines . . . undoubtedly inflicted a substantial proportion of Japanese casualties. Without that virtual wall of steel to their front, it might have been impossible for the Raiders and Parachutists to stop the onrushing enemy.[120]

A special force without the benefit of such conventional support would not have been able to fend off the continuous attacks of the larger Japanese force. Moreover, I contend that the knowledge of such support may have served as a motivating factor in encouraging the raider forces in conducting their missions. "Elite light infantry units are not usually equipped with heavy weapons – artillery, armor, and so forth . . . The

[118] *Ibid.*, p. 205.
[119] Isely and Crowl, p. 145.

experience of the Commandos in the latter part of World War II indicates that in prolonged combat elite units are eventually deployed more or less like other infantry, only to have heavier armed opponents cut them to pieces."[121] Employed in concert with conventional forces, special components of the hybrid force are less likely to suffer this fate.

The outright abusive manner in which Stilwell employed the Marauders in Burma is much less likely to occur within a hybrid force. While the success of the Marauders against the Japanese is without question, "Merrill . . . found his small force being employed, again and again, in regular battle against much larger Japanese formations. His forces thus suffered fatally from the inevitable attrition that accompanies 'regularization'."[122] Possessing large amounts of men and firepower, a hybrid force can engage an enemy that requires a conventional response without resorting to overextending the capabilities of their special assets. The Marauders enjoyed no such support and suffered dearly for it. "Stilwell kept them continuously in the field for far too long, giving them missions that while integrated with his plans for his regular forces, compelled the raiders to fight regular pitched battles. This over- and misuse of elite forces led to very high attrition and, though, they succeeded tactically on the 'road to Myitkyina, they were soon rendered inoperative."[123]

With regard to the Marine assault on Peleliu, the assault was planned and executed strictly as a conventional amphibious assault. The attacking forces did not account for the guerrilla-type tactics that the Japanese wound up employing after being

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[120] Hoffman, pp. 206-207.
[121] Eliot A. Cohen, *Commandos and Politicians: Elite Military Units in Modern Democracies*, Center for International Affairs, Harvard University, 1978, p. 58.

beaten back from their initial defensive positions. The Marines were forced to dislodge the Japanese from caves using the conventional assets available to them such as artillery, air bombing, and flame-throwers. These efforts were very costly in terms of lives. Unconventional efforts conducted by a hybrid force may have proven a great deal more effective in uprooting the Japanese from their caves and underground positions. Inserted prior to or during the conventional assault, special elements of the hybrid force may have been able to destroy a number of these positions. At the very least, intelligence gathered regarding the positions and defenses capabilities of the caves, may have saved a large number of the regular infantry lives that were lost in clearing the Japanese from their well-defended caves.

The Japanese had no distinct elite force, but did have (eventually) a hybrid strategy. The Marines, very early on, had an explicitly hybrid force, but seldom took advantage of the special operations raiding capability they had – instead using the elite part of their hybrid force in a mostly conventional way. Thus, this case demonstrates that the limits of the hybrid force are not firm, but instead are flexible, and may periodically shift more into either the conventional or special realms, as deemed appropriate for the case at hand.

[122] Arquilla, p. 256.
[123] *Ibid.*, p. xxiii.

IV. VIETNAM

A. BACKGROUND

The Vietnam War is the quintessential case for examining hybrid warfare, due to both the Vietnamese and the Americans each employing hybrid efforts, to varying degrees, throughout the war. Over the course of the war, the United States would attempt a number of operational and tactical methods to solve one strategic problem: the cessation of communist growth in Southeast Asia. Interestingly enough, the American approach to the Vietnam War was almost the exact opposite of the approach taken in the Second Seminole War. The first American efforts in the Second Seminole War were strictly conventional in nature, with General Winfield Scott failing to overcome Seminole resistance. As the war progressed, Americans enjoyed ultimate success due to the employment of hybrid tactics by Lieutenant McLaughlin and his Mosquito Fleet. Conversely, initial American efforts in Vietnam were hybrid in nature, and it was during this time that the US enjoyed the greatest level of success. As the war continued, the American strategy shifted to that of conventional force, resulting in ultimate defeat.

There were certainly a number of bureaucratic and political reasons as to why the Vietnam War was fought as it was. Indeed, as will be discussed, the successes of American Special Forces in Vietnam were limited by politico-military issues, not by the capabilities of the forces. This chapter will explain the various military approaches taken by the United States in fighting the war, and demonstrating, yet again, that the hybrid force enjoyed the greatest amount of success.

As seen in both the Second Seminole War and World War II, the environment and geography of Vietnam was very conducive to hybrid operations. Indeed, the Vietnamese

strategy focused on adapting its military to win in "three strategic areas": the highlands, the plains, and the urban areas.[124] The Vietnamese recognized that fighting in such diverse environs would require a diverse force. Conventional tactics were not going to succeed in the highland or urban areas, while guerrilla tactics would serve little value on the plains. "Our forces had to be strong enough to launch many campaigns at the same time or successively and on an ever larger scale, and to fight the enemy in all three strategic areas right up to the 'capital city' of the enemy."[125]

B. THE ENEMY AS A HYBRID FORCE

The Vietnamese fought as a hybrid force throughout the war. The unconventional effort was fought primarily by Viet Cong revolutionaries, while the conventional tactics and operations were employed by regular army assets of North Vietnam. Employed together, these forces would baffle the Americans for the duration of the war. Confusion and frustration created by the inability to employ an effective counter-strategy resulted in a great deal of disagreement and infighting among senior American leadership. Had the Vietnamese fought strictly unconventionally or conventionally, the benefits gained by this confusion would have been lost.

The employment of hybrid tactics by the Vietnamese against the Americans was the result of lessons learned in their war for independence against the French (The First Indochina War). In this war, the Vietnamese, under the leadership of Ho Chi Minh and General Vo Nguyen Giap, employed the revolutionary war strategy developed and practiced by Mao Tse-tung in China. As such, initial Vietnamese efforts against the French relied heavily on guerrilla tactics. These tactics proved very effective in wearing

[124] General Vo Nguyen Giap, *How We Won the War*, Philadelphia: RECON Publications, 1976, p. 34.

down the French defenses, rallying popular support, and serving as a foundation for the ultimate employment of conventional operations. The shift to conventional tactics occurred in 1949 when the Chinese began lending support to the Vietnamese effort. "New weapons and safe training areas allowed Giap to organize larger, division-sized units. Vietminh divisions in 1950 struck French posts on the Chinese border, capturing large amounts of equipment and securing Vietminh links with China."[126] This initial conventional success inspired further conventional attempts to oust the French that resulted in high losses for the Vietminh. After reverting to guerrilla tactics in order to rebuild forces and support, Giap struck the French outpost at Dien Bien Phu in 1954 employing large-scale conventional forces. Through a series of diversionary attacks, effective use of artillery, and siege tactics and techniques, Giap defeated the French decisively resulting in their withdrawal from Vietnam.[127]

Vietnamese tactics against the Americans differed from that employed against the French in that there was no attempt made to transition from guerrilla to conventional tactics. Instead, the strategy employed by Giap would consist of lethal blend of guerrilla and conventional tactics, conducted in a simultaneous and complementary fashion throughout the duration of the conflict. While these tactics were used in varying degrees as the war progressed, a definitive transition to outright conventional war never occurred. Indeed, there was no need for such a transition with the level of success enjoyed through the employment of hybrid tactics. In order to employ this strategy effectively, the Vietnamese recognized that varying means of resistance and force would have to be used

[125] *Ibid.*, p. 34.
[126] John Shy and Thomas W. Collier, "Revolutionary War," in Paret, p. 848.

depending on the geography of the battlefield and the nature of the enemy. As stated by General Giap, "in any war, after having concentrated large and powerful forces in the right direction and at the right time, we must also solve an equally important question, which is to choose and make full use of the most appropriate *form of combat*. Only by so doing can we create the necessary strength on the battlefield to win victory."[128] Consequently, the Vietnamese continually assessed their tactics and operations, changing them as necessary to meet the challenges presented by the environment or the enemy. As such, they enjoyed the ability to pick-and-choose when, where, and how to launch an attack.

General Giap attributes the Vietnamese victory to this combined employment of conventional and unconventional assets, specifically discussing three kinds of forces that were responsible for military effectiveness. These three forces consisted of: "the regular army, the regional forces, and the militia and self-defense forces. The regular army and the regional forces form the *People's Army*. The militia and self-defense forces are the *armed forces of the masses*."[129] In discussing the regular army, the General refers to "*many large strategic army columns* composed of many modern technical units, especially tank, armor, artillery and anti-aircraft units capable of conducting combined offensives on a large scale." [130] These forces were complemented by the "*regional armed forces and the political forces of the masses,*" that "were also consolidated and vigorously developed from the countryside to the cities and towns, from the populous areas of the

[127] Lt. Gen. Phillip B. Davidson, USA (Ret.), *Vietnam at War: The History, 1946-1975*, Novato, CA: Presidio Press, 1988, pp. 245-251.
[128] Giap, p. 52. The use of italics in quotations from *How We Won the War* are so emphasized by General Giap.
[129] *Ibid.*, p. 34.
[130] *Ibid.*, p. 35.

Mekong Delta to the coastal areas of central Vietnam. These forces were rapidly deployed, ready to combine their action with the main force, and combine military attacks with popular uprisings to strike decisive blows in vital areas, the towns in particular."[131]

The resultant force was a capable, flexible, and difficult to engage. "*Regular forces* . . . launched a series of large-scale combined attacks of various strategic units including mobile army columns and 'on-the-spot' army columns, striking directly into the towns, the nerve centers and the major military bases of the enemy."[132] "*Attacks by our regional armed forces and uprisings by the masses*, were launched continuously throughout the strategic general offensive, in all areas, from the countryside to the towns, . . . from the mainland to the offshore islands. In coordination with the military attacks of our regular units, they expanded and consolidated the successes of these attacks.[133] "The lesson to be drawn is that, against a skillfully used combination of regular and guerrilla forces, the largest and best-equipped army will struggle in vain."[134]

Such was the hybrid character of the Vietnamese forces.

C. CONVENTIONAL OPERATIONS AGAINST THE VIETNAMESE

Conventional efforts to end the Vietnam War commenced in 1964 following the Gulf of Tonkin incident – "an attack against two patrolling US destroyers – after which [President] Johnson extracted a resolution from Congress that gave him the equivalent of a declaration of war – or at least the impression that he could authorize bolder military

[131] *Ibid.*, p. 35.
[132] *Ibid.*, p. 40.
[133] *Ibid.*, p. 40.
[134] Robin Neillands, *In the Combat Zone: Special Forces since 1945*, New York: New York University Press, 1998, p. 155.

operations."[135] This was the break that General William C. Westmoreland, Commander of the Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (MACV), was looking for. Until this point in the war, American efforts were focused primarily on treating the war through counter-insurgent efforts, which were enjoying some success through the activities of Special Forces advisors in South Vietnam.

Raids and attacks on American bases in the South resulted in the Americans stepping up attacks against North Vietnam by means of air strikes. "The American retaliation for Viet Cong attacks led to increased counter-retaliation which necessitated the very introduction of ground combat forces which the use of air strikes was supposed to prevent."[136] For the Americans, the root of the problem was thought to lay in the support (military, economic, and political) given to the Viet Cong by North Vietnam. Consequently, the Americans failed to remain engaged against the Viet Cong through counter-insurgent means just when such efforts were starting to yield benefits. Instead, the Americans aimed to remove the North Vietnamese support to the Viet Cong, which if anything, had the unintended consequence of drawing the North Vietnamese government into a larger conventional conflict. While it is accepted by many that North Vietnamese participation would have increased regardless of the American response to their support of the guerrillas, the fact remains that the strategy taken by Westmoreland disregarded any other means to win the war than by a large-scale conventional approach. General Westmoreland was convinced that the war could be won simply by the employment of a large, conventional army plucked right from the pages of Clausewitz. His

[135] Millett, p. 564.
[136] Larry E. Cable, *Conflict of Myths: The Development of American Counterinsurgency Doctrine and the Vietnam War*, New York: New York University Press, 1986, p. 285.

recommendation to President Johnson in 1965 called for the enlargement of American forces to 200,000 men with which he would begin offensive operations in 1965 to deny the enemy victory, and defeat him outright by 1968.[137] Unfortunately, such a strategy was doomed to fail and resulted in the US being unable to uproot the Viet Cong from South Vietnam

> The American Army was the incorrect instrument for fighting the conflict which had developed in South Vietnam. It was a force configured, equipped and trained according to a doctrine suitable for conventional warfare, or for warfare in the nuclear battlefield of Europe. The mechanical techniques of mobility, heavy firepower and sophisticated communications did not automatically endow the army with the necessary capabilities to successfully counter insurgent forces . . . At the very most, the use of conventional, big battalion tactics by the Americans would assure that the insurgents ceased assembling their forces in large concentrations, resuming instead the campaign of ultra small-scale efforts of terrorism and intimidation coupled with political agitation and propaganda which had served so well in earlier days. The American idea that guerrilla wars could be fought successfully by using what were essentially conventional forces, tactics and doctrine was plainly wrong and was not supportable from the historical record, except in the narrowest of situations.[138]

D. SPECIAL OPERATIONS

American Special Forces were introduced into Vietnam in 1957 to serve as military advisors to the Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN) officers and Non-commissioned Officers (NCOs). The purpose of these forces was to "*train and advise* their Vietnamese colleagues, not to take charge of irregular units and certainly not to lead offensive missions against the Viet Cong. The United States intended to wage this war at one remove, but the South Vietnamese Army proved unable, and in some cases unwilling, to fight and win against their tough, highly motivated Viet Cong

[137] Millett, p. 566.
[138] Cable, pp. 282-283.

opponents."[139] Consequently, American Special Forces troops had to take charge of patrols and defensive operations, resulting in the slippery slope that would draw the United States into Vietnam for over 15 years.

American Special Forces involvement steadily increased with the start of the Kennedy administration in 1961. Kennedy, an outspoken advocate of Special Forces, "was eager to send the Special Forces into action. In April 1961 he sent 1200 of them to Vietnam, despite the possibility that this commitment might be considered a precedent for the introduction of combat troops."[140] Moreover, he authorized the activation of 5th Special Forces Group, 1st Special Forces, and the setting up of the Special Warfare Center in Fort Bragg.[141]

Special Forces efforts during this period were met with some success, specifically through the Civilian Irregular Defense Group (CIDG) program. The CIDG program was established in 1961, and was the focus of Special Forces efforts until 1964. The CIDG program was designed to train, advise, and assist Vietnamese mountain tribes (collectively known as Montagnards) in civil action programs and guerilla warfare.[142] The CIDG program did enjoy a certain level of success and demonstrated the first American effort to win the "hearts and minds" of the Vietnamese villagers. In fact, the program was expanded following its initial successes. Unfortunately, the program would result in a breakdown of South Vietnamese command and control with regards to the Montagnards. Suspicious as they were of the Montagnards, the South Vietnamese were concerned that the training provided to the Montagnards by American Special Forces

[139] Neillands, p. 159.
[140] Cohen, p. 41.
[141] Neillands, p. 162.

might eventually be used in an insurgent effort against the South Vietnamese government. While the Special Forces recognized the sensitivity of this issue, the support of the Montagnards was deemed vital to success. "Without their support in the Central Highlands the war was lost."[143] The tenuous situation culminated in 1964 "when the Montagnards rebelled and shot their South Vietnamese officers but gladly took orders from the Green Berets."[144] The episode embarrassed the Americans, infuriated the South Vietnamese and provided critics of Special Forces with needed ammunition to support their arguments against further Special Forces involvement.[145] The CIDG program's days were numbered shortly after this incident. With the buildup of US conventional forces in 1965, command and control of CIDG forces passed from the ARVN to MACV under a process called Operation Switchback.[146] This change in command and control contributed to the ultimate demise of the program, as the conventional leaders within MACV "charged the CIDG forces and their SF advisors with contact patrols and above all with the collection of intelligence on Viet Cong camps and strengths."[147] With the emphasis of the program now based on enemy engagement rather than civil engagement, the program lost its momentum and American support, and was turned over to the ARVN to control.

With the onset of the conventional approach to the war following the Gulf of Tonkin incident, employment of Special Forces was increasingly directed to serve in support of conventional operations specifically in terms of reconnaissance and

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[142] *Ibid.*, p. 162.
[143] *Ibid.*, p. 163
[144] Cohen, p. 72.
[145] *Ibid.*, p. 72.
[146] Neillands, p. 169.
[147] *Ibid.*, p. 169.

intelligence. The conventional attitudes towards Special Forces failed to improve and in fact took a turn for the worse in 1969 with the "Rheault Affair." This episode involved the murder of a Vietnamese double agent and resulted in the arrest of "Colonel Robert Rheault, the commander of the Fifth Special Forces Group (that is, the Green Beret commander for Vietnam), six Green Beret officers, and one NCO."[148] While charges in the case were dropped, it served as further evidence for Special Forces critics of the propensity for Special Forces to act outside the accepted rules of engagement.

E. MARINE CORPS HYBRID OPERATIONS

Marine Corps forces were introduced to Vietnam in March 1965 through an amphibious landing conducted on the beaches near Da Nang.[149] Marine involvement was part of the greater American effort underfoot to conventionalize the war following the Gulf of Tonkin incident. Under the organizational auspices of the III Marine Amphibious Force (MAF), the Marines would be assigned to control the five northern provinces of South Vietnam, collectively located within the I Corps Tactical Zone (I Corps).[150] "The marines could not have found a more difficult place in all of South Vietnam to fight either a war for control of the rural population or a war of attrition against the invading North Vietnamese Army (NVA). Terrain and weather conspired to make I Corps an unpleasant place to fight."[151] I Corps had the heaviest rainfall in Vietnam, and while the winter monsoons brought numbing cold, the summers produced temperature-humidity indices near 100 and clouds of dust.[152] As was the case in both the Seminole Wars and

[148] Cohen, p. 76.
[149] Neillands, p. 171.
[150] Millett, p. 560.
[151] *Ibid.*, p. 560.
[152] *Ibid.*, pp. 560-561.

World War II, the Marine Corps would find itself challenged equally by Mother Nature and the enemy.

Initial employment of the Marine Corps in the conflict was directed to serve a number of purposes, most of them in support of Westmoreland's conventional vision. The deployment of a Marine Brigade from Okinawa

> would not only secure the Da Nang airfield but would presumably release ARVN units for more aggressive operations in I Corps. Marine Hawk batteries would safeguard the base against possible DRV and Chinese air retaliation. In addition, the Marines could establish an American enclave that could be used to either escalate the war in South Vietnam or to protect an American withdrawal should Johnson decide to cut the commitment.[153]

Experiences once in Da Nang altered the Marine Corps' position on how the war should be fought. Spearheaded by the likes of General Victor H. Krulak, commanding general of Fleet Marine Forces Pacific, and Major General Lewis W. Walt, the III Marine Amphibious Force (MAF) commander, the Marine Corps embarked on a strategy of pacification that would last the better part of the Marine Corps' involvement in the war. Despite the stance of General Westmoreland, General Krulak was convinced that "an enclave, pacification strategy offered the best long-term chance of victory."[154] Clearly influenced by the Marine Corps Small Wars Manual of 1940, Krulak contended that the war could not be won in the battlefield if the South Vietnamese government could not maintain the support of the village populations. Furthermore, he did not believe that "the cultural differences between the Americans and the Vietnamese were so great that pacification was impossible as long as the United States insisted upon land reform, economic development, physical security, and grassroots village diplomacy. While he

[153] *Ibid.*, p. 564.
[154] *Ibid.*, p. 567.

did not deny the utility of opportunistic strikes against the Communist main force units, Krulak argued for a 'spreading ink blot' system of rural pacification rather than 'search and destroy' operations in Vietnam's backlands."[155] Krulak's pacification strategy would prove very effective and was highlighted by such Operations as COUNTY FAIR and GOLDEN FLEECE. COUNTY FAIR operations were conducted by mixed Marine-Vietnamese task forces and "combined civic action with population control techniques designed to eliminate the VC political cadre and village guerrillas."[156] GOLDEN FLEECE involved the protection of rice farmers during harvest from the threat of the Viet Cong. The culmination of Marine Corps pacification efforts was the Combined Action Program (CAP).

1. Unconventional Aspects of the Hybrid Force

The Marine Corps CAP program and the employment of Force Reconnaissance (Force Recon) typified unconventional aspects of the Marine Corps in the Vietnam War.

a. CAP Program

The CAP program was established by the Marine Corps in 1965 in order to protect gains made by the successful execution of Operations COUNTY FAIR and GOLDEN FLEECE. The Marines realized that villager expectations for protection were rising disproportionately to the level of protection that the Government of (South) Vietnam (GVN) could provide them. Consequently, CAP was instituted as the primary means to uproot the influence of the Vietcong within the villages and to win the "hearts and minds" of the Vietnamese villagers.

[155] *Ibid.*, p. 567.
[156] *Ibid.*, p. 570.

> The idea was to take a rifle squad (14 Marines) and a corpsman and combine them with a PF platoon (30-35) Vietnamese minuteman to operate in a specific village that probably contained two or more hamlets. These combined forces were called combined action platoons (CAPs). They were the forces that would provide the all-essential security, collect intelligence, strengthen local institutions by protecting the hamlet and village officials, improve the standard of living, and build support for the GVN.[157]

Figure 2 illustrates the typical composition of the Combined Action Platoon.

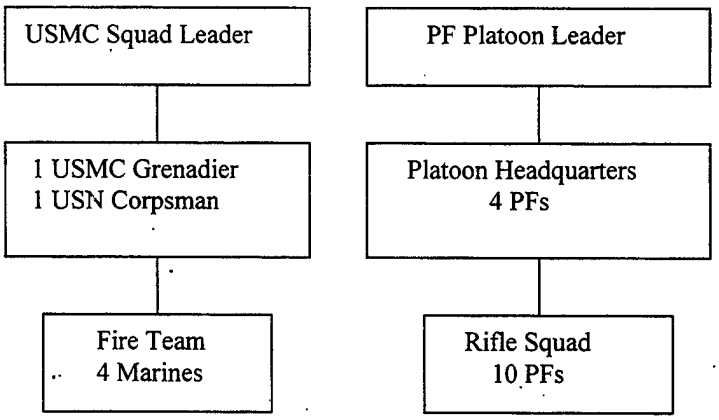

Figure 2: Composition of the Combined Actions Platoon [158]

The success of the CAP program was convincingly demonstrated by a Fleet Marine Force Pacific (FMFPAC) report prepared in January 1967. This report "observed that the 22 Vietnamese villages in the Marine Tactical Areas of responsibility (TAOR) that had an active Combined Action Program, of six months or longer, averaged a grade of 60 percent on the III MAF pacification scale. This was a rise of nearly 20 percentage points since the Combined Action Platoons were stationed in these

[157] LtCol Raymond C. Damm, Jr., "The Combined Action Program: A Tool for the Future," *Marine Corps Gazette*, October 1998, p. 51
[158] *Ibid.*, p. 50.

villages."[159] Further proof of the program's efficacy is the fact that throughout the history of the program only *one* CAP was ever overrun.[160] Despite the apparent successes of the program, Army leaders remained skeptical and indeed critical of Marine Corps participation in the war. The source of the criticism lay in the Army belief that ground had to be gained in order for there to be success. The winning over of the people was not a primary concern for them. Such criticism can be seen in the words of General Harry Kinnard.

> Kinnard was "absolutely disgusted" with the Marines. "I did everything I could to drag them out, " he said, "and get them to fight . . . They just wouldn't play. . . They don't know how to fight on land, particularly against guerrillas."[161]

Further criticism came from General Westmoreland.

> General Westmoreland was particularly upset over the Marines' use of CAPs, challenging as they did the concept of operations that he had drawn up. He stated in his memoirs that "they were assidiously [*sic*] combing the countryside within the beachheads, trying to establish firm control in hamlets and villages, and planning to expand the beachhead gradually up and down the coast . . . Yet the practice left the enemy free to come and go as he pleased throughout the bulk of the region and, when and where he chose, to attack the periphery of the beachheads." Westmoreland did not realize that the Marines were operating in the densely populated areas, leaving the VC little to recruit or exploit in the remote, largely uninhabited region they controlled.[162]

"The CAP unit concept was unique in that it was the singular innovative American program brought to Vietnam. All other counterinsurgency programs had been

[159] LtCol H.T. Hayden, (ed.), *Shadow War: Special Operations and Low Intensity Conflict*, Vista, CA: Pacific Aero Press, 1992, p. 136.
[160] Andrew F. Krepinevich, Jr., *The Army and Vietnam*, Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986, p. 175.
[161] *Ibid.*, p. 175.
[162] *Ibid.*, p. 175.

tried before, by someone else, somewhere else."[163] Figure 3 outlines the missions of the CAPs.

1. Clear out Vietcong infrastructure
2. Provide security for village
3. Protect GNV officials
4. Guard lines of communication in area
5. Conduct combined operations
6. Conduct psychological operations
7. Conduct Civic Action
8. Train Popular Force

Figure 3: CAP Missions [164]

[163] Hayden, p. 137.
[164] Damm, p. 51.

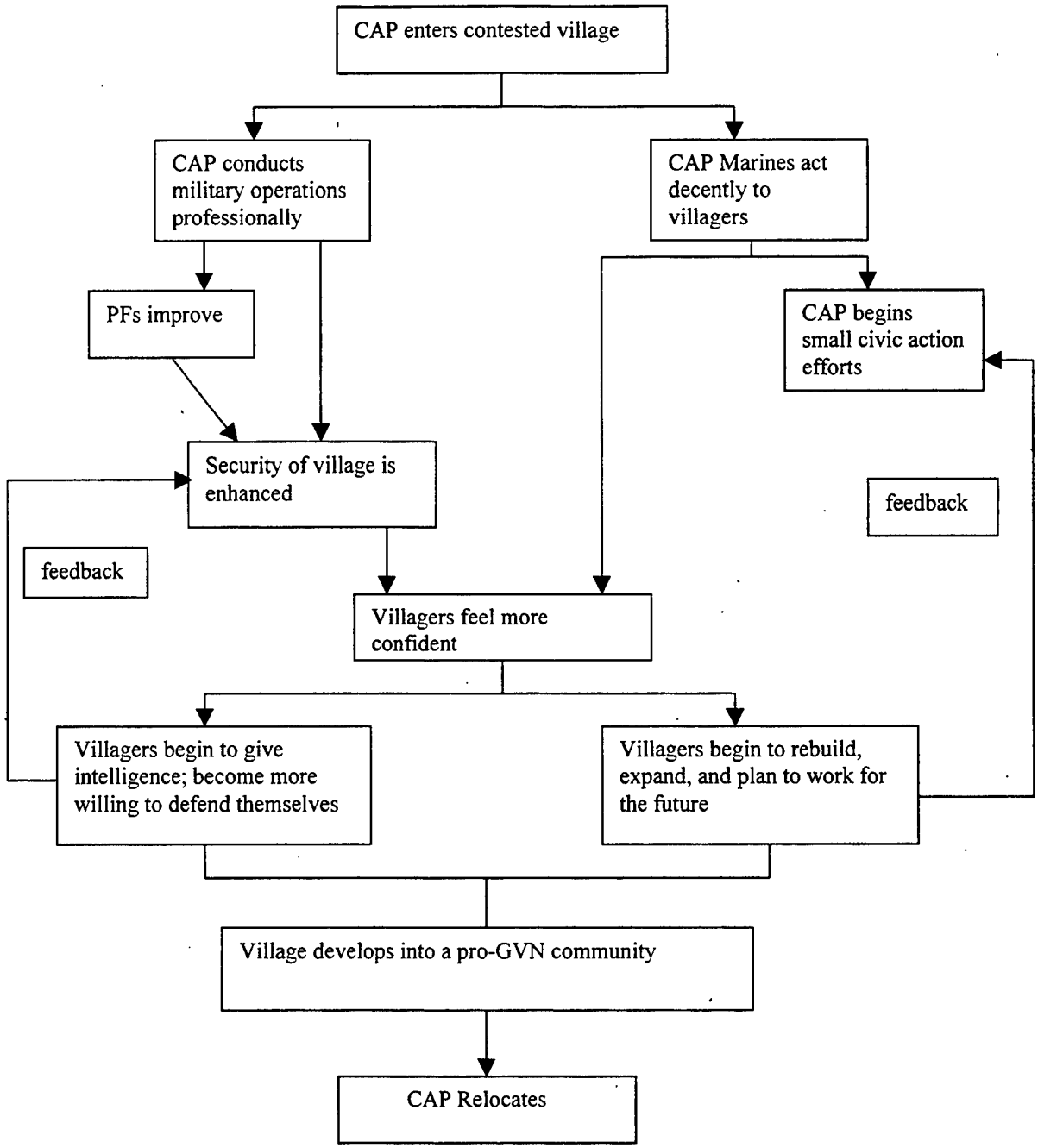

Figure 4: Schematic of the Cap Missions[165]

[165] *Ibid.*, p. 51.

b. Force Recon

In response to the demand for long-range reconnaissance support to conventional components, Marine Force Reconnaissance Companies were formed to fulfill the tasks of "long-range patrolling, intelligence gathering, and close combat."[166] Experiments with such elements had been conducted by the Marine Corps since the latter half of World War II. At the conclusion of the Korean War, the Marine Corps aggressively pursued the development of deep penetrating reconnaissance capabilities. The movement began in earnest in 1955 with the establishment of a Reconnaissance Platoon. Following a stringent selection process, the platoon "received a vast amount of specialized training, including the Ranger course and parachute jumps at the Army Airborne School at Fort Benning, Georgia. Two years of training and a fine performance on exercises convinced the Corps that the Recce Platoon had a place in the USMC order-of-battle and the platoon was raised to a company level."[167] Subsequently, a second recon company was organized and trained. The two companies were organized into three platoons, Parachute Recon, Amphibious Recon and Parachute Pathfinders, with the task of providing landing forces deep-patrol intelligence at up to 100 miles from the beachhead.[168] The emphasis placed on the parachute as the "basic means of transportation for the recon Marines was prompted by the possibility that in the dispersed modern battlefield 'beaches' might well be far inland instead of only along coastlines."[169] Coupled with the development of Marine Corps doctrine in the area of vertical assault, Force Recon provided capabilities that were unknown until this time. In fact, "from their

[166] Neillands, p. 189.
[167] *Ibid.*, pp. 189-190.
[168] *Ibid.*, p. 190.

formation in the late 1950s until 1965, the Force Recon Marines would be the only units in the Department of Defense organized and trained to conduct deep reconnaissance."[170]

With the onset of the Vietnam War, Force Recon was arguably the best prepared "special force" entering the war at least in terms of conducting reconnaissance and direct action missions. The greater challenge to Force, however, would be convincing the conventional elements of the Marine Corps of their value and how they should be properly employed.

2. Conventional Aspects of the Hybrid Force

As stated earlier, Marine Corps involvement in Vietnam was initially directed to assist in the execution of large-scale conventional operations aimed at destroying the Vietcong and elements of the North Vietnamese Army. The first example of Marine Corps conventional operations occurred during Operation STARLLIGHT in 1965. In August-September 1965, the Marines employed a four-battalion force controlled by the 7th Marines against the 1st VC Regiment. The attack resulted in the death of at least 700 Communists to less than 200 Marines.[171]

> Fought near the coast, the first battles proved that vertical envelopment, naval gunfire, close air support, and aggressive infantry tactics more than matched VC tenacity. Despite the monsoons of late 1965, additional battalion operations outside the Da Nang and Phu Bai TAORs reinforced III MAF confidence that it could stop VC main force penetrations into its pacification areas. The most ominous aspect of the thrusts beyond the TAORs was the Marines' first contact with regular NVA units, who proved hard fighters willing to contest helicopter landing zones even in the face of devastating Marine close air support.[172]

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[169] Michael Lee Lanning and Ray William Stubbe, *Inside Force Recon: Recon Marines in Vietnam*, New York: Ivy Books, 1989, p. 34.
[170] *Ibid.*, pp. 37-38.
[171] Millett, p. 572.

As the war progressed, the Marine conventional efforts increased, while attention shifted from the pacification programs to confronting the NVA along DMZ. The specter of NVA penetration across the DMZ resulted in development of a large-scale buildup by the Marines in I Corps. By the end of 1966,

> III MAF numbered nearly 70,000 Marines, who had assumed the defense of nearly 1,800 square miles and a million Vietnamese. The Marines had mounted 150 battalion or larger operations and more than 200,000 small-unit patrols, ambushes, and sweeps. Despite its early promise, the Marine pacification war had stalled because of GVN ineptness, MACV's insistence on big-unit operations, and the threat of NVA invasion from Laos and across the DMZ.[173]

3. Hybrid Operations

Marine Corps hybrid operations were imperative to the successes of the Marine Corps in Vietnam. In the Marine pacification war during the early years of Marine involvement, the CAP program served to support conventional interests in that they depleted the source of recruits for the VC. Additionally, conventional operations were conducted by the Marines in support of the CAP program. This support was aimed at countering any large-scale attempts by the VC to overrun the villages where the CAP program had taken hold. With the number of CAP personnel in the village decidedly small, the threat of losing the villages to larger numbers of VC was very real indeed. Recognizing the importance of maintaining the security of the villages, the Marines ensured that conventional support was allotted for their protection. "For all its commitment to pacification, III MAF did not avoid large-unit operations when such operations either promised special success or rescued hard-pressed ARVN units and U.S. Army Special Forces camps beyond the Marine TAORs. Whenever possible, III MAF

[172] *Ibid.*, pp. 572-573.

attempted to follow its own 'search-and-destroy' missions with pacification operations."[174]

While the pacification war continued throughout the Marine Corps' involvement in Vietnam (indeed, the CAP program was credited with its greatest success in mid-1969)[175], emphasis did eventually shift to large-scale conventional operations against the NVA. Reasons for this shift have been briefly mentioned, but it is important to point out that between the pacification war and the increased emphasis on large-scale conventional operations, the Marine Corps was increasingly being spread thin. Consequently, as the war progressed, the Marine Corps hybrid model became characterized by the support of Force Recon units to conventional Marine elements

The use of Force Recon assets in support of conventional operations required a significant amount of adjusting on the part of many conventionally oriented Marine leaders. For many of these leaders, the problems experienced in employing Force Recon was not necessarily their fault. Many of them were unfamiliar with the concept and capabilities of the Recon units, and as such were inclined to either underutilize or unintentionally abuse Force Recon. These problems were predominant during the first three or four years of Marine involvement. During this time, "Marine commanders, like the Army commanders, had as yet no real grasp of the complexities of the Vietnam War, and only a sketchy idea of how to use Force Recon. In the words of Lieutenant Colonel Roy Van Cleve, of the 3rd Recon Battalion: 'Recon was used for any mission that came

[173] *Ibid.*, p. 577.
[174] *Ibid.*, p. 572.
[175] Hayden, p. 138.

up. If you had no one else to do it, whatever it was, give it to Recon. So we got raider-type missions and we got some infantry assault-type missions'."[176]

Employment of Force Recon assets improved dramatically in 1969 with the appointment of LtGen Herman Nickerson, Jr., as Commanding General of III MAF. Up until this point, aside from the abuse of Force Recon (e.g., being ordered to probe for mines with knives and bayonets during Operation STARLIGHT),[177] the Force suffered from underemployment due to the reluctance on the part of senior commanders to send teams out beyond the range of friendly artillery and radio communications. Nickerson emphasized the role of Force Recon in supporting operations at the MAF level, and enjoyed substantial benefits in the areas of intelligence, reconnaissance, scouting, and effective direct action as a result. Specific examples of the benefit of the hybrid force were seen in combat operations in the A Shau Valley and the Thuong Duc Corridor.[178]

F. CONCLUSIONS

As we have seen, American strategy toward fighting the hybrid Vietnamese force ranged from counter-insurgent tactics early on, to full-scale conventional war as the conflict progressed. While early Special Forces efforts were effective, their disruption of South Vietnamese command and control efforts, as well as their perceived propensity for committing atrocities, placed them in a bad light with their conventional employers. Furthermore, with the Gulf of Tonkin incident, military leaders and politicians alike convinced themselves that the root cause of the war lay in the aggressive pursuits of the North, not the nationalistic revolution that was occurring within South Vietnam at the

[176] Neillands, p. 190.
[177] Lanning and Stubbe, p. 66.
[178] *Ibid.*, pp. 164-186.

hands of the Viet Cong. "In short order the war was transformed from a guerrilla conflict between the Viet Cong and Saigon to a larger U.S.-North Vietnamese war."[179]

It is clear, then, that the Marine Corps hybrid approach in the Vietnam War was the best U.S. strategy employed during the course of the war. The hybrid efforts of the CAP program, with conventional assets for overall village protection, was effective in maintaining pacification efforts while demonstrating formidable force to dissuade the potential use of large-scale tactics by the Viet Cong or NVA. Conversely, the Army was quick to shelve its pacification efforts at the onset of the conventional shift, leaving the villages wide open for VC takeover. The employment of the Marine strategy would have been much more effective had the overall strategy for the war not shifted so dramatically in 1965. Unfortunately, the Marine program was unable to have the desired impact, due largely to the requirements placed upon the Marine Corps to support the conventional efforts being waged by MACV. The utility of hybrid efforts conducted by Force Recon and conventional elements of the Marine Corps also serve as an important lesson. While Recon initially seemed to be as vulnerable to misuse as the special elements of the other services, the hybrid force ultimately demonstrated an effectiveness and capability that was unparalleled by any other service. Indeed, no other service rivaled the Marines in their efforts to integrate and employ forces from unconventional and conventional elements.

[179] Cohen, p. 88.

V. THE MARINE EXPEDITIONARY UNIT (SPECIAL OPERATIONS CAPABLE) [MEU(SOC)]

A. INTRODUCTION

Marine Corps policy states that "the primary objective of the MEU(SOC) program is to provide the National Command Authorities and geographic combatant commanders with an effective means of dealing with the uncertainties of future threats, by providing forward-deployed units which offer unique opportunities for a variety of quick reaction, sea-based, crisis response options, in either a conventional amphibious role, or in the execution of selected maritime special operations."[180] This chapter provides background and general information about the MEU(SOC) in order to provide a basis for understanding current MEU(SOC) structure and policy. This will allow for examination of the MEU(SOC) as a hybrid force, and the notion that the hybrid force model (as developed in the previous case studies), is nothing new either to warfare or to the Marine Corps.

B. HISTORY

As discussed in Chapter I, the failed attempt to rescue the American hostages in Iran in 1980 spurred movements in both political and military groups to rethink American special operations forces and capabilities. Subsequently, "in the 1981 Defense Guidance, and reemphasized in 1983, the Secretary of Defense directed a revitalization of SOF throughout the armed services. Given this added emphasis and the national requirement for a capability to conduct special operations, the Commandant of the Marine Corps in 1984 directed the Commanding General, Fleet Marine Force, Atlantic (CG FMFLANT),

[180] MCO 3120.9A

to examine the special operations capabilities of the Marine Corps."[181] The examination was conducted within the parameters established by the Commandant:

1. Remain naval/amphibious in nature.
2. Be organized and employed within the context of present MAGTF concept/doctrine.
3. Be assigned special operations that are doctrinally Marine missions and that do nor directly conflict with the missions of other Services' SOF.
4. Be viewed as supporting or complementary element of naval operations.
5. Be undertaken from the high watermark inland.
6. Remain under the command and control of the Commander Amphibious Task Force (CATF), Commander Landing Force (CLF), or other Naval Task Force Commanders.[182]

The study examined seven options that ranged from modest enhancement of the MEU with special operations capabilities, to the outright creation of a dedicated Marine Special Operations Force. "The examination revealed that the Marine Corps possessed an inherent capability to conduct a broad spectrum of special operations in a maritime environment, particularly when a requirement exists for the insertion of surface-borne or helicopter-borne special operations capable forces from the sea. Additionally, there were certain initiatives that the Marine Corps could undertake to enhance that inherent special operations capability."[183]

As a result of the examination, the 26th MAU was activated in June 1985 and commenced training in July for a November 1985 deployment to the Mediterranean. In December 1985, the 26th MAU received SOC designation. Deemed a success at the conclusion of the Mediterranean deployment, the MEU(SOC) program was implemented in the Fleet Marine Force Pacific (FMFPAC) in June 1987.[184] Implemented throughout

[181] Hayden, p.32.
[182] Commanding General, Fleet Marine Force, Atlantic, *Report of Examination of Marine Corps Special Operations Enhancements*, 26 MAR 1985.
[183] Hayden, p. 32.
[184] *Ibid.*, p.33.

the Marine Corps by 1988, all deploying MEUs have since been required to deploy as MEU(SOC). "Only the forward-deployed MEUs are designated MEU(SOC), and this is only when the units have demonstrated specific capabilities at the end of the pre-deployment training cycle in a Special Operations Capable Exercise (SOCEX)."[185]

C. POLICY

The governing document for MEU(SOC) is Marine Corps Order (MCO) 3120.9A, *Policy for Marine Expeditionary Unit [MEU(SOC)]*.

D. ORGANIZATION

The MEU(SOC) is the basis of the organizational means about which Marine forces are formed: the Marine Air-Ground Task Force (MAGTF).

> MAGTFs are task organizations consisting of ground, aviation, combat service support, and command components. They have no standard structure, but rather are constituted as appropriate for the specific situation. The MAGTF provides a single commander the optimum combined-arms force for the situation he faces.[186]

Every MAGTF, regardless of size, is composed of four main elements: the command element (CE), the ground combat element (GCE), the aviation combat element (ACE), and the Combat Service Support Element (CSSE). Although all MEUs(SOC) are deployed in this organizational manner, each may differ slightly in composition, depending on deployment location, Amphibious Ready Group (ARG) composition, or commander preferences. Figure 5 displays the MEU(SOC) organization with typical manning and equipment.

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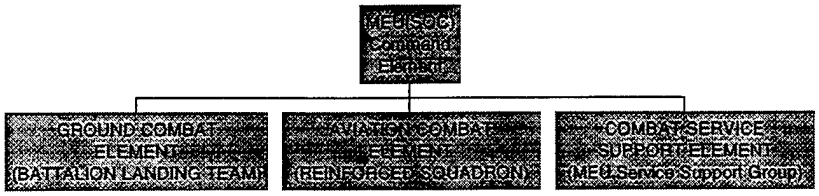
[185] *Ibid.*, p.33.
[186] *Warfighting*, FMFM-1, p.42.



TROOPS

2,050 Marines plus 100 Sailors assigned Marine units (medical, dental, chaplain, etc.)
Total: 2,150

AIRCRAFT

- 12 CH-46 medium light helicopters
- 4 CH-53 (D or E) heavy lift assault transport helicopters
- 4 AH-1 attack helicopters
- 3 UH-1 utility helicopters
- 6 AV-8B vertical/short takeoff and landing attack aircraft
- 2 KC-130 aerial refuelers
- 20 Stinger surface-to-air missile launchers

GROUND COMBAT EQUIPMENT

- 5 Tanks or 17 light armored vehicles
- 12 Amphibious assault vehicles
- 32 Dragon missile launchers (antiarmor)
- 8 TOW missile launchers (antiarmor)
- 4 105mm howitzers
- 4 155mm howitzers
- 8 81mm mortars
- 9 60mm mortars
- 20 .50 caliber machineguns
- 60 7.62mm machineguns
- 26 40mm grenade launchers

Source: Maj. Thomas C. Linn, "MAGTF Capabilities in an Uncertain World," *Marine Corps Gazette*, May 1990, p. 39.

Figure 5: MEU(SOC) Organization And Composition

The MEU(SOC) is commanded by a Colonel and is intended to be self-sustaining for 15 days. As such, it is important to note that the MEU(SOC) is not designed for employment as an independent entity in a protracted campaign. It is designed instead to serve as a mobile and flexible tool for the CINC in conducting conventional and select maritime operations of limited duration. In both conventional and special capacities, the MEU(SOC) can serve as the foundation upon which more appropriately sized or trained assets can build. Each MEU(SOC) is therefore designed and trained to serve as a Joint Task Force (JTF) enabler.

Additionally, the MEU(SOC) has the ability to organize within itself a temporary unit called the Maritime Special Purpose Force (MSPF) which is trained and equipped specifically to conduct direct action missions utilizing close quarter battle (CQB) skills. "The MSPF is task organized from MEU(SOC) assets to provide a special operations capable force that can be quickly tailored to accomplish a specific mission, and employed

either as a complement to conventional naval operations or in the execution of a selected maritime special operations mission."[187] It is perhaps most important to note that, according to Marine Corps policy, "the MSPF is not designed to duplicate existing capabilities of SOF, but is intended to focus on operations in a maritime environment. The MSPF is not capable of operating independently of its parent MEU; operating in conjunction with the MEU, however, it is capable of conducting operations with, or in support of SOF."[188] Figure 6 displays the organization and typical composition of the MSPF.

- Command Element
  - Commander
  - Comm Det
  - ITT Det
  - CI Det
  - Med Sect
- Covering Element
  - Rifle Plt (minus reinforced)
  - SEALs, PHIBRON (as required)
- Strike Element
  - Force Recon
  - Security
  - EOD Det
  - Photo
  - SEALs, PHIBRON (as required)
- Reconnaissance and Surveillance (R&S) Element
  - STA (sniper support) Plt
  - Comm Det
  - Rad Bn Det
  - CI/ITT Det
  - SEALs, PHIBRON (as required)
- Aviation Support Element (mission specific)
  - C2 Helo
  - Sniper Helo
  - Transport Helo
  - Attack Helo
  - Refueling Support
  - Airfield Construction Support
  - Stinger Missiles

Source: MCO 3120.9A,
Policy for MEU(SOC)

Figure 6: Maritime Special Purpose Force (MSPF)

[187] MCO 3120.9A
[188] *Ibid.*

E. TRAINING

Training for the MEU(SOC) is aimed at developing proficiency in both conventional and special operations. The overarching guidance for training and evaluation is provided in MCO 3120.9A and MCO 3502.3, *Marine Expeditionary Unit (Special Operations Capable) Predeployment Training Program [MEU(SOC) PTP].* There are five core-evaluated events that require evaluation for SOC designation that are broken down as follows:

1. Amphibious operations
   - Amphibious raid
     - Long-range raid (requiring Forward Arming and Refueling Point [FARP] operations)
     - Mechanized Boat Raids
2. Military operations other than war (MOOTW)
   - Non-combatant evacuation operations (NEO)
   - Security operations (embassy/consulate)
   - Humanitarian/civic assistance
3. Direct Action Operations
   - Hasty tactical recovery of aircraft and personnel (TRAP)
   - In-extremis hostage recovery (IHR)
   - Naval platform raid
     - Gas-oil platform (GOPLAT)
     - Maritime Interdiction Operation (MIO)
4. Supporting Operations
   - Clandestine reconnaissance and surveillance
   - Mass casualty operation
   - Airfield seizure
5. Rapid Response Planning Process (R2P2)

In order to fulfill the requirements for SOC certification, predeployment training is broken down into three phases: initial, intermediate, and final. Each element within the MEU is required to undergo specific training and evaluation throughout each of the phases. The three phases culminate in the MEU being designated special operations capable.

As described in MCO Order 3120.9A, the Initial Training Phase focuses on individual and small-unit skills training, and is highlighted by such training courses as ARG/MEU (SOC) Staff Planning Course, operations and intelligence seminar, and special skills courses. The special skills courses include scout swimmer, urban reconnaissance and surveillance, urban sniper, and close quarters battle and security element training, to name a few.

The Intermediate Training Phase is designed to "conduct collective MEU level training that builds on unit capabilities. Emphasis will be on live fire and night operations over extended ranges."[189] This training is highlighted by MSPF interoperability training, Training in an Urban Environment (TRUE), GOPLAT and MIO training, and Marine Expeditionary Unit Exercise (MEUEX). The MEUEX is the final exercise in the intermediate phase and involves the entire MEU.

The Final Training Phase is the culmination of the predeployment training cycle. Its highlights include advanced amphibious training, Supporting Arms Coordination Exercise (SACEX) and Special Operations Capable Exercise (SOCEX).

Two specific points should be made with regard to the MEU PTP. First, the MEU/ARG staff is involved in the training process in a hands-on manner. Throughout all three phases, the staff is evaluated on its ability to conduct rapid planning and its ability to demonstrate interoperability with the Amphibious Squadron (PHIBRON) and Special Operations and Joint Special Operations Task Forces. This allows the staff to become comfortable working with and employing all elements of the MEU. This serves to break down any hesitancy or uncertainty there may be in employing the special

[189] MCO 3502.3, July 7, 1995.

elements of the MEU. Moreover, personnel from both conventional and special backgrounds man the MEU/ARG staff.

The second point is that emphasis is placed on interservice and interagency training and coordination during the predeployment training. This is accomplished primarily through Situational Training Exercise (STX), the MEUEX, and the Fleet Exercise/Special Operations Capable Exercise (FLEETEX/SOCEX). Participants in this training include personnel from the Department of State (DOS); Country/Embassy Team and Disaster Assistance Personnel, the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA), the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), Special Operations Forces (SOF), and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs).[190]

Special Operations training is provided and evaluated by the Marine Expeditionary Force (MEF) Special Operations Training Group (SOTG). The mission of the SOTG is "to provide training in special operations and warfare in diverse environments for the MEF,"[191] which is accomplished through the following tasks:

1. Conduct special operations training, exercises, and evaluation in support of the MEU(SOC) training program.
2. Provided resident expertise in special operations to the MEF commander and interface with special operations forces, as directed.
3. Maintain the capability to provide training in arctic, desert, mountain, and urban environments, as required.
4. Provide special operations trained personnel to the supported unified Commander-in-Chief (CINC), as directed.
5. Test and evaluate special operations doctrine, equipment, and weapons as directed by higher headquarters.
6. Maintain a cadre of qualified instructors capable of instructing and developing special skills instruction of the MEU(SOC) training program.[192]

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[190] *Ibid.*
[191] *Table of Organization for Special Operations Training Group, I Marine Expeditionary Command Element*, July 19, 1995.
[192] *Ibid.*

F. MEU(SOC) CAPABILITIES

The capabilities of a MEU(SOC) are divided into the categories of Amphibious Operations, Direct Action Operations, Military Operations Other Than War (MOOTW), and Supporting Operations. Figure 7 lists MEU(SOC) capabilities as outlined in Marine Corps Order (MCO) 3120.9A.

- AMPHIBIOUS OPERATIONS
  - Assault
  - Raid
  - Demonstration
  - Withdrawal
- DIRECT ACTION
  - In Extremis Hostage Rescue (IHR)
  - Gas and Oil Platform Seizure (GOPLAT)
  - Specialized Demolition Operations
  - TRAP
  - Seizure/Recovery of Selected Personnel or Material
  - Counterproliferation of WMD
  - Vessel Boarding Search and Seizure (VBSS)
- MOOTW
  - Peacekeeping
  - Peace Enforcement
  - Joint/Combined Training/Instruction Team
  - Humanitarian Assistance/Disaster Relief
  - Security Operations
  - NEO
  - Reinforcement Operations
- Supporting Operations
  - Tactical Deception Operations
  - Initial Terminal Guidance (ITG)
  - SIGINT/EW
  - MOUT
  - R&S
  - Fire Support Planning, Coordination, Control in a Joint/Combined Environment
  - CI
  - Airfield/Port Seizure
  - EAF Operations
  - Show of Force Operations
  - JTF Enabling Operations
  - Sniping Operations

Figure 7: MEU(SOC) Capabilities

Of the above capabilities, the following are those which are specifically intended for assignment to the MSPF:

1. Reconnaissance and Surveillance
2. Specialized demolitions
3. In-extremis hostage recovery
4. Seizure/recovery of offshore energy facilities
5. Seizure/recovery of selected personnel and material
6. Visit, board, search and seizure operations

7. Tactical recovery of aircraft and personnel[193]

G. MEU(SOC) LIMITATIONS

The limitations of the MEU(SOC) are outlined in MCO 3120.9A. The MEU(SOC) has a limited:

1. Defensive capability against armored/motorized units in open terrain.
2. Defensive capability against a sustained low-level air attack when operating independent of naval air support.
3. Capability to replace combat losses and retrain if early introduction of follow-on forces is not contemplated.
4. Capability to participate in special warfare tasks requiring mobile training teams in nation-building efforts. However, the MEU(SOC) can provide some entry level and/or reinforcement training.
5. Ability to establish a MEU Headquarters ashore, and operate independent of naval shipping. The MEU(SOC) is heavily reliant upon shipboard facilities for C4I and aviation maintenance support.[194]

H. REDUNDANCIES WITH SOF: REAL OR PERCEIVED

The issue of redundancy between SOF and the Marines is often debated. The Marine Corps position with regard to this matter is that all Marine Corps efforts within the special operations realm are complementary, rather than duplicative. Moreover, they are geared more "inland" than are Naval Special Warfare assets. Specific items that are often the cause for debate include training for IHR, training for airborne and subsurface entry, and GOPLAT/MIO. The point made by numerous Marine Corps officers in addressing this debate centers on two points. First, the Marine Corps' efforts in special operations are designed to be conducted in extreme situations. That is, situations in which SOF may be more appropriate, but unavailable. Second, they are designed to be conducted in concert with Naval Special Warfare elements. For instance, GOPLAT/MIO operations are typically planned for SEALs to approach the platform from the water and

[193] MCO 3120.9A

the Marines to approach from the air. This top-down/bottom-up approach allows for complete coverage of the platform.

While redundancies may exist, Marine Corps efforts in the realm of special operations serve to enhance their performance as a hybrid force. Lacking these capabilities, the Marine Corps would become a strictly conventional force, and consequently its capability to perform in the realm of hybrid warfare, in which they have historically proven so successful, would suffer.

The importance of interoperability, along with conclusions and assessments, follow in the next chapter.

[194] MCO 3120.9A.

VI. ASSESSMENTS AND CONCLUSIONS

A. CASE STUDY ANALYSIS AND RELEVANCE

The three cases examined in this study have provided clear historical evidence of the value of a hybrid force. In comparing the success of the Marine Corps hybrid approach to unilateral conventional and special approaches, it was seen that the Marine hybrid force enjoyed the greatest success in each conflict. The reasons for this are threefold.

First, the Marine Corps, being a relatively small organization, possesses the ability to move easily throughout the realm of hybrid operations. Hybrid warfare occurs across a continuum, varying in degrees of conventional or unconventional characteristics. In order to remain in control of a conflict throughout the changes inherent in the hybrid realm, the engaged force must possess the flexibility to adapt as required. The size of the Marine Corps permits such flexibility without requiring major changes in doctrine or training. Conventional or special forces are not designed for, nor are they capable of, such flexibility.

Second, in possessing such wide capabilities under one bureaucratic umbrella, the Marines are not as challenged by the parochial disagreements that have a tendency to emerge between conventional and special unit commanders when developing strategy for hybrid conflicts. For example, it seems certain that General Scott would never have employed Colonel Harney's forces in the manner that Harney did, and had Harney been under Scott's direct control, he would have been discouraged from pursuing his

unconventional approach to defeating the Seminoles. Similarly, instances can be identified during World War II and Vietnam in which debates raged over how to defeat the enemy, with conventional and special assets defending their means of approach as being the best. Within the Marine Corps, such parochialism, while it exists (as seen in the initial misuse of Recon in Vietnam), has less of a tendency to occur, and when it does occur it does so in a less damaging manner. This point is still valid today. The fundamental reason for this is that the Marines are very culturally oriented and, as "every Marine is a rifleman," are much less critical of the differing elements that comprise the hybrid force.

Third, the Marine Corps enjoyed the greatest success in these three cases due to their successful efforts to adapt to situational demands. Prior to each of these conflicts, Marine Corps leaders made a conscious decision to adapt the Corps to meet the anticipated threat.

In the Seminole case, the decision to employ the Marines for service with the Army was made by Commandant Henderson in order to demonstrate the value of the Marine Corps. Until this time, the Marines had been largely employed as ships' guards, although the War of 1812 had served as an opportunity to showcase the Marines Corps' fighting ability. Henderson recognized that, to remain relevant, the Marine Corps must continue to prove its worth in battle, even if it meant serving with the army in a predominantly ground campaign.[195]

Prior to World War II, the Marine Corps spent two decades developing the amphibious doctrine that would defeat Japan in the Pacific War. The Marines accepted

[195] Millett, pp. 70-72.

this challenge in light of the Army's rejection of efforts to develop amphibious doctrine. The Army's outlook on amphibious operations was negative, largely shaped by the British debacle at Gallipoli. Consequently Army leaders chose to pursue the development of other strategies.

In the years prior to Vietnam, the Marine Corps would develop doctrinally in the areas of vertical assault and the establishment of deep reconnaissance units. Their efforts in each of these areas played a vital role in the successes that were achieved in Vietnam. Furthermore, their persistent maintenance of the CAP program, despite conventional army objections, proved to be valuable in establishing control of numerous villages during the early years of the war.

B. REMAINING RELEVANT

After the Vietnam War, the Marine Corps continued its quest to remain relevant. In the latter half of the 1970s, the uncertain future for Marine Corps participation in conflict prompted the Brookings Institution's study, *Where Does the Marine Corps Go from Here?*.[196] The study contended that the "the golden age of amphibious warfare is now the domain of historians, and the Marine Corps no longer needs a unique mission to justify its existence."[197] Recommended proposals for future Marine Corps employment included: replacing Army assets in Asia exclusively with Marine Corps units; reducing the size of the Marine Corps and maintaining amphibious warfare as its sole mission; replacing the 82nd Airborne Division as the US ground quick-reaction force; or

[196] Martin Binkin and Jeffrey Record, *Where does the Marine Corps Go From Here?*, Washington, DC: The Brookings Institution, 1976.
[197] *Ibid.*, p. 88.

redirecting their focus toward joining the Army in Europe.[198] While a few of these ideas provided for interesting debate, none of them had a chance to materialize due to the demand for a development of special operations capabilities, within all the services, following the failed Iranian hostage rescue attempt and other difficulties experienced during the early 1980s. As discussed previously, the MEU(SOC) concept was the result of a Marine Corps study conducted in response to executive direction. Since its inception, the MEU(SOC) has become the cornerstone upon which American littoral strategies rest.

If nothing else is taken from the case studies, let it be this: the Marine Corps has demonstrated an historical tendency to evolve to remain relevant, and it can be assured that the Marines will continue to do so in the future. Their ability to evolve as necessary is enhanced by the very characteristics that make them a successful hybrid force: their relatively small size, and their bureaucratic independence. The implication of this for USSOCOM and the Naval Special Warfare Command (NAVSPECWARCOM) is that, should the Marine Corps feel that a greater shift into the special operations arena is necessary to remain relevant, then that is what will be done. If their relevance ever hinges upon such a transition, it is certain that necessary doctrinal and organizational changes will be made despite who is filling the role at the time. As such, it would behoove USSOCOM, NAVSPECWARCOM and the Marine Corps to develop better relationships aimed at supporting interoperability issues and common concerns.

[198] *Ibid.*, pp. 66-88.

C. MARINE CORPS LIMITATIONS

Having described the capabilities of the MEU(SOC) in the previous chapter, I should also now address the limitations of the Marine Corps hybrid model. These limitations will be addressed in terms of the MEU(SOC), as this will usually be the first Marine force on the scene in a crisis. It must be recognized, however, that the essence of the Marine Corps' hybrid character lies within the MAGTF concept in general. As such, the limitations of the MEU(SOC) do not necessarily extend to larger MAGTFs.

With regard to the conventional realm, the MEU(SOC) is limited predominantly by the factors of time and strength. The MEU(SOC), once on the ground, is limited to approximately 15 days of operations. While this limitation can be extended, based on logistical support and the nature of the operation, it serves as a good guideline for employing the force. In terms of strength, the MEU(SOC) is manned, on the average, by 2000 Marines and sailors. Again, depending on the mission and duration, this strength may be a limiting factor in the decision to employ the MEU(SOC).

The limitations of the Marines with regard to special operations are largely self-induced. Recognizing the value of the SEALs in conducting special operations, the Marines do not seek to duplicate SEAL efforts, but instead complement their abilities through the performance of specific maritime and amphibious special operations. The limitations of the Marines in these missions include: they may be clandestine, but not covert, in nature; they are limited in means of insertion compared to the SEALs; and their training is largely focused around the performance of in-extremis direct action missions.

In the course of numerous interviews conducted during the research for this study, the following points were emphasized time and again:

1. The Marine Corps is not attempting to establish or promote itself as a special force. However, the value of special operations in amphibious and littoral warfare has been proven repeatedly throughout history. The dynamic nature of amphibious war demands flexible and responsive measures that may include special operations. Therefore, it only makes sense to possess a capability to perform such missions that would improve the chances for success. This is particularly true in instances where SOF forces are not readily available but Marine forces are.
2. In pursuit of special operations, the Marine Corps recognizes the value of the SEALs in such missions and, as such, desires their participation. Anything less is not smart utilization of available assets. As more than one Marine officer stated during interviews, "there can never be too many friends on the battlefield."

D. MEU(SOC) AND SOCOM

The importance of establishing and maintaining a cooperative relationship between Headquarters Marine Corps (HQMC) and USSOCOM concerning MEU(SOC) has regrettably been overlooked. Initial relations (or lack thereof) were perhaps influenced by the Marine Corps decision not to provide dedicated assets to SOCOM, choosing instead to develop the MEU(SOC). This decision was interpreted by many to be evidence of Marine elitism, in that it seemed the Marines were implying that they were equally capable of conducting special operations, and therefore neither required, nor desired, to participate in the newly established SOCOM. Other issues, including the use of the term "Special Operations Capable" by the Marines, further strained relations between SOF and the Marine Corps. SOF critics of MEU(SOC) contend that their use of the term is inappropriate, as the criteria established for attaining the title is certified by the Marines themselves. Furthermore, critics also argue that the use of the title can lead to confusion among civilian policy-makers, and lead them to equate the Marines with SOF due to their ignorance of the definitional difference between the two. These issues merely scratch the surface of the misunderstandings that exist between the Marine Corps

and SOF. Other, more involved, issues include: training and accession processes; mission capability debates; and mission assignments, to name a few.

In an attempt to resolve these issues, a Memorandum of Agreement, signed in 1993, established "a USSOCOM/MC Board designed to 'advise and make recommendations to USCINCSOC and the Commandant of the Marine Corps on policies, concepts, and issues whish may be beneficial to both'."[199] The Board provided a valuable forum for addressing common concerns, and led to beneficial training for both sides. Joint training culminated in a Crisis Intervention and Response Exercise (CIREX) in which both Marine and SOCOM assets participated. While the Board enjoyed initial success, a meeting has not been held in over two years. Furthermore, efforts to reestablish the Board have been deemed unnecessary.

The current relationship between SOCOM and HQMC is unfortunate. It does not benefit SOCOM to treat the Marine Corps as they would any other service, mainly because the Marine Corps is not like any other service. SOCOM maintains control over the other services special operations organizations, employment, and capabilities. The Marine Corps, however, through its MEU(SOC) program, has continually expanded its roles and missions into the special operations realm. This can serve as added value to certain SOCOM missions, and serve to enhance the relationship between the SEALs and Marines. Furthermore, the ARG/MEU serves as a Joint Task Force (JTF) enabler, and as such may be involved in the establishment of a Joint Special Operations Task Force (JSOTF). It only seems reasonable that better efforts at addressing such issues in a regular and neutral forum would provide for better execution during real world crises.

E. MEU(SOC) AND NAVSPECWARCOM

Of greater concern is the relationship between the Marines and NAVSPECWARCOM. Issues concerning interoperability, training, redundancy, command and control, and employment have plagued the two parties for years.

The desire for interoperability would seem obvious. Each organization has traditionally been involved in maritime special operations and will remain so in the future. Moreover, interoperability efforts can only enhance the capabilities that each unit possesses. While certain redundancies do exist between SEALs and Marine elements of the MSPF, these redundancies are designed to be complementary, not duplicative. The typical size of the SEAL unit embarked in an ARG is a platoon. A unit of this size may be optimal for certain special operations, particularly covert operations. However, in larger scale direct action operations, a platoon may be not be sufficient, or may require greater firepower. Marine elements of the MSPF can fill this requirement, thereby enhancing the capability of the SEALs. It is for this reason that issues regarding Marine Corps-SEAL interoperability issues must be addressed.

Problems stemming from the lack of interoperability and cooperation between the MEU and the SEALs have the potential to have a detrimental impact on the conduct of maritime special operations. The most divisive issues between the Marines and SEALs seem to be centered around command and control, degree of employment, and a lack of familiarity with each other's capabilities and limitations. These issues can result in a break down of trust between Marine Corps and SEAL elements. Citing morale problems due to these issues, a number of people within Naval Special Warfare argue that the

[199] John M. Collins, *Special Operations Forces: An Assessment*, Washington, DC: National Defense

SEALs should be removed from the ARG. Rather than embarking on the ARG, the SEALs would be forward based for ARG tasking on an as needed basis. While this proposal has not been made directly, moves have recently been made in this direction. A recent message regarding SEAL platoon work-up and deployment issues for the USS *Kearsarge* ARG, stated that SEAL intentions were:

1. Not to conduct MEU(SOC)/Naval Special Warfare Task Unit (NSWTU) interoperability training during the interdeployment training cycle (IDTC).
2. Not to embark the SEAL platoon during pre-deployment exercises including the MEUEX.
3. Not to conduct any training with the ARG during Joint Task Force Exercise (JTFEX), but to pass operational control (OPCON) to the exercise Joint Special Operations Task Force (JSOTF).
4. To require that all tasking for the platoon during JTFEX be requested prior to the exercise by either the commander of the amphibious group or the commander of the amphibious squadron.[200]

Additionally, the message states that while the platoon would be embarked in the ARG for the deployment, OPCON would be withheld from the amphibious squadron commander, and would instead rest with the platoon officer-in-charge assigned to the carrier battle group. While tactical control (TACON) would be passed to the squadron commander, the issue of OPCON residing with an officer who may not be co-located in the same theater (during times when the ARG is not co-located with the carrier), presents an awkward, if not faulty, command and control relationship.

While moves have not yet been made to pull the SEALs from the ARGs, the referenced message provides strong evidence for the possibility of such a move in the future. The removal of SEALs from the ARG would be detrimental to the capabilities of

University Press, 1994, p.69.

[200] Message from COMPHIBGRU TWO to COMSECONDFLT, DTG 241630ZOCT98.

the ARG/MEU team in many ways. As such, it is important that interoperability issues be jointly addressed and solved by both parties.

F. CONCLUSIONS

The Marine Corps has proven itself to be a capable hybrid force throughout its history. The hybrid nature of the MEU(SOC) provides regional CINCs and JTF commanders with a flexible force package that is unequalled in its capacity to respond to myriad missions. The MEU(SOC) allows for the flexibility and capability to react effectively in rapidly deteriorating situations. The potential for a humanitarian assistance mission, for example, to degenerate quickly into a situation requiring direct action, or non-combatant evacuation, is very real. The MEU(SOC) enables a CINC to respond to such a crisis immediately.

The debates surrounding Marine Corps roles and employment in special operations are missing the point. While the Marine Corps will continue to develop this capability in order to remain relevant, they will only do so to a degree. The Marines pride themselves on their flexibility and ability to address issues throughout the spectrum of conflict. To focus on special operations would actually serve to limit the Marine Corps' overall strategic, operational and tactical utility. Perhaps the best analogy for the MEU(SOC)'s role in future conflict is one which was offered during an interview with the Executive Officer of the 11th MEU.[201] He likened the MEU(SOC) to a Swiss army knife and SOF to a scalpel. Not all special operations require the use of a scalpel. Indeed, time and distance may prevent the scalpel from even being an option for use. In

[201] LtCol F. Winters, USMC, 11th Marine Expeditionary Unit, Camp Pendleton, CA, interview by author, 19 November 1998, Camp Pendleton, CA.

such instances, the Swiss army knife can either solve the problem by itself, or start the incision that the scalpel works within upon its arrival.

In the increasingly uncertain world, which will be characterized by hybrid threats, the historically proven and future-oriented Marine hybrid model will continue to remain valuable and relevant. Cooperation with SOCOM and NAVSPECWARCOM can only increase the viability of this force, as well as enhance their utility.

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