STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

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SPECIAL FORCES SKILLS: ARE THEY SPECIAL ENOUGH?

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ABSTRACT

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Historically, Army Special Forces have been called on to accomplish missions in support of political and military objectives throughout the world and across the operational continuum. There is little reason to think future Special Forces capabilities will be in any less demand. In fact, virtually all observers see an increased role and utility for the Army's unconventional warriors.

Special Forces are assigned seven principal missions, each calling for mastery of a wide variety of individual and collective skills. Will these skills enable Special Forces soldiers to accomplish these principal missions in the future? This paper will explore new as well as old skills that Army Special Forces will need to accomplish their seven principle missions for the 2010-2020 timeframe.

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SPECIAL FORCES: ARE THEY SPECIAL ENOUGH?

Prior to the demise of the Soviet Union, the United States military faced a monolithic threat. The answer to that threat was a National Military Strategy that consistently countered current and planned Soviet capabilities. The predictability of the threat made military planning a stodgy affair of pulling out the last year's document, updating it based on the latest intelligence estimates, and changing the date on the cover sheet.

With the fall of the Soviet empire, the U.S. military was no longer able to define its relevance based on this single threat. For several years, military strategy and policy development were confounded by this lack of unifying purpose created by an ill-defined threat. This created discord, resistance to change, and an uncoordinated effort towards adapting to the new environment by the uniformed services. With the publication of the 1997 National Military Strategy, senior defense leaders acknowledged that uncertainty, asymmetry, and ambiguity would frame the future environment for the application of military power.[1] This left no doubt; the services would have to change in order to meet the nation's military strategy.

The United States military faces a daunting task; transform the force to meet future challenges. Joint Vision 2020 dictates that to achieve forces that are dominant across the full spectrum of operations, service transformation is required.[2] While the Air Force, Navy, Marine Corps, and Special Operations Forces have been receptive to adapting to this new paradigm, the Army viewed transformation less enthusiastically than their fellow services. In 1998, newly appointed Army Chief of Staff General Shinseki brought the leadership change needed to effect transformation.

With the guiding joint vision, individual service plans, and Major Subordinate Command plans all beginning to identify the end-state for future military forces, U.S. Army Special Forces has undertaken its own study to determine how they will integrate into both the joint and Army concepts for transformation. The Army Transformation Campaign Plan does a tremendous job outlining what direction the total Army will take to make sure it can accomplish its missions for the future. Concepts such as "lighter", "more lethal", "adaptive", and "capable of decentralized execution" as stated in the plan may be new to the Army, but these are concepts long noted as hallmark operating principles of Army Special Forces (SF). Unlike other branches, which have been forced to adapt to these seemingly new approaches, Special Forces have always excelled at operating in fluid environments. Therefore, when the Army began to seriously transform, they pointed towards Special Forces as the force to emulate.

As the Army begins to look like they are become more "SOF-like", many senior SF leaders are actively involved with assessing what future roles and missions Army Special Forces will perform. United States Army Special Operations Command (USASOC) has provided an annex to the Army Transformation Plan in addition to working closely with Army staffers to ensure Army SOF, and particularly Army SF, adheres to and complements the principles outlined for the Army. The development of key conceptual documents including the Integrating Operations Concept and its companion, the Operations and Organization Plan, have aided in developing a consensus amongst senior special operations personnel. These documents address probable roles and functions for SF. What they do not detail are the skills SF soldiers and teams will be required to possess in order to accomplish the roles and missions of the future.

This paper will discuss skills required for Special Forces out to 2020 by using Department of Defense documents, discussing expected military capabilities, and evaluating future threats for SF. When using the term "SF", I refer to individual Special Forces soldiers in general or the Special Forces Operational Detachment Alpha. My intent is to limit discussion to these two groups in order keep the subject manageable. I will identify skills only. When, where, or how those skills should be acquired or taught will be beyond the scope of this paper.

Three key assumptions were used in preparing this paper. The first assumption is that the missions assigned to SF will stay the same. Special Forces are assigned 7 missions: Foreign Internal Defense (FID), Unconventional Warfare (UW), Direct Action (DA), Special Reconnaissance (SR), Combatting Terrorism (CBT), Information Operations (IO), and Counter Proliferation (CP). Assuming these missions will remain the same establishes a common doctrinal foundation for discussion of skills rather than of evolving missions. Secondly, there will not be a major force structure or doctrinal change. The basic operational, and only maneuver element of Special Forces, for over fifty years has been the twelve-man Special Forces Operational Detachment Alpha or SFODA. The missions assigned to SF are conducted by the SFODA. The SFODA is an independent unit of execution with command and control HQs providing largely administrative and support functions. Changes significantly altering this operating principle could call for markedly different skills than those discussed in this paper. Finally, I assume there will not be a change in the laws governing roles and functions for USSOCOM and consequently SF. United States Code 10 assigns USSOCOM nine missions, including the seven assigned to SF.[3] The other two are civil affairs and psychological operations, assigned to civil affairs and psychological operations units accordingly. As a component of USSOCOM, USASOC and Special Forces would inevitably be affected by a

change in missions assigned. Again, for ease of discussion, I will avoid discussing this point in order keep this paper focused on skills.

FUTURE VISION

Economic globalization and the ease of transmitting and receiving information throughout the world are two factors that result in people and nations no longer being confined by physical or cultural boundaries. As powerful as these factors are in the present, they will become even more destabilizing to world order as society becomes polarized by those able to take advantage of these trends and the disenfranchised. Failed states unable to develop socially and economically will give rise to more and more disenfranchised groups. Leaders capable of irrational behavior have and will continue to work within this statement. Their ability to incite in their followers hate and contempt for those nations and people able to obtain power, wealth, and freedom will mean increasingly dealing with actors rather than states.

Technology, for all the good it brings to society, will give new and even more lethal tools and weapons to a potential enemy. Once virtually the sole developer of technology, and thus able to control distribution, the United States will find itself doing an ever smaller share of development as research capability spreads to more third world countries offering labor and development cost savings to businesses. What research remains in the United States will likely be commercial. It will become more difficult to control intentional or unintentional transfers.

Putting these two concepts together will result in an enemy with both the motivation and the means to fight the United States, no matter how small his operational support base. The 2001 Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR) recognizes the uncertainty of the future security environment, but sets the stage for services to accept ambiguity and to prepare to adapt and overcome these effects.

> While contending with such uncertainty is a key challenge for U.S. defense planning, certain features and trends of the security environment define not only today's geopolitical and military technical challenges but also highlight critical operational challenges that the Nation's armed forces will need to master in the future.4

Current trends highlighted by the QDR that are expected to threaten future US military superiority include: enemy asymmetric warfare capabilities, regional instability, military power in the hands of non-state actors, rapid advancements in military technology, and new dimensions for military competition. The QDR signals a significant transition for the US military from a threat-based to a capabilities-based force. [5] As such, the intent is for the services to transform,

enabling them to take advantage of inherent asymmetric capabilities derived from moving away from the former threat-based defense strategy.

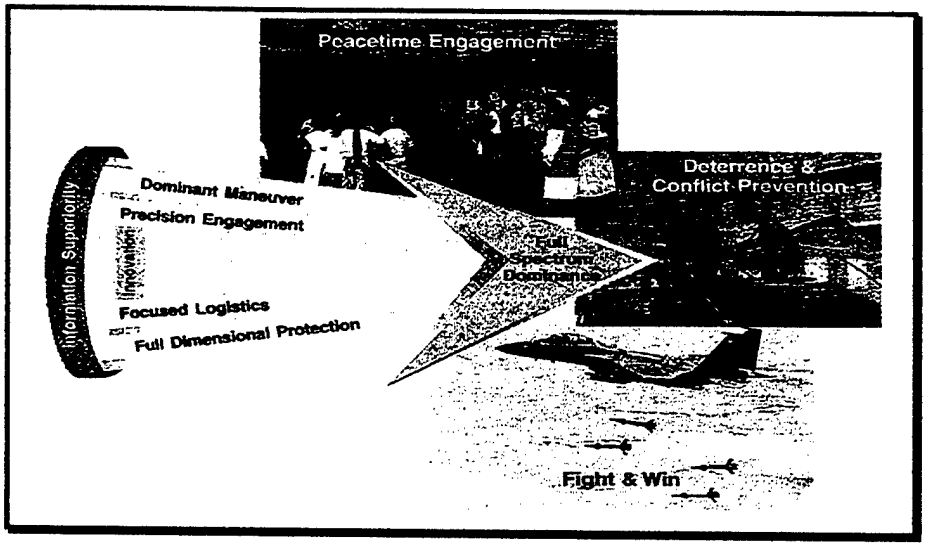

Illustration 1 Military Operations

As the QDR outlines the threats and general direction for the Department of Defense, the Chairman's Joint Vision 2020 provides his way ahead for the services and the need to prepare for the uncertain future.[6] The overarching focus of JV 2020 is full spectrum dominance.

> The label full spectrum dominance implies that US forces are able to conduct prompt, sustained, and synchronized operations with combinations of forces tailored to specific situations and with access to and freedom to operate in all domains – space, sea, land, air, and information.[7]

Defining full spectrum dominance as the *end*, it is achieved through a combination of *ways*: dominant maneuver, precision engagement, focused logistics, and full dimensional protection. Much like the QDR shifted the future focus, JV 2020 sets the stage for leaders and planners to think about the application of military power from a different perspective. Gone are the days when the military looked at its only function as being solely responsible for winning the nation's wars.

Military power is now applied in greater frequency across the spectrum of conflict than ever before. Engagement, deterrence, and prevention have become significant activities employing more and more military forces as the United States government transitions to prosecuting a strategy based on global engagement. With an increasing role in transitioning to peace following a conflict, the military as a whole can expect to spend more time on operations other than war than they can with conventional set-piece conflicts. Special Forces have always blended a regional threat focus and a multi-faceted capability together to offer regional CinCs

the widest array of options possible. What the QDR does for SF is to validate future mission requirements for the near term. Tenets of all seven missions currently assigned to SF are highlighted throughout the QDR.

SPECIAL RECONNAISSANCE SKILLS

> Reconnaissance and surveillance actions conducted by special operations forces to obtain or verify, by visual observation or other collection methods, information concerning the capabilities, intentions and activities of an actual or potential enemy or to secure data concerning the meteorological, hydrographic, or geographic characteristics of a particular area. It includes target acquisition, area assessment, and post strike reconnaissance. Also called SR. [8]

From MACVSOG to Desert Storm, modern day Special Forces has enjoyed a long and successful history of conducting Special Reconnaissance in support of theater commanders. These operations required units and soldiers capable of operating behind enemy lines or in contested areas for extended periods, often with little external support. In this form, SF has acted as an information provider for analysts to later turn into human intelligence. Modern, as well as future, SR operations will not be as limited in scope.

Full spectrum operations fundamentally change the traditional concepts of Special Forces conducting SR. Special Forces must have the skills required to gather human information across the entire spectrum of conflict. Personal contact during peacetime engagement with sources in a potentially hostile country or neighboring region is a primary advantage of having SF conduct operations supporting the Theater CinCs' engagement plans. Undertaking overt human intelligence collection during engagement activities is not plausible. This will quickly destroy any rapport and freedom of operation that a team has been able to develop when the host country senses that they are collecting information rather than advising and assisting local nationals. Therefore, SF Detachments must have increased skills for planning, coordinating, and conducting clandestine intelligence collection. Of even more importance will be the ability to handle potential intelligence sources when they present themselves based on personal relationships developed between SF and foreign nationals. SF detachments must be able to cultivate and develop such a source. Passing sources to other agencies can destroy the trust established between a potential source and SF. Tradecraft and advanced special operations techniques must be taught as a common operational skill.

In addition to collecting human intelligence from local nationals, SF will be able to provide personal, experience-based knowledge of the systems, infrastructure, and geography within a given area or country. Target analysis of both state-of-the-art and dated target systems is a critical skill requirement, which would enable SF to collect and process relevant target

information. This information could then be combined with technical intelligence gathered by other means to provide a complete picture of a target. Targeting coupled with precision engagement as envisioned in Joint Vision 2020 implies an in-depth knowledge not only of a location where a critical target component is housed, but the location of the critical component inside of that target.[9]

Having SF deployed in or around potential hot spots during conflict resolution/deterrence will greatly enhance human intelligence efforts. Essential to operating in this environment will be their ability to gather information without drawing attention to themselves or to their activities. By maintaining long-term relationships begun and fostered in peacetime, SF in country will not appear out of the ordinary during conflict resolution activities. With this ability to operate with locals in their environment without raising undue suspicion, SF will be able to conduct SR using primarily the same skills used in peacetime engagement.

During war, SF will still be required to operate in denied territories gathering information. What will change is the nature of how this information is collected. Future SR operations in conflict will rely less on human visual observation and more on emplacing and monitoring remote sensors or using long-range surveillance systems.

Although SF provides an outstanding source of human intelligence throughout the spectrum of conflict, they must be assisted by the very latest in advanced electronic surveillance capabilities. Joint Vision 2020 states that accepting and taking advantage of technology is key to achieving battlefield effectiveness.[10] While the human dimension involved in performing SR is the cornerstone of its success, it will also be the greatest limiting factor for future mission success. SF detachments must be skilled at using the latest surveillance technology. Visual, audible, tactile, and aural remote surveillance devices must become standard equipment for SF detachments. The 2001 QDR has already grasped this key concept and specified the application of technology to assist human intelligence operations.[11]

As the world becomes more and more dependent on communications, the need for SF detachments to have a signals intelligence (SIGINT) capability becomes critical. While the United States possesses tremendous SIGINT capability, SF with integral SIGINT skills will be able to augment their human face-to-face communications with low-level signals communications. This would provide a more complete picture of an adversary's capabilities and intent.

Human memory must be augmented to maximize collection capability. No matter how much information SF detachments will be able to collect, they are severely limited when expected to remember conversations and unfamiliar visual signs in different languages using

memory alone. Advanced technology coupled with extensive education in memory training will make SF more reliable human sensors.

No information is worth knowing if it cannot be quickly and easily placed in the hands of decision makers.

> Information superiority is fundamental to the transformation of the operational capabilities of the joint force. The Joint Force of 2020 will use superior information and knowledge to achieve decision superiority, to support advanced command and control capabilities, and to reach the full potential of dominant maneuver, precision engagement, full dimensional protection, and focused logistics.[12]

SF must be able to communicate information in real time and with complete data accuracy. As other means of intelligence become more responsive to the joint force user's needs, so must SF's contribution to human intelligence. Every SF soldier must be a skilled communications specialist able to transmit and receive on future communications systems. The speed required to attain decision superiority will require less reliance on team communicators and team communications and more reliance on individual communications to deliver truly timely information.

DIRECT ACTION SKILLS

> Short duration strikes and other small-scale offensive actions by special operations forces to seize, destroy, capture, recover, or inflict damage on designated personnel or material. In the conduct of these operations, special operations forces may employ raid, ambush, or direct assault tactics; emplace mines and other munitions; conduct standoff attacks by fire from the air, ground, or maritime platforms; provide terminal guidance for precision guided munitions; conduct independent sabotage; and conduct anti-ship operations. Also called DA.[13]

Conducting unilateral direct action will become a growing mission set for Special Forces of the future. An SF detachment's small signature and size, ease of movement, and regional cultural awareness will increasingly make it the force of choice for conducting direct action. During peacetime engagement and crisis prevention, SF could be used to conduct non-kinetic attacks. Located in-country and conducting engagement activities puts SF in proximity to potential targets, and thus able to attack them without introducing additional U.S. assets, deterring further aggression. To execute these missions, SF detachments will require advanced skills for non-kinetic means of attack. Coupled with the capability to "plant" such weapons asynchronously, SF will be able to set the conditions and leave, rendering an attack completely covert. Most non-kinetic means of attack are directly related to activities performed in support of information operations. Therefore, I will cover these skills below in Information Operations.

When conducting DA missions, in addition to the non-kinetic skills required, SF will require a greater variety of standoff kinetic precision weapons skills. Precision weapons use is rapidly replacing older, unguided weaponry as the fear of and repercussions related to civilian non-combatant casualties becomes more ominous. Additionally, these same characteristics enable extremely powerful weapons to be used in close proximity to and in support of, friendly forces. Although air-delivered guided bombs are currently the most prolific of such weapons, SF employing smaller ground-launched precision munitions will greatly enhance the SF DA capability and the overall lethality of the team. Regardless of the delivery platform, Special Forces will be required to employ these weapons for future DA missions.

When the use of standoff precision weapons is inappropriate, SF detachments will be required to engage targets at close range using personal firearms. Here, target acquisition and discriminatory engagement will be an essential skill. Much the same as with standoff precision munitions, future close range military operations will necessitate minimizing civilian casualties and collateral damage. Adversaries can be expected to use highly populated or urban areas in an effort to reduce their vulnerability to detection and attack. When required to conduct direct action raids in this environment, SF detachments will be required to rapidly differentiate between non-combatants and adversaries, determine if they can be engaged causing minimal collateral damage, and use highly accurate direct fire to eliminate threats.

If so much will be done with the aid of technology, why use humans to perform dangerous and complicated procedures at all? The use of robotics to enhance DA missions is particularly apt since it involves working in close proximity to a threat able to kill the attacker as easily as vice versa. SF skilled at using robots to deliver munitions to targets will significantly reduce troop exposure to hostile fire. Using Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (robotic carriers) to loiter indefinitely above a target to first sense and then deliver ordnance on cue will remove the human factor associated with such missions. Leading an urban assault element with a robotic device carrying sensors may greatly reduce the possibility of injuries to friendly personnel. SF must develop the skills and procedures for incorporating these measures into its Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures (TTP).

COMBATTING TERRORISM SKILLS

> Actions, including antiterrorism (defensive measures taken to reduce vulnerability to terrorist acts) and counterterrorism (offensive measures taken to prevent, deter, and respond to terrorism), taken to oppose terrorism throughout the entire threat spectrum. [14]

Vice Admiral Wilson, Director, Defense Intelligence Agency pointedly stated in March 2001, that terrorism is the most significant future threat facing the United States both overseas and at home.[15] The United States policy end state for counterterrorism set forth in Presidential Decision Directive 39 is to "deter, defeat and respond vigorously to all terrorist attacks on our territory and against our citizens, or facilities, whether they occur domestically, in international waters or airspace or on a foreign territory."[16] This seven-year-old document intensified the efforts of all departments of government to combat terrorism.

Within the Department of Defense, Special Forces currently provide limited military forces capable of deterring and defeating terrorist operations worldwide. While combatting terrorism is an assigned mission for Special Forces, the Army's manual for Special Forces operations specifically states that not every SF unit is capable of conducting counterterrorism missions.[17] The growing incidence of terror as a tactic means future SF detachments must increasingly have the skills and training necessary to conduct counterterrorist operations, including hostage rescue and attacks.

Efforts to prevent attacks to the homeland will probably continue to be controlled and coordinated by civil authorities with DoD providing unique support. Law enforcement agencies will retain authority for preemptive actions as well as for response to terrorist incidents within the United States. Defeating terrorist organizations and preventing homeland attack will increasingly be done using preemptive strikes abroad based on actionable intelligence. These terrorist organizations will change tactics to avoid detection and defeat, most notably by operating in ever smaller cells, reducing communications, using advanced technology for attacks, blending into their chosen environments and moving frequently. Key to attacking these multiple and fleeting targets will be rapidly positioned forces able to exploit intelligence windfalls. As Special Forces detachments will likely be in theater and able to respond quickly they will become the logical force to execute CT operations outside the United States rather than deploying a single force with a distinct signature from the United States.

Performing CT operations will require SF to modify future tactics, techniques, and procedures. Although all SF operational detachments should be skilled enough to conduct CT missions, they would normally form the basis for a larger force and require augmentation by a support package to conduct large-scale operations. Using this concept, a deployed detachment conducting peacetime engagement in a region could be rapidly moved to a target identified by intelligence and either conduct the mission if required to do so because of the sensitivity of the timing or form the nucleus of the larger element needed to conduct the operation. This will give

regional commanders a close quarters precision attack capability that can rapidly act on perishable intelligence.

COUNTER-PROLIFERATION SKILLS

> Actions taken to seize, destroy, render safe, capture or recover weapons of mass destruction.[18]

Pick up any current security or military strategy document and it will contain ominous apocalyptic warnings about the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD). What was once an elite club comprised of rational states capable of qualified responses has become, and will continue to be, a growing collection of uninvited and less responsible members. Terrorists are having increasing success obtaining WMD technology and expertise. [19] Given that globalization and information technology trends will continue, the threat of WMD use will continue to rise.

As the threat becomes more viable, all Special Forces must attain and maintain unit proficiency and individual skill to locate, identify, and seize, future variants of WMD. Like combatting terrorism, designated Special Forces elements able to conduct counter-proliferation missions are few and will be hard-pressed to keep pace with ever-increasing incidents.

Deterring and defeating planned attacks implies moving proactively against an adversary. SF performing regional engagement activities must be able to rapidly transition to CP missions, preventing attacks from ever reaching the United States mainland. During conflict, adversaries will likely try to resort to the use of WMD to defeat the United States' symmetrical military superiority.[20] Locating and destroying the threat before it can ever be used will become a key enabler for further military actions against an adversary.

Many of the skills required for future SR and DA and CT missions would be used to support counter-proliferation missions. Performing special reconnaissance in support of CP equates to the requirement to locate and identify WMD. Only lacking will be required training, technology, and mastery of the skills necessary to detect WMD from remote sites to provide positive identification of the type of weapon. Following positive detection and identification, SF detachments may either initiate a DA mission to seize or destroy the WMD or continue to support for a larger follow-on force. If required to initiate a DA mission, the objective must be limited to either seizing or isolating the weapon. SF detachments, although required to understand weapons construction principles for identification purposes, would turn over responsibility for destroying or rendering a weapon safe for transporting it to ordnance disposal personnel better able to maintain skills for these tasks.

INFORMATION OPERATIONS SKILLS

> Actions taken to affect adversary information and information systems, while defending one's own information and information systems to achieve information superiority in support of national military strategy. Also called IO.[21]

Future military operations will be as much about winning intellectually as about winning with sheer kinetic military power. Information operations will be a critical component of winning intellectually. United States IO will remain centrally planned at the highest civilian as well as military levels to facilitate interagency coordination. Consequently, SF will undertake IO missions in support of a larger integrated campaign involving multiple elements of IO.

ASSIGNED AND SUPPORTED CAPABILITIES AND ACTIVITIES	INFORMATION OPERATIONS APPLICATION
Operations Security	Offensive and Defensive
Psychological Operations	Offensive
Counterpropaganda	Defensive
Military Deception	Offensive
Counterdeception	Defensive
Electronic Warfare	Offensive and Defensive
Computer Network Attack	Offensive
Physical Attack and Destruction	Offensive
Information Assurance	Defensive
Physical Security	Defensive
Counterintelligence	Defensive
Special Information Operations	Offensive and Defensive

TABLE 1: SPECIAL FORCES INFORMATION OPERATIONS CAPABILITIES

Table 1 shows current SF capabilities in support of information operations. As future IO become more complex, the military services will likely be faced with creating specialized organizations to cope with mission expansion.[22] SF, already tasked to perform IO, will fully define its own roles and missions supporting specific activities. These will include offensive skills in deception, electronic warfare, computer network attack, and psychological operations. SF units will be required to conduct defensive IO to protect themselves and safeguard their own information and systems from attack.

Future SF soldiers must have an advanced knowledge of computers and civilian communications technology to fully realize their ability to conduct offensive IO. This involves more than just knowing the capabilities or limitations of technology. SF will need complete understanding of how governments, militaries, and businesses obtain, store, safeguard, and communicate operational information worldwide. Advanced target analysis skills dealing with

computer network architecture and communications networks will be required to determine attack vulnerabilities. Once these vulnerabilities are determined, SF will need to know how to attack and produce desired results. Skills such as hacking, handling viruses, remote electronic jamming, and monitoring will become the new weapons of choice.

Attacking an adversary's information systems will become more difficult for the attacker. Conversely, it will be easier for an adversary to defend against computer attack and detect intrusions and monitoring. This prospect will have little effect on operations conducted unilaterally during conflict but will require SF detachments conducting offensive IO during engagement or deterrence phases to be skilled at electronic counter-surveillance.

SF will use imitative visual and audible communications deception and reprogramming to confuse and disrupt an enemy's ability to discriminate between fact and fiction. For this reason, future SF must fully understand how and why an adversary thinks the way he does. Psychological operations principles and theory will be essential skills for future SF. IO targets human decision makers. Understanding how an adversary thinks and the ability to craft ways of coercing him to make decisions in our favor will become a tactical, not strategic consideration for the future. Because of the human target of IO, JV 2020 asserts this will hinder a commander from assessing IO affects.[23] Here again, culturally aware and skilled in psychological operations, SF can give the commander on-ground assessments of the effectiveness of IO operations by being interspersed with the target population and possibly, even if indirectly, with a decision maker himself.

FOREIGN INTERNAL DEFENSE SKILLS

> Participation by civilian and military agencies of a government in any of the action programs taken by another government to free and protect its society from subversion, lawlessness, and insurgency. Also called FID.[24]

FID has been a primary source for United States engagement strategies founded on containing Soviet expansion since the end of World War II.[25] For a period of time following the collapse of the Soviet Union, the United States struggled with defining those security interests abroad that merited military assistance involvement. The 2000 National Security Strategy again sees FID as a critical component for shaping the environment abroad and enhancing overall security.[26]

FID for the future will become a task more frequently performed by conventional Army units as they transform to full spectrum forces no longer focused solely on warfighting. This additional conventional force capability will significantly reduce the role of future SF in FID.

Special Forces will focus their FID efforts on advising and assisting host nation specialized military and paramilitary units while conventional units work with the conventional forces.

While much has been discussed about technology and its effects on how the United States military will operate, not all nations requesting assistance will be able to afford nor will they want to seek technological solutions to their defense issues. Future SF, in addition to being masters of their own modern military technology, will also be required to advise host nation SF or other selected units using older equipment and technology. The key to success will be striking the proper balance between having the skills to use cutting edge techniques and equipment for unilateral operations while remaining wed to the past to retain FID skills. Given the projection for conventional forces to pick up an increased responsibility for FID missions, SF will have no need to spend valuable training time maintaining legacy techniques and equipment skills. If required, SF will be able to train-down during FID mission pre-deployment time to meet requirements.

UNCONVENTIONAL WARFARE SKILLS

> A broad spectrum of military and paramilitary operations, normally of long duration, predominantly conducted by indigenous or surrogate forces who are organized, trained, equipped, supported and directed in varying degrees by an external source. It includes guerrilla warfare, and other offensive, low visibility, covert, or clandestine operations, as well as the indirect activities of subversion, sabotage, intelligence activities, and evasion and escape. Also called UW. [27]

The ambiguities creating an increasingly unsettled future are the perfect medium to conduct unconventional warfare. UW will be the preferred means of exercising military influence as an element of national power. Globalization, technology advances, and the dominance of economic power over sheer military power, will lead to nations challenging one another using asymmetric or unconventional means instead of using conventional formations.[28] The importance of UW will lead to the ability to conduct unconventional warfare becoming the benchmark defining a nations' military strength and capability. Employing unconventional warfare forces around the world to exercise national policy and influence will become the preferred alternative to large signature troop formations.[29] UW is conducted by, with, or through the use of indigenous or surrogate forces, when practical. Conducting operations using non-U.S. military or paramilitary forces to achieve goals will enable the United States to effectively exercise foreign policy without appearing overly heavy-handed.

Unconventional Warfare will include all aspects of the previously discussed missions of SR, DA, CBT, CP, IO, and FID. It is because of this complexity and breadth that UW is the primary training focus of SF. Special Forces conducting UW will be required to instruct or

advise others how to conduct aspects of each mission. Therefore, skills discussed under each previous topic apply to the skills required to execute aspects of unconventional warfare. SF detachments will tailor tactics, techniques, and procedures to the situation and clientele with which they are working.

Key components to being able to conduct such advice and instruction are cultural awareness, rapport-building and language capability. The first two will always be based on human perception and interaction. Future SF must have the interpersonal skills to develop trust and confidence between themselves and a coalition partner in shorter and shorter timeframes. With ever-increasing exposure and access to other cultures via communications technology, in-depth cultural awareness will become more of a way of showing sensitivity to cultures other than ones' own rather than determining the sincerity of any offerings of support.

Language capabilities will allow SF detachments to assimilate into a culture, but as English becomes the international standard language, learning all but obscure languages will be of little use other than as a sign of cultural interest and understanding.[30] Future language translation technology should enable direct voice translations much the way current written translations work, enabling instantaneous verbal communications without a common language shared between the speaker and the audience. Detachments will no longer be faced with developing and maintaining language proficiency skills beyond the basic level.

Overt sabotage will draw on direct action skills. Attacking targets using either kinetic or non-kinetic means, whether done unilaterally or "through, by, and with" indigenous or surrogate forces, will be a matter of matching the right method of attack to the target. Target analysis skills necessary for DA missions will enable SF detachments to apply the appropriate method and achieve the desired results. Clandestine and covert sabotage methods will require greater skills in covering information which might enable an adversary to trace the method or act back to the operator or to the external source. Future target attack training and planning for sabotage operations will include ease of detection/tracing as part of evaluation criteria methods.

Subversion will be a major future operating environment for SF. When future application of diplomatic, economic or informational national power fails to solve or resolve a confrontation, undermining the political, military, economic, or psychological strength of an adversary will replace conventional conflict. This concept forms the basis for the future joint force concept for Rapid Decisive Operations employing effects-based operations.[31] SF will form the foundation for the application of subversive military power and add significantly to a joint force commander's capability to execute Rapid Decisive Operations. They will use national surrogates to lead such activities, avoiding identification of the cause with the US.

SF detachments will need to think at the geo-strategic level, yet be able to apply subversion at the tactical level of execution. If an adversary's center of gravity is financial stability, SF may need the skills necessary to attack that center of gravity at all levels while remaining cognizant of potential pitfalls associated with their actions beyond the immediate target. Similarly, while they might have the skills to subversively remove a government official from office, SF must always remain aware of the wider effect of their action and the resulting effect on the overall conduct of the joint campaign.

Keeping in mind the effects of subversion, subversion techniques will need to be an integral part of skill training. Subversion in unconventional warfare has long been considered an indirect activity with associated training centered on theory and not application. Future SF soldiers, having gained access during regional engagement and subsequently authorized to conduct subversion activities, may be able to use subversion to affect the outcome and avert crises, thus avoiding further military involvement.

CONCLUSION

Special Forces must become truly special to maintain relevance for the future. As the other services transform to become more "SOF-like", the failure of Special Forces to provide truly unique skills and capabilities beyond those possessed by conventional forces will lead to their eventual irrelevance and demise. The missions assigned to SF offer more than enough opportunity to provide unique capabilities found only in Special Forces soldiers and units. What must be done is threefold: harness new and emerging technologies and make them available to SF, require all SF units to be able to execute all seven assigned SF missions, and empower SF soldiers and units with the skills to be successful.

The unquestionable reality is that both military and civilian technology is advancing at phenomenal rates and will only progress faster. SF can ill-afford not embracing any and all aspects of technology that enable them to do their missions faster, better, more accurately, and with less risk of compromise. This approach is not a new one for some units within Special Operations. It is a departure from current thinking whereby Special Forces is often afforded advanced technologies coming from other units after they have outlived their service life or been replaced by state of the art applications. In the future, this approach will place SF at serious operational risk and render them unable to execute their assigned missions.

Currently assigned missions cover a wide range of capabilities assigned for Special Forces. Conducted across the spectrum of operations, these missions will provide military planners with a force capable of countering asymmetric threats before they are able to threaten

United States interests. Future threats will only increase beyond our capability to react militarily, thus, all Special Forces must posses the skills necessary to conduct all assigned missions.

No amount of technology or creative assignment of missions will avoid the need to have soldiers trained in the skills necessary to execute future missions. Conducting SF operations will require new, indirect, and innovative tactics and procedures. What worked the last time or in the past will enable an aggressive adversary to rapidly access databases, evaluate, and react to our next move. Therefore, SF skills and techniques will be constantly evolving, requiring testing, evaluation, and modification to ensure they match requirements before being operationally employed. These skills will be highly perishable and will require dedicated and unencumbered training time devoted to maintain skill proficiency.

While technology and mission capabilities should be leveraged at every turn, they will never take the place of a mature SF soldier on the ground able to make decisions. Our future adversaries will avail themselves of whatever means they can to gain advantage over the United States. This is the essence of asymmetric warfare. Given the emphasis and priorities presented in this paper, SF will be uniquely qualified and positioned to execute operations in support of the National Military Strategy and counter future threats and crises.

WORD COUNT = 6244

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