

# **Special Forces Capabilities of the European Union Military Forces**

**A Monograph  
by  
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**Since 1999, the European Union has significantly increased its effort to create a viable military force. A natural part of a military force in the contemporary environment is Special Operations Forces. The purpose of this monograph is to determine what Special Forces capabilities are required by the European Union's military forces. The European Union's commitment, in 1999, to the established Helsinki Headline Goals outlined that a European military force shall be used in the framework of the Petersberg Tasks. These tasks are the missions and environment upon which the framework this monograph is based. Deduced and described from Special Operation Forces theory, special operations are distinguished from unconventional operations and strategic military intelligence operations. Thus, Special Forces are distinguished from Unconventional Forces. A case study analyzes different missions Special Operations Forces have conducted since the Cold War ended in order to determine what capabilities Special Forces need. This study determines that a viable EU Special Forces concept must, first of all, have a strategic utility to conduct Special Operations but not Unconventional Operations. This concept also needs to have a capability to conduct initial entry operations in order to spearhead and prepare the battlefield for a larger conventional force. This monograph recommends that the EU create a standing Combined Joint Special Operations Headquarters in order to facilitate a viable operational level Special Forces capability. This standing CJSOTF HQ would facilitate: the readiness to act as the force of choice or as an initial entry force; the technical, doctrinal and cultural interoperability Special Forces requires to be operational; the integration and coordination within EU and coalition conventional and Special Forces; and the essential joint interoperability Special Forces requires to be trained to standard with other supporting assets, such as aircraft, helicopters, and naval assets.**

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## Abstract

Special Forces Capabilities of the European Union Military Forces  
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Since 1999, the European Union has significantly increased its effort to create a viable military force. A natural part of a military force in the contemporary environment is Special Operations Forces. The purpose of this monograph is to determine what Special Forces capabilities are required by the European Union's military forces.

The European Union's commitment, in 1999, to the established Helsinki Headline Goals outlined that a European military force shall be used in the framework of the so called Petersberg Tasks, which includes humanitarian and rescue efforts, peacekeeping, and crisis management involving deployment of combat forces. These tasks are the missions and environment upon which the framework this monograph is based. Deduced and described from Special Operation Forces theory, special operations are distinguished from unconventional operations and strategic military intelligence operations. Thus, Special Forces are distinguished from Unconventional Forces. With these distinctions made and the Petersberg Task framework established a case study methodology is used. This case study analyzes different missions Special Operations Forces have conducted since the Cold War ended in order to determine what capabilities, as mission set, Special Forces need. It will also determine how to integrate Special Forces in a EU military force by studying command and control, organizational structure, and how integration with multinational Special Forces as well as conventional forces has been conducted in these cases.

This study determines that a viable EU Special Forces concept must, first of all, have a strategic utility to conduct Special Operations but not Unconventional Operations, defined as Direct Action and Special Reconnaissance missions. This concept also needs to have a capability to conduct initial entry operations in order to spearhead and prepare the battlefield for a larger conventional force.

This monograph recommends that the EU create a standing Combined Joint Special Operations Headquarters in order to facilitate a viable operational level Special Forces capability. This standing CJSOTF HQ would facilitate: the readiness to act as the force of choice or as an initial entry force; the technical, doctrinal and cultural interoperability Special Forces requires to be operational; the integration and coordination within EU and coalition conventional and Special Operation Forces; and the essential joint interoperability Special Forces requires to be trained to standard with other supporting assets, such as aircraft, helicopters, and naval assets.

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## **Chapter One - Introduction**

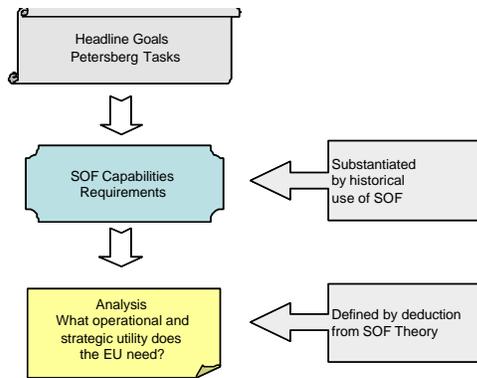
In the aftermath of the conflict in Kosovo in 1999 most of Europe was ashamed of the fact that Europe still could not handle their own security. This realization led to the European Union Council in Helsinki deciding that the European Union (EU) has to increase its military capabilities to ensure the security of Europe and its proximity. The EU established the Helsinki Headline Goals, which is an agreement among the member states to commit forces to give the EU a military instrument to handle its security interest. The forces committed to the Headline Goal are supposed to perform a wide range of missions in the framework of the Petersberg tasks, which includes humanitarian and rescue efforts, peacekeeping, and crisis management involving deployment of combat forces (this will be further defined below).

The European Union's member states commitment to the Headline Goal includes special forces. This is natural since special operations forces (SOF) are significant contributors to conflict resolution in the contemporary environment, at all levels of war and scope of conflict. This monograph addresses special operations and special forces (SF). It sets a theoretical framework for special forces. It analyzes through several case studies, of recent employment of special forces in equivalent missions as in the Petersberg tasks, what SF capabilities it is feasible that the EU military force should have to meet its operational and strategic requirements. The purpose of this monograph is to analyze what special forces' capabilities the EU military force needs to support optimal conflict resolution within the Helsinki Headline Goals and the Petersberg tasks.

### **Structure and Methodology**

This study uses a structure that will introduce the topic, describe the structure and methodology, and provide the background to the framework of the European Union military forces. Next, a chapter with special operations and special operation forces theory will define the basis on which special operations are conducted and special forces operate. The Third chapter

will be historical case studies where recent historical operations will be analyzed. Chapter Four will assess future capabilities and requirements in the framework the EU forces are expected to operate, with the requirements and capabilities deduced from the case studies, and based in a theoretical framework of the utility of special operations and special operation forces. The last chapter will provide a brief summary and conclusions.



**Figure 1. Analysis Methodology**

This study will use a qualitative literature assessing analysis methodology. The analysis will be conducted by analyzing the Headline Goals mission set and what special operation forces capabilities these mission sets require. This will be conducted by using the Petersberg tasks as a framework for the future environment for the EU military forces to be employed in. In

this framework will requirements and capabilities needed be deduced through a case study of operations conducted in a contemporary (post Cold War) environment. Operations are chosen that can be related to the same mission set; the same strategic or operational environment; or the same geographic environment independent of which Western country's special operations forces have been involved. These requirements and capabilities, substantiated by historical examples, will then be analyzed in a framework of special operation forces theory to determine what capabilities and utility the European Union needs.

This study will use two criteria, which are prioritized in order of appearance: special forces capabilities and special forces integration. These criteria will serve as a mechanism to analyze the historical cases in chapter three. These criteria provide a starting point for understanding capabilities required for future SF in the framework of the EU. The criteria will be defined as:

Special operations capabilities will be based on the mission set SF has or needs to have to achieve specific operational or strategic results or effects, and thus has an operational or strategic utility. The mission set used in this study will mainly be derived from U.S. Special Operations doctrine and will be defined in Chapter Two.

Special operation forces integration will be deduced by studying the command and control and the organizational structure through which special operations forces has been integrated with conventional forces and/ or in multinational operations.

## Assumptions

Units in the Helsinki Force Catalogue are trained to standard. The EU military force must, if not otherwise decided in Headline Goals, be able to operate globally. The EU military force will be, when on operations, organized as a Combined Joint Task Force. External resources, such as ISR or deployability, do not limit the SF units employment.

## Limitations

This study will not address “black” or clandestine special forces operations if they do not apply to an operation in which they are feasible to conduct under a UN mandate. This study will neither address one nation’s strategic use of SOF, except if applicable as an historical example of utility of SOF capabilities.

## Delimitations

This monograph will address, as potential operations of the EU, only the mission set needed for Petersberg tasks operations. It will further address only tactical level of war in relation to missions conducted to achieve operational or strategic level effects. This study will mainly address special forces and their missions, capabilities, and address only other SOF briefly according to the U.S. definition which includes Civil Affairs, Psychological Operations and other forces in the U.S. SOF community.

## Background - The European Union Framework

### The Development of European Union Common Security and Defence Policy

European Union has for a long time had a vision of a common foreign and security policy (CFSP). A treaty was included after an intergovernmental conference in Maastricht, 1991, where member states for the first time incorporated in the treaty the objective of a common foreign policy, with the CFSP entry into force in 1993.

In the Amsterdam Treaty, which entered into force in 1999, the provisions of the CFSP were revised. This reform of the CFSP was the main outcome of the 1997 Amsterdam Treaty.<sup>1</sup> The Amsterdam treaty added more coherent foreign policy instrument (common strategies) and efficient decision-making (qualified majority, constructive abstention and referring a decision to the European council).

The conflicts in the Balkans during the 1990s, especially the Kosovo Campaign “Allied Force” in 1999, were painful reminders to Europe that it can not take care of its own security interests, not even in the European continent itself. The European states simply lacked the capacity to project decisive force beyond their borders. This development became a catalyst for the EU to continue develop the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP) and a military capability.

The new Treaty of Nice entered into force on 1 February 2003 and contains new CFSP provisions. It provided the Union with a common security and defense policy, including the gradual formulation of a common defence policy, i.e. the ESDP forms part of the CFSP. The common defence policy could lead to a common defense if so decided by the council and ratified by the members. A new military and political structure was decided upon in the Nice European

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<sup>1</sup> Elizabeth Bomberg, Alexander Stubb, *The European Union: How Does it Work?* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 35.

council to provide political control and strategic direction if a crisis occurs. A political and security committee, and the appointment of a High representative for the CFSP was decided upon as well as a committee for civilian aspects of crisis management, a military committee and a political-military group. A military staff composed of military experts has been set up to assist under the direction of the military committee.<sup>2</sup>

The ESDP are divided into three components; military crisis management, civilian crisis management, and conflict prevention (removing the root causes of conflict themselves). The first two are known as the Petersberg tasks. Since 1999, every European Council has endeavoured to develop the Union's capacity for autonomous action under the ESDP. When ESDP is operational it will give the EU a unique position thanks to its comprehensive range of security or foreign policy instruments, encompassing economic, diplomatic, military, law enforcement and other tools.<sup>3</sup>

## Headline Goals and Petersberg Tasks

At the Helsinki Summit in December 1999 the Helsinki European Council established the Headline Goals for the Union. The Headline Goal means a commitment to be able, by the year of 2003, to deploy within 60 days, and sustain for at least one year, up to 60, 000 troops. This force will be capable of carrying out the full range of the Petersberg tasks.<sup>4</sup> The Headline Goals have got the more popular name European Rapid Reaction Force in the media, which is incorrect since it only identifies a pool of forces and capabilities from which forces can be rapidly

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<sup>2</sup> CFSP, Common Foreign and Security Policy/European Security and Defence Policy, (available from <http://ue.eu.int/pesc/pres.asp>, internet, accessed July 16 2003), 3.

<sup>3</sup> Scadplus, *The Common Foreign and Security Policy: Introduction*, (<http://europa.eu.int/scadplus/printversion/en/lvb/r00001.htm> accessed July 16 2003), 5

<sup>4</sup> European Security and Defence Identity (ESDI), "The Defense Monitor, 29, no. 1 (2000); available from <http://www.cdi.org/dm/2000/feb2000.pdf>, internet accessed January 27 2002; quoted in Daniel L. Garvey, *The European rapid Reaction Force: Just How Serious Are They?*, (Carlisle: U.S. Army War College, 2002), 2.

assembled on a case-by-case basis for particular operations, with the approval of the national governments.<sup>5</sup>

At a meeting in Petersburg Germany members of the Western European Union (WEU) established a new broader mission including humanitarian and rescue efforts, peacekeeping, and crisis management involving deployment of combat forces. These Petersburg tasks were to be claimed by the EU in October 1997 at the Amsterdam summit.<sup>6</sup> The Petersburg tasks are humanitarian and rescue tasks, peacekeeping tasks and combat force tasks in crisis management, including peacemaking. The European Union has decided that:

The Union must have the capacity for autonomous action, backed up by credible military force, the means to decide to use them, and readiness to do so, in order to respond to international crises without prejudice to actions by NATO.<sup>7</sup>

This desire, for a capacity for autonomous action in international crisis management, where NATO as such is not engaged, has been given substance through each successive European Council. This is to be conducted in compliance with the principles of the UN charter and acknowledging the prerogatives of the UN Security Council.<sup>8</sup>

Dr. Julian Lindley-French outlines a number of missions as a potential range of missions in the framework of the Petersburg tasks: Peacetime security (protection and security of European homeland, evacuation of citizens overseas, military aid to Civil Authorities (counter-crime, counter-drug and preemptive strikes against threat of WMD against Europe or EU); Defense diplomacy (forces to dispel hostility, build and maintain thrust, assist democratic development as a contribution to conflict prevention); Support to wider European interests (forces to promote

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<sup>5</sup> Nicole Gnesotto, "ESDP: The Way Forward", *Military Technology*, Dec 2002.

<sup>6</sup> William Anthony Hay, Harvey Sicherman, "Europe's Rapid Reaction Force: What, Why, and How?," *Foreign Policy Research Institute's Watch on the West*, 2, no 2, February 2001, available from <http://www.nyu.edu/globalbeat/emu/FPRI0201.html>, internet, accessed August 10 2003), 2.

<sup>7</sup> CFSP, Common Foreign and Security Policy/European Security and Defence Policy, (available from <http://ue.eu.int/pesc/pres.asp>, internet, accessed July 16 2003), 2.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid

European interests, influence and standing abroad); Peace Support and Humanitarian Operations (forces to operations other than war in support of European interests, humanitarian principles and international order); Regional conflict outside the EU area (forces to control a conflict that could adversely affect European Security); European interests or International security (regional conflict inside the EU area, to respond to regional crisis or conflict from member states).<sup>9</sup> This framework certainly requires a capable military force that is trained and organized in peacetime.

## European Union Military Structure and the Military Staff

European Union Military Staff (EUMS) was established in June 2001 after a council decision January 22 2001. The EUMS mission is to:

perform early warning, situation assessment and strategic planning for Petersberg tasks including identification of European national and multinational forces and to implement policies and decisions as directed by the European Military Committee (EUMC).<sup>10</sup>

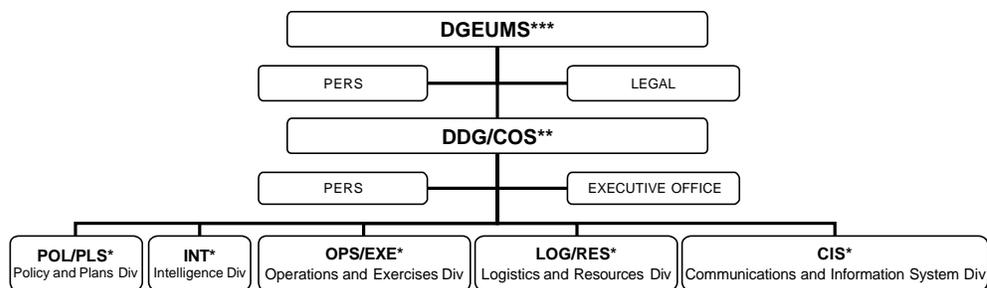
This means that the EUMS will provide the EU with the necessary military advice and expertise that it will need to make decisions with potential military implications. It will also provide the EU with the military knowledge needed to deal with the member states as providers of military resources. EUMS consists of 135 officers and are headed by a General. The EUMS is however not to be an operational planning capability and thus not an operational HQ, and it is not the creation of a standing European Army or a standing European Rapid Reaction Force.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Julian Lindley-French, *Boosting Europe's Military Muscle – The Build-Up and Future Role of the EU Rapid Reaction Force*, (WEU institute for Security Studies, available from <http://www.cicerofoundation.org/lectures/p4lindleyfrench.html> , internet, accessed August 10 2003)

<sup>10</sup> Council Decision of 22 January 2001 on the establishment of the Military Staff of the European Union (2001/80/CFSP), internet, available at <http://ue.eu.int/pesc/military/en/L27-7en.pdf> accessed November 15, 2003.

<sup>11</sup> UK Defence Today, “European Union Military Staff declared a permanent body” (Ministry of Defence, internet, available at [http://news.mod.uk/news/press/news\\_headline\\_story.asp?newsItem\\_id=1164](http://news.mod.uk/news/press/news_headline_story.asp?newsItem_id=1164) accessed November 15 2003).



**Figure 2. Outline Organization of EU Military Staff**

**Source: Council Decision of 22 January 2001 on the establishment of the Military Staff of the European Union (2001/80/CFSP) accessed at <http://www.eurunion.org/legislat/Defense/natlmilsecondEUMilStaff.pdf> on the 10 of March 2004.**

## Helsinki Headline Goal Catalogue

To fulfill the commitments agreed upon in the Helsinki European council in 1999, to set the Headline Goal by 2003, a Helsinki Headline Goal Catalogue (HHC) has been established. The HHC outlines the forces committed to the Headline Goal from different member nations. In the framework of Headline Goals the EU will also establish the possibility to launch operations or initiate operations faster than 60 days. There are three levels of readiness. The first is an immediate reaction capability to be employed in the area of operations (AO) within 5 days. The second level is the rapid reaction level where forces should be employed in the AO within 5 to 30 days. The third level is the original, Headline Goal Reaction, level where forces are supposed to be employed within 60 days. According to many military analysts an operation deployed according to the Headline Goal has to take rotation in to account to be able to sustain an operation. It will therefore probably mean a much higher commitment with about 200,000 troops instead of the 60,000.

## WEU, NATO, Berlin Plus, and EU Operations

The Western European Union (WEU) has marked the development of security and defense in Europe since 1954, but its role has more and more been transferred to other

international institutions. The WEU's main responsibilities relates to Article V, collective defense. The new article 17 of the EU Treaty opens up prospects for two new developments, although neither seems imminent; a common defense, and the integration of the Western European Union into the European Union. This establishment of a closer link with the WEU will allow the EU to instruct the WEU to carry out Petersberg tasks, and it was followed by an agreement that introduced transferring capabilities and tasks of the WEU to the EU, for example the Petersberg tasks.<sup>12</sup>

The success of crises management, which complies with the UN charter, depends on the collaboration with the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). The EU has to use NATO resources, including military capabilities, operational planning capabilities etc. Therefore a strategic partnership has been set up to avoid unnecessary duplication of capabilities. EU will because of this only carry out operations where NATO as a whole is not engaged.<sup>13</sup>

This strategic partnership was manifested in an agreement decided by the European Council in Copenhagen in December 2002, after long and hard negotiations. The agreement called Berlin Plus is valid for countries that are members of NATO or the NATO cooperation "partnership for peace" (PfP). The final details in the agreement were decided in March 2003, and include for example the use of NATO capacity for planning and strategic command and control; satellites and strategic transport capability etc.<sup>14</sup>

The first ESDP operation was launched on 1<sup>st</sup> January 2003; the European Police Mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina (EUPM). The EU has since launched operation CONCORDIA in Macedonia in March 2003 following the NATO operation Allied Harmony,

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<sup>12</sup> Scadplus, *The Common Foreign and Security Policy: Introduction*, (<http://europa.eu.int/scadplus/printversion/en/lvb/r00001.htm> accessed July 16 2003), 3, 7.

<sup>13</sup> Karsten Voigt, *ESDP and NATO: A German Perspective on the Transatlantic Bargain*, (Portsmouth: Hampton Roads International Security Quarterly, August 25, 2001), 31, 39.

<sup>14</sup> The Swedish Parliament, EUSVAR – frågor och svar om EU, internet, available at <http://www2.riksdagen.se/Internet\Eusvar.nsf>, internet accessed August 10 2003, 2.

which was the first military operation. In June 2003 was a military operation launched in the Democratic Republic of Congo. In order to stabilize the situation in the region of Ituri was operation Artemis launched in accordance with a UN Security Council resolution. This operation was conducted without any resources from NATO. The European Council declared at the meeting in Copenhagen in 2002 that they were prepared to replace the NATO stabilization force in Bosnia-Herzegovina.<sup>15</sup>

## **Chapter Two - The Theory Connection - Special Operations and Special Operation Forces**

This chapter reviews the history and defines special operations (SO), special operation forces (SOF), special forces (SF) and the environment where these forces operate. It further defines the characteristics of special forces and special operation principles, missions, and tasks. It analyzes the utility of special operations and special forces. It provides the theoretical foundation on which the analysis of this study will be conducted. There is, unfortunately, a lack of a theoretical debate in the area of special forces and special operations. This chapter will therefore be based on: Colin S. Gray's work *Explorations in Strategy*, the report he edited *Special Operations: What succeeds and Why? Lessons of Experience, Phase I*, William H. McRaven's thesis *The Theory of Special Operations*, Luttwak's study *A Systematic Review of "Commando" (Special) Operations, 1939-1980*, and from U.S. SOF doctrine.<sup>16</sup>

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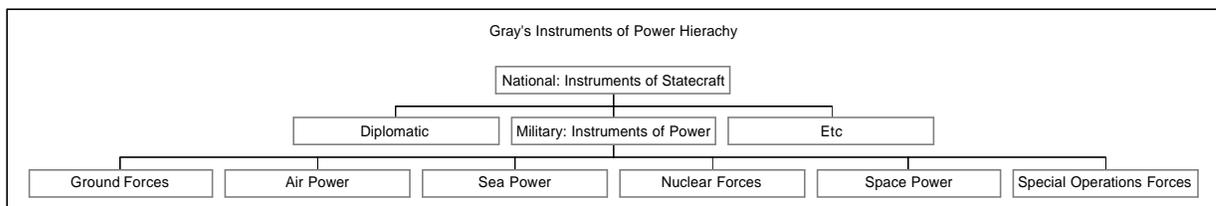
<sup>15</sup> The Swedish Parliament, EUSVAR – frågor och svar om EU, internet, available at <http://www2.riksdagen.se/Internet/Eusvar.nsf>, internet accessed August 10 2003, 5.

<sup>16</sup> Colin S. Gray, *Explorations in Strategy*, (London: Praeger Publishers, 1998); and *Special Operations: What Succeeds and Why? Lessons of Experience, Phase I*. (Final report. Fairfax, VA: National Institute for Public Policy, June 1992). See also William H. McRaven, *The Theory of Special Operation*, (Monterey: Naval Postgraduate School, 1993), and in Edward N. Luttwak, Steven L. Canby, and David L. Thomas, *A Systematic Review of "Commando" (Special) Operations, 1939-1980*, (Potomac, Md.: C and L Associates, May 24, 1982).

## Defining Levels of War

This paper uses Colin S. Gray's definition of "levels of war". This definition builds on the definition by Clausewitz: "the use of engagements for the object of the war". It then follows that: "a politically desirable condition should inspire policy choices which should be supported by a strategy which makes proper use of an operational competence founded upon tactical excellence". Gray continues "Strategy, after all, is the bridge that connects the threat and use of force with policy or politics".<sup>17</sup> Gray defines Grand Strategy as the instruments of statecraft which includes for example: diplomacy; trade and investment; economic and financial assistance; propaganda, information and education; cultural influence; espionage, covert action/political warfare; military assistance and arms sale; military power; arms control; peacekeeping; and humanitarian assistance.<sup>18</sup> Military Strategy is defined as instruments of power, including: air power; sea power; land power; space power; special operations forces; and nuclear forces.<sup>19</sup>

In summary if the politicians choose to use the military instrument, the strategist has to choose among the military instruments of power to achieve the desired strategic effect which ultimately leads to the achievement of the policy goals pursued.<sup>20</sup>



**Figure 3. Colin S. Gray's Instruments of Power Hierarchy**

**Source: Colin S. Gray, *Explorations in Strategy*. (London: Praeger Publishers, 1996), 87.**

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<sup>17</sup> Colin S. Gray, *Explorations in Strategy*, (London: Praeger Publishers, 1998), 7.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid*, 87.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid*, 88.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid*, 114.

## Special Operations and Special Operation Forces Theory

### A Review of the History of Special Operations and Special Operations Forces

Special operations are as old as warfare itself and are in Western military thought regarded as belonging to a separate phenomenon of irregular warfare. These operations, as self-contained acts by self-sufficient forces operating within enemy territory, which in WW II became known as commando operations consisted of missions like: assault raids, intelligence collection, reconnaissance, pre-emptive seizure, sabotage, and covert diversionary actions.<sup>21</sup> Before WW II specialized forces had not been developed and systematically deployed to conduct these kinds of missions in conjunction with operations of regular units. Even if every major army in WW II employed these specialized forces to conduct commando operations behind enemy lines only Britain, Germany and Soviet Union established commando units on an important scale and conducted what may be described as commando operations.<sup>22</sup> The Germans were first out in order to support their concept of blitzkrieg, and evolved from sabotage-prevention and preemptive seizure in Poland to: preemptive seizure of vital objectives; sabotage of military targets in the rear; deep scouting and intelligence collection; diversionary and undermining actions behind Soviet lines and instigation of rebellion in the invasion of Russia; to: coup de main; sabotage; and diversionary missions by the special SS formation under Otto Skorzeny.<sup>23</sup>

The British created a number of units during WW II for the same reasons as the

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<sup>21</sup> M.R.D. Foot, “*Special Operations/1*”, in *the Fourth Dimension of Warfare*, ed. Michael Elliot-Bateman (Manchester 1970), v2, 19-39; quoted in David Thomas, *Commando Operations in Modern Warfare*, (Journal of Contemporary History, SAGE, London, Beverly Hills and New Delhi, 1983, vol 18), 689, for an excellent overview.

<sup>22</sup> Myron Smith, *The Secret Wars, A guide to the Sources in English*, (Santa Barbara, 1980, vol 1 for a comprehensive bibliography; quoted in David Thomas, *Commando Operations in Modern Warfare*, (Journal of Contemporary History, SAGE, London, Beverly Hills and New Delhi, 1983, vol 18), 691.

<sup>23</sup> David Thomas, “*Commando Operations in Modern Warfare*”, *Journal of Contemporary History* vol 18 (1983): 693.

Germans, for example: Special Boat Section; Small Scale Raiding Force; Special Air Service (SAS); the Long Range Desert Group. Few of these units had as good results as SAS, which achieved results out of all proportion to its size and resources even if the strategic effectiveness was small.<sup>24</sup>

The Russians started with partisan units but developed this concept further.<sup>25</sup> In WW II they had a capability with special designation units (Spetsnaznacheniya) under control of NKVD and GRU and Special Guards Sabotage Battalions and parachute assault and reconnaissance units under the Red Army. These forces were used when the Red Army was on the defensive as strategic self-contained commando operations conducting: deep reconnaissance; intelligence collection; assassination; sabotage; and raids against German HQs and signal intelligence facilities.<sup>26</sup> In the later offensive phase these commando units were integrated with the fronts conducting: sabotaging vital facilities in the rear; assassinating key officers; disrupting communications; and also facilitating the main offensives by destruction of supply depots; airfields; headquarters; and communication installations. WW II was definitely a decisive period in the development of commando operations, due to the vast number of operations and the multiplicity of specialized forces created to conduct these tasks.<sup>27</sup>

Overall strategic effectiveness of commando operations in WW II was low even if they achieved some tactical effect. For example, sustain tempo of an offensive; demoralize the enemy and his population, and tie down enemy resources, if they were employed in an offensive overall

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<sup>24</sup> David Thomas, "Commando Operations in Modern Warfare", *Journal of Contemporary History* vol 18 (1983): 698.

<sup>25</sup> Edgar Howell, *The Soviet Partisan Movement 1941-1944*, Department of the Army Pamphlet, N. 20-244 (Washington D.C. 1956), 77-83; John Armstrong, *Soviet Partisans in World War Two* (Madison 1964); quoted in David Thomas, "Commando Operations in Modern Warfare", *Journal of Contemporary History* vol 18 (1983): 699.

<sup>26</sup> David Thomas, "Commando Operations in Modern Warfare", *Journal of Contemporary History* vol 18 (1983): 699.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid*: 701.

role in conjunction with conventional objectives. The conflicts after WW II have proven not to be suitable to the comprehensive use of commando operations in WW II. Thomas describes the counterinsurgency type of warfare the western world was facing in the aftermath of WW II:

The use of commando type units in resistance warfare in an anti-guerilla role is another matter. But this employment of commando forces cannot be described as commando warfare in the proper sense.

WW II still had the effect on every major Army to establish some kind of commando forces and incorporate them in their doctrine. The U.S. was one of the countries that did not. Thomas' conclusion is that countries that remained committed to attrition and logistical warfare did not recognize the commando potential as countries with a maneuver style of warfare as the Germans and the Soviets. The British Commandos, Special Boat Section and SAS, conducted a number of operations in small scale wars against subversive movements in former or existing British colonial possessions e.g. Malaya; Borneo; Aden; Cyprus; and Oman; however, they did not have an operational role in Korea or the Suez crises. The British concept of commando warfare in conjunction with conventional forces has been showed in peacetime, in Northern Ireland and in wartime in the Falkland island campaign. Today, the mature British concept of Special Forces has a domestic counter terrorist role in its repertoire. This is demonstrated by the hostage rescue at the Iranian Embassy in 1980.

The Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) concept of commando operations has its origin in the experience of Orde Wingate's raiding units, the Special Identification Group (under British command in North Africa 1942). The IDF has developed its concept from the formation of the first commando unit from the Paratroop Forces and has deployed commando units as reprisal raids in response to Arab terrorists since 1953. IDF has since 1956 deployed standing commando units in war as well as in peacetime, and has conducted the largest and most successful series of commando operations between WW II and 1980. The IDF has well integrated commando forces and operations on strategic as well as tactical level. The Commando forces have two essential

purposes: counter-terrorism and deep rear attack in support of the armed forces, in peace they serve as a deterrent and in war in an offensive role.<sup>28</sup>

The U.S. Army established the US Special Forces in 1952 to wage unconventional warfare in the rear, which encompassed guerilla warfare; escape and evasion; psychological warfare; and subversion and thus had nothing to do with commando operations or special operations in a proper sense.<sup>29</sup> The concept reflected experiences of resistance, guerilla and psychological warfare developed by the OSS in WW II and the British Special Operations Executive. In Vietnam, 1960, they became the first American units obliged to conduct commando operations, but in 1965 they turned into a side-show to the conventional army. Despite many successful commando operations in Vietnam the special forces were de-activated and re-formed as airborne and helicopter borne ranger battalions, to be used for tactical missions in enemy territory. Not until the late 1980's has the concept of special forces been thoroughly established in the US military system by the establishment of the Special Operations Command in 1987.

Desert Storm in 1991 was, previous to Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) the last use of the western world's special forces in a conventional war

In conclusion, the history of commando or special operations has, according to Thomas, had its greatest military value when:

it has been used against high-value targets, whose capture or destruction has required absolute surprise and specialized training and operational capabilities. In conventional war, commando operations have been most useful as an instrument of the offensive rather than as a defensive measure. ... In anti-guerilla warfare, against enemies with no fixed assets who themselves practice irregular methods, commando operations have been less helpful, indeed, in many cases, the importance of commando missions has been

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<sup>28</sup> Edward Luttwak and Dan Horowitz, *The Israeli Army* (London 1975), 108-118; 178; quoted in David Thomas, "Commando Operations in Modern Warfare", *Journal of Contemporary History vol 18* (1983): 707.

<sup>29</sup> See later in this chapter for a definition of Commandos, and commando operations.

negligible, except on tactical level for purposes of intelligence and reconnaissance in difficult terrain.<sup>30</sup>

With the basic history of special operations reviewed between WW II and the 1980s we now turn to defining special operations and its environment.

## Special Operations Defined

U.S. joint special operations doctrine gives us a starting point in defining what special operations are. Special operations are, according to U.S. doctrine inherently joint, and even if a special operation may be conducted as single-service operation, will they routinely require support and coordination in the joint environment. Special operations are characterized by attributes that distinguish them from conventional operations, for example: being designed to influence the will of foreign leadership; high political and physical risk; directed at high-value, critical and often time sensitive targets. They are often conducted at great distances using sophisticated communication systems and means of insertion, support and extraction.<sup>31</sup>

William H. McRaven defines a special operation as:

A special operation is conducted by forces specially trained, equipped, and supported for a specific target whose destruction, elimination, or in the case of hostages, the rescue of, is a political or military imperative.<sup>32</sup>

McRaven definition implies that non-special operations personnel, such as those conducting Dolittle's raid on Tokyo or the submarines involved in the raid of the German battleship Tirpitz, can conduct special operations. Gray suggests a more holistic way of looking at defining special operations:

in order to secure a sufficiently holistic understanding of special operations it is useful to think of them as, or in terms of: a state of mind; forces; and a mission. The scope of the

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<sup>30</sup> David Thomas, "Commando Operations in Modern Warfare", *Journal of Contemporary History* vol 18 (1983): 711.

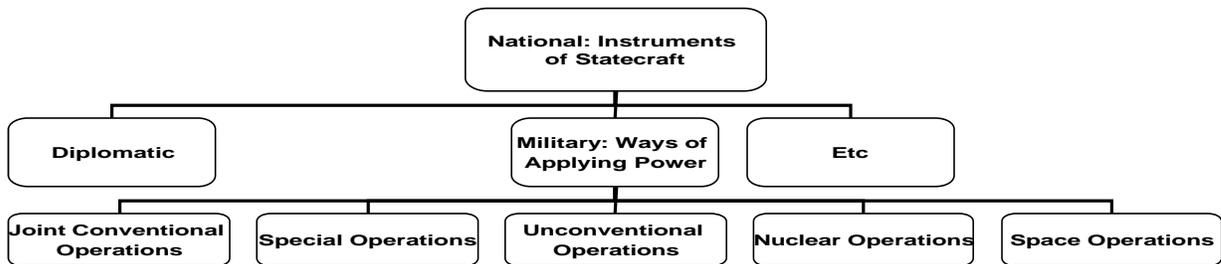
<sup>31</sup> U.S. Joint Chief of Staff. *Joint Pub 3-05: Doctrine for Special Operations*. (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1998), I-2.

<sup>32</sup> William H. McRaven, *The Theory of Special Operation*, (Monterey: Naval Postgraduate School, 1993), 3-4.

mission must depend upon the quality of the state of mind – the ability to think in an unorthodox way – and the tactical prowess of available forces. There is always some peril that special operations will narrow down to what special operation forces have trained to do, or what bureaucratic definition and assignments formally allow.<sup>33</sup>

The bottom line of his argument is that the consequences of special operations are strategic effect; utility in the course, and towards the desired outcome of a conflict as a whole.

Thus, special operations can be seen as another *way* to achieve the effect as opposed to joint conventional operations (figure 4). This way to distinguish special operations is pictured as an alternative to Gray’s way that defines the “specialness” looking at the *means* (instruments).



**Figure 4. Alternative to Gray, Ways of Military Power Application Hierarchy**  
**Source: Ronny Modigs**

Luttwak reinforces the view that special operations are “very high risk, very high pay off operations, maximally dependent on Intelligence and quality factors, and minimally reliant on logistical sustainability, mass or other “attrition” attributes”. Luttwak introduces the temporal factor and the matter of the mindset of the operators in the definition of a special operation when he distinguishes special operations from resistance activities (see further below in the definition of unconventional operations).

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<sup>33</sup> Colin S. Gray, ed., *Special Operations: What Succeeds and Why? Lessons of Experience, Phase I*. (Final report. Fairfax, VA: National Institute for Public Policy, June 1992), 27.

McRaven outlines another way looking at the uniqueness of special operations. He means that:

All special operations are conducted against fortified positions, whether that position be a battleship surrounded by antitorpedo net (the British midget submarine raid on the TIRPITZ), a mountain retreat guarded by Italian troops (Skorzeny's rescue of Mussolini), a POW (Prisoner of War) camp (Ranger raid on Cabanatuan, U.S. Special Forces raid on Son Tay) or a hijacked airliner (German antiterrorist unit (GSG-9) hostage rescue in Mogadishi).<sup>34</sup>

This implies that a special operation is offensive and therefore conducted as direct action and always is conducted against defensive warfare on the part of the enemy. Since defensive warfare is the stronger form of warfare,<sup>35</sup> special operations has the challenging task to attack the stronger form of warfare with inferior numbers – the special operation paradox. Gaining and sustaining relative superiority over the enemy is, according to McRaven, the only way to overcome this “special operation paradox”. To understand this paradox is the essence of understanding special operations.

Many factors, as discussed above, influence how to define special operations. Maurice Tugwell and David Charters have offered the definition of special operations that will be used in this paper. They suggest that special operations are:

small-scale, clandestine, covert or overt operations of an unorthodox and frequently high-risk nature, undertaken to achieve significant political or military objectives in support of foreign policy.<sup>36</sup>

This definition has six key features that will be further explored below. One or a few of these features cannot by themselves describe the “specialness” needed to be a special operation.

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<sup>34</sup> William H. McRaven, *The Theory of Special Operation*, (Monterey: Naval Postgraduate School, 1993), 4.

<sup>35</sup> Clausewitz quote “The defensive form of warfare is intrinsically stronger than the offensive” , Carl Von Clausewitz, *On War*, (U.K.: Princeton University Press, eight printing, 1984), 358.

<sup>36</sup> Maurice Tugwell and David Charters, *Special Operations and the Threats to United States Interests in the 1980's*, in Frank R. Barnett, B. Hugh Tovar, and Richard H. Shultz, eds., *Special Operations in U.S Strategy* (Washington, D.C.: National defense University Press, 1984, p35; quoted in Colin S. Gray, ed., *Special Operations: What Succeeds and Why? Lessons of Experience, Phase 1*. (Final report. Fairfax, VA: National Institute for Public Policy, June 1992), 6.

Small-scale: as usual quality and quantity are opposed; large forces cannot function stealthily and as they grow in scale their activities become more like regular warfare.

Clandestine: (non-attributable, concealing the fact of the operation), covert, (deniable, attempts to conceal true authorship of operation), or overt.

Unorthodox: it is the missions rather than methods that are unorthodox, even if unorthodox methods help characterize special operations forces.

High-risk: is the typical circumstance for the conduct of many kinds of special operations and often the character of their purpose. As defined in this definition from another study: “Special operations are self-contained acts of war mounted by self sufficient forces operating within hostile territory.”<sup>37</sup> Special forces seek protection from high risk with tactical excellence and planning in excruciating detail that provide a good basis for improvisation.

Significant political or military objective: special operations should have a strategic rather than a tactical or operational role. This is why special operations are an instrument of military power. One example of special operations utility, in this case economy of force, on the strategic level is when the British High Command looking at David Stirling’s plan in WW II stated: “It was wonderfully economical, it promised much but risked practically nothing.”<sup>38</sup>

Foreign policy: it is useful to define special operations as being conducted in support of foreign policy. Special forces are a national grand strategic asset and can therefore be employed as a tool of statecraft, surgically in support of diplomacy, of foreign assistance, as a complement to regular forces, or as an independent weapon.

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<sup>37</sup> Edward N. Luttwak, Steven L. Canby, and David L. Thomas, *A Systematic Review of “Commando” (Special) Operations, 1939-1980*, (Potomac, Md.: C and L Associates, May 24, 1982), p. I-1; quoted in Colin S. Gray, ed., *Special Operations: What Succeeds and Why? Lessons of Experience, Phase I*. (Final report. Fairfax, VA: National Institute for Public Policy, June 1992), 9.

<sup>38</sup> Virginia Cowles, *The Phantom Major: The Story of David Stirling and the S.A.S. Regiment*, (London: Collins, 1958), pp 21 -2; quoted in Colin S. Gray, ed., *Special Operations: What Succeeds and Why? Lessons of Experience, Phase I*. (Final report. Fairfax, VA: National Institute for Public Policy, June 1992), 10.

Adding Luttwak's view of the offensive mindset, the unilateralism, and the short time frame of a special operation to Tugwell and Charter's definition gives us a more comprehensive definition of what a special operation is.

A common problem is to confuse special operations with what special operation forces do, and it is important to make that distinction:

Special operations are operations that regular forces, [functioning regularly], cannot perform and special operation forces are selected, equipped, and trained to do what regular forces cannot do. To restate the point from another perspective, special operations lie beyond the bounds of routine task in war.<sup>39</sup>

This does, however, not mean that every operation that a special operation force conduct are special operations, and this refers to the previous stated definition of special operations. It also suggests that other elite or regular units can have a role in, or conduct a special operation if they are prepared for it. This gives us a number of other operations or tasks that SOF can perform that are not special operations, and we will start with defining unconventional operations.

## Special Operations vs. Unconventional Operations

Special operations have been defined above, and can be an extension of commando operations on a smaller scale. Therefore, special operations build on conventional warfare skills, but to a much higher proficiency. Unconventional operations, on the other hand, are conducted in the framework of unconventional warfare, historically under names such as partisan warfare, irregular warfare, and resistance activities. Luttwak states that unconventional operations are significantly different from special operations for a number of reasons:

Resistance activities are by nature both protracted and open ended, and thus fundamentally different in character from all SOs, whose goals are specific and whose time-frame is short.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Colin S. Gray, *Explorations in Strategy*. (London: Praeger Publishers, 1998), 149.

<sup>40</sup> Edward N. Luttwak, Steven L. Canby, David L. Thomas, *A Systematic Review of "Commando" (Special) Operations 1939-1980*, (Potomac, Md.: C & L Associates, May 24, 1982), I-11.

Luttwak also means that successful SO officers and successful resistance organizers have radically different mindsets and temperament: “the most important quality that resistance organizers need is patience and circumspection – hardly the traits associated with successful Commando or SO officers”.<sup>41</sup> This implies that unconventional operations are what the US doctrine mean with the missions for special operation forces, unconventional warfare and foreign internal defense, and thus not to be considered special operations. Luttwak’s perspective is that forces conducting resistance activities are so fundamentally different from special operations of any type properly defined that they should be distinct from special operations, all of which depends on one’s own forces alone, has specific goals, operations whose time frame is short, and come under a separate command framework.<sup>42</sup> Another example of how to distinguish between special and unconventional operations is that unconventional, as opposed to conventional, refers to missions that are special and not part of the conventional war fighting. Unconventional is not to be confused with unorthodox, a mindset that is needed for both special and unconventional operations. Special operations, by this definition, are special due to high proficiency and unique equipment employed.<sup>43</sup> Other characteristics of unconventional warfare that distinguish it from special operations are that in the unconventional missions you conduct war by proxy, i.e. by using the indigenous military and population to achieve your objectives. This requires different characteristics and skills of the operators as well as a greater cultural awareness. Unconventional operations also by necessity involve a lot more interaction with other military assets like civil affairs, psychological operations, and certainly more interagency interaction.

In summary, special operations are distinguished from unconventional operations by:

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<sup>41</sup> Edward N. Luttwak, Steven L. Canby, David L. Thomas, *A Systematic Review of “Commando” (Special) Operations 1939-1980*, (Potomac, Md.: C & L Associates, May 24, 1982), I-11.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid*, I-33, I-13.

<sup>43</sup> Thomas K. Adams, *US Special Operations Forces in Action*, (London: Frank Cass Publishers, 1998), 304.

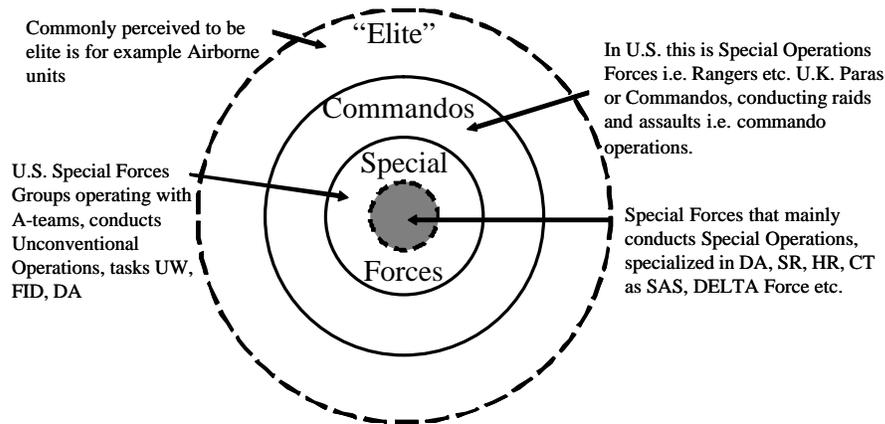
Goals, being specific vs. open-ended; Temporal, short vs. protracted duration; Mindset, offensive vs. patience and circumspection; Capabilities, high proficiency-special equipment vs. language, cultural awareness, and instructor skills; Employment, self-contained vs. interbranch, interagency and international. Following this definition tells us that special operation missions are mainly direct action and special reconnaissance and unconventional operation missions are foreign internal defense (FID), including Counterinsurgency (COIN), and unconventional warfare. Thus, the difference in operations requires significantly different characteristics and should therefore not be conducted by the same operators and therefore not by the same units.

Unconventional operations seem to be used by strong powers with a colonial heritage or imperialistic ambitions not facing the risk of an international backlash. For this paper, the EU military force working in the Petersburg task framework needing a UN mandate, unconventional operations seems unlikely. UN would naturally not conduct insurgencies and can by its charter not take side in a conflict and thus not conduct UW i.e. counterinsurgency. Therefore will unconventional operations not be the focus of this paper. This paper will due to above made definitions make a difference between special operations and unconventional operations.

## Defining Elite, Commando, Special Operation Forces, and Special Forces

There are many differences and misinterpretations in literature defining elite forces. Elite has its inherent attraction that humans naturally want to belong. This drives people to interpret what you belong to as elite or special. Elite is, according to Webster's dictionary, "a group or class of persons or a member of such group ...", or "the best or most skilled members of a group ...". Another frequent way of defining elite forces refers to risk, when it comes to dangerous missions and for using dangerous methods, for example parachuting, thus airborne

units are often referred to as elite.<sup>44</sup> Risk as a part of a definition has a lot of perception and skills to it, and is therefore relative. What by some is perceived as risky, will naturally not be perceived risky by someone who is well trained in doing it, e.g. parachuting. Training therefore is a better way to define elite, which goes back to the original definition of “the most skilled”.



**Figure 5. A "traditional" way of looking at Elite, Commandos & Special Forces**  
**Source: Ronny Modigs**

Naturally units that are smaller and have a smaller range of missions, can develop more proficiency than larger units, acting in battalion size or bigger. Units can also be considered to be elite from earning a reputation of continued success in battle, which also goes back to the original definition of “being the best or most skilled”. According to Gray “elite as a quality, refers strictly to the standard of selection not to the activity that soldiers are selected to perform. Special forces must be elite forces. Elite forces generally are not special forces.”<sup>45</sup> Quality and skills seems to be the way to define elite units and these factors are generally selection criteria to elite units. Selection is therefore conducted for all types of elite units and the more selective the selection process is, the more elite or special the units become. There seems to be a link between scope of

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<sup>44</sup> Jeffrey W. Bearor, *Commandos by Anybody's Definition*, internet, available at <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/library/report/1989/BJW.htm>, internet accessed December 06 2003.  
<sup>45</sup> Colin S. Gray, ed., *Special Operations: What Succeeds and Why? Lessons of Experience, Phase I*. (Final report. Fairfax, VA: National Institute for Public Policy, June 1992), 5.

missions and organization to eliteness. The smaller units, the more specialized missions and skill set needed, the smaller the scope of missions, the more special the forces are and thus are considered special forces and not just elite.

As discussed is scope important, commando units for example are elite but not special forces. Commando is defined in different lexicons as a military unit trained as shock troops for hit and run raids, or a small fighting force specially trained for making quick destructive raids against enemy held areas. Examples of Commando units are the British Army's Paras or the Marine's Commandos, in the U.S., Army Rangers is what would be described as having a modus operandi most applicable to this definition. Commandos have an offensive method of employment, mainly in conjunction with conventional forces, or operations. Commando operation's scope are significantly bigger, normally battalion size, leaving a larger footprint than that of the more self-contained special operation. Therefore commando units do not fall into the definition of special forces, defined by small scale, clandestine or covert, or unorthodox which normally are not employed in larger units than a company for a task or a mission.

This is not to say that elite units, especially commandos, are not used in special operations, they are. There are a number of historical examples of special operations through history that have had a scope beyond what special forces alone can perform. For example, the hostage rescue operation BARRAS in Sierra Leone by British special forces with support of commandos in 2000. Different countries have different solutions to solve the problem of coordination of special forces with other associated units needed in the conduct of special operations. The U.S. has incorporated these "supporting" units or capabilities (PSYOP, Civil Affairs, Rangers, air components etc) in the definition special operation forces (SOF), while other countries do not incorporate or define anything outside of special forcers, thus using the forces needed to conduct special or unconventional operations anyway.

Some countries use special operations forces as their strategic intelligence assets, for example the Russian Military intelligence service GRU.<sup>46</sup> This is also a part of special operations forces that not will be included in this study.

It is important that special forces are not confused with elite forces, if they are; they are very liable to be abused in fire-brigade roles. It is imperative to remember that it is the intensity or level of skills required of each man and the uses to which those skills are put that make people and missions special, there are, however, few unique military skills special forces possess. Likewise, the definition of special forces is important since a frequent use of special forces on the tactical level facing the risk of reducing this limited and valuable asset's utility where it belong, achieving effect in parity with other strategic assets.

## Special Forces and Unconventional Forces Characteristics

As discussed above special operations need some special capabilities to be performed well. For this reason the development of special forces has been natural, at least since WW II, even if there always have been units conducting these kinds of operations. It is the demands of special operations as defined earlier in this paper that drive this development towards attributes that distinguish special forces from conventional forces. The development of special forces has taken different paths in different countries, developed from the special capabilities needed in each case. Some overall characteristics seem to be the lowest common denominator though, which will be described here.

Members of special forces undergo a careful selection process, and/or mission specific training far beyond normal or basic military skills and capabilities. Most special forces recruit mature and experienced personnel with a high competency and with an unorthodox mindset. In

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<sup>46</sup> Glavnoye Razvedovatel'noye Upravlenie (GRU), (internet, available from, <http://www.aeronautics.ru/news/news002/news072.htm> accessed Mar 10 2004).

some, e.g., the U.S., countries SF are regionally oriented due to those countries' overseas requirements. This requires cross-cultural communication skills of the special operators and is therefore a routine part of their training. This skill set regular<sup>47</sup> US special forces need applies more to unconventional operations than special operations and US special forces groups will therefore be defined as unconventional forces hereafter.<sup>48</sup> Special forces soldiers are therefore specially trained, equipped and organized to conduct special operations. This careful selection and training make any rapid replacement or generation of more special operators, or special capabilities impossible. The characteristics of special forces and unconventional forces are well described in this composed quote from the US Army doctrine for Army special operations forces (FM 100-25):

Special operation forces are mature forces who demonstrate superior performance in small groups or as part of ... other military forces. Selected small, self-contained units can work swiftly and quietly without the noticeable presence of conventional forces. Even under the most austere conditions, in harsh environments, they are able to operate without the infrastructure often needed by a larger force. Thus they can penetrate enemy territory by various means, sustain themselves in the denied area, and execute various missions. Language skills, cross-cultural training, regional orientation, and understanding of the political context of their operational environments make them unparalleled when operating in complex environments. Their skills enable them to work as effectively with civilian populations (e.g. survey and assess local situations and report these assessments rapidly) as with other military forces to influence situations favorably to the outcome of the conflict. They have the ability to: apply discrete leverage; be task-organized quickly and deployed rapidly to provide tailored responses to many different situations.<sup>49</sup>

For the purpose of this paper this subchapter serves to define the characteristics of special forces. These characteristics are mainly developed to serve the requirement of special operations, but also unconventional operations e.g. language and cultural skills. The characteristics defined also give special forces a capability to do so much more than tasks in the

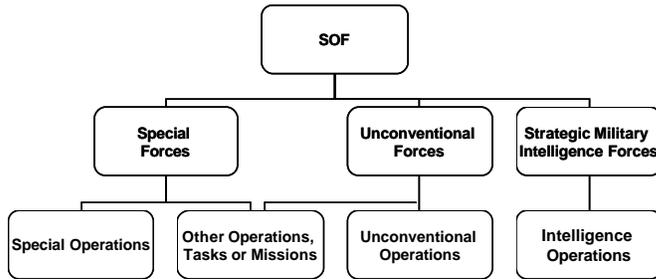
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<sup>47</sup> Regular, meaning not belonging to Joint Special Operations Command (JSOC).

<sup>48</sup> This goes hand in hand with Thomas K. Adams suggested concept of Unconventional Operation Forces, see Thomas K. Adams, *US Special Operations Forces in Action*, (London: Frank Cass Publishers, 1998), 302.

<sup>49</sup> U.S. Department of the Army, *Field Manual 100-25: Doctrine for Army Special Operation Forces*, (U.S. Army John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School, August 1999), I-7-I-12.

framework of special operations, tasks SF can perform well in environment and situations conventional forces hardly can operate in, tasks with tactical utility and effectiveness, which suits the characteristics of SF.

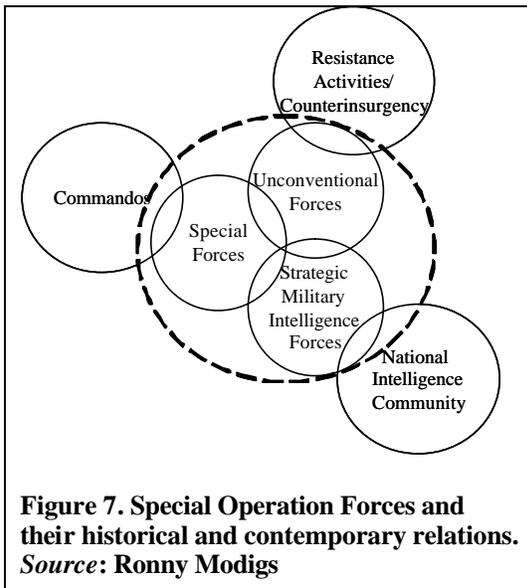


**Figure 6. Utility of Special Forces and Unconventional Forces**

*Source: Ronny Modigs*

These tasks, as discussed earlier, will be defined as other operations, tasks or missions that SF can perform. Thus, special forces can conduct three distinguished types of operations: special, unconventional and other operations (figure 6). In summary,

special operations forces (CA, PSYOPS and supporting elements in the U.S. model excluded) have as lowest common denominator some skills and characteristics necessary for their purpose. Special operation forces also have distinguished differences in the characteristics, skills and



**Figure 7. Special Operation Forces and their historical and contemporary relations.**

*Source: Ronny Modigs*

mindset needed to solve their mission as special forces, unconventional forces or as, in some cases, strategic military intelligence forces.

## Special Operations, Levels of War, Environments and the Spectrum of Conflict

Special operations are conducted all over the security framework, across a wide spectrum of conflict, a spectrum from peace via conflict to war, in military terms from military operations other than war to war. Special operations can be conducted, and its objectives may be focused, at all levels of war, from the tactical level to the strategic level, but has its highest value as force multiplier or enabler at the operational and especially the strategic level. Special operations differ from conventional operations in many ways, e.g., degree of physical and political risk (see definition above) and must complement conventional operations when feasible. SO can be conducted directly (for example a raid), which is the predominant way to conduct special operations. Special operations are not limited to any specific environment or phases of a situation or conflict. They can be conducted during all phases; preconflict, conflict and postconflict.<sup>50</sup>

The impact of special operations will, however, vary with the intensity of a conflict, the number of troops involved, the faith a commander place in high-risk and unconventional operations, international and domestic politics among other factors.

In single-mission conflicts or events, or wars of low intensity, which are self-contained politico-military episodes, like the abortive Iranian rescue mission Desert One in 1980 for example. In this context SF may be the only military instrument used and thus the exclusive tool of strategy. Special forces inherent readiness and capabilities make them suitable to respond to these single-mission crises.

Low intensity conflicts - characterized by small-scale, irregular military activities, which might escalate to or involve conventional warfare. Low intensity also refers to the degree of violence and the small size of engagements. These conflicts have dominated the post-World War

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<sup>50</sup> U.S. Joint Chief of Staff. *Joint Pub 3-05: Doctrine for Special Operations*. (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1998), I-1-I3.

II period. In this environment special operations and unconventional operations are valuable military instruments or ways because of the ability to take the war to the enemy and defeat his strategy. Attacking targets surgically and limiting the collateral damage is conducive to the aim of winning the loyalty of the population or at least not losing it. In low intensity conflicts special operations are rarer. Special operation forces, especially unconventional forces are instead used in other missions, for example unconventional operations with missions like FID and UW which may be conducted over an extended period of time (months or years), unlike special operations and missions special operation forces undertake in high intensity conflict.<sup>51</sup>

In conventional wars, understood to involve large scale confrontation of armies, called medium or high intensity wars due to large number of troops, modern equipment and weapons, larger military units have a tendency to dominate the military events. The most plausible is therefore that special operations are shaping operations, or operations intended to facilitate regular troop's achievement of the main objective, as such special operations can have a profound impact on overall strategic effectiveness. Special operations can also be conducted in high intensity campaign and contribute independently to strategic effectiveness, for example, by rescuing important political or military personnel, disabling communication networks, redirection of enemy forces, fighting weapons of mass destruction (WMD) etc. Special operation forces, conducting special operations and unconventional operations, are more likely to have paramount role, relative to other military capabilities, in low intensity than in high intensity conflicts.<sup>52</sup>

## Relative Superiority and Special Operations Principles

McRaven describes relative superiority in special operations and defines three basic

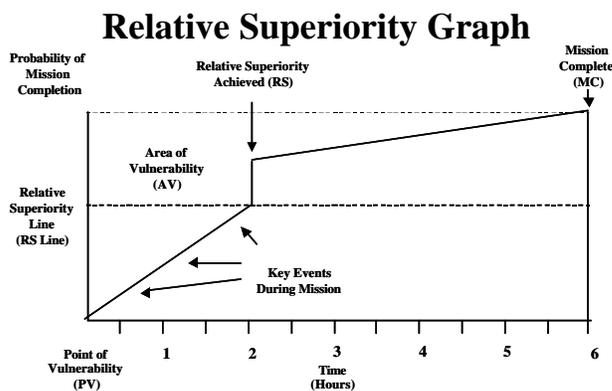
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<sup>51</sup> Colin S. Gray, ed., *Special Operations: What Succeeds and Why? Lessons of Experience, Phase I*. (Final report. Fairfax, VA: National Institute for Public Policy, June 1992), 44-49.

<sup>52</sup>Ibid, 44-49.

properties of it. Relative superiority is the pivotal moment in an engagement, an operation's success hinges on that moment when relative superiority is to be achieved, which also is the point of greatest risk. One's relative superiority is gained the probability of success strongly outweighs the probability of failure. Once relative superiority is achieved, it must be sustained in order to guarantee victory. The ability to sustain relative superiority often requires the use of the moral factors by the operators. If relative superiority is lost, it is difficult to regain, when relative superiority is lost, the initiative is lost and the stronger form of warfare generally wins.<sup>53</sup>

The key to success in a special operation is to gain relative superiority early in the engagement. The longer an engagement continues, the greater is the risk that the will of the enemy and chance and uncertainty, the frictions of war, will influence the outcome (see McRaven's relative superiority graph with definitions, figure



**Figure 8. McRaven's Relative Superiority Graph**  
 Source: William H. McRaven, *The Theory of Special Operation*, (Monterey: Naval Postgraduate School, 1993), 10.

8).<sup>54</sup> To gain this relative superiority surprise is essential. This drives that an SO with a small footprint facing a lesser risk of being detected too early and therefore the size of the force matters. The force should be as large as the nature of the objective and transport constraints allow as long as it does not trigger enemy warning mechanisms too early. Luttwak means that the relationship

<sup>53</sup> William H. McRaven, *The Theory of Special Operation*, (Monterey: Naval Postgraduate School, 1993), 5-9.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid, 10-11.

between the size of a force and its stealth is an important consideration when conducting special operations.<sup>55</sup>

“Understanding the principles of war ... is essential to operating successfully across the range of military operations.”<sup>56</sup> For special operations these principles apply with varied emphasis, mostly due to the fact that most special operations are conducted by small units. McRaven derives the principles for special operations, in his thesis (see below). He sees these principles as the way to overcome the special operations paradox. His principles are slightly different than what is described in U.S. doctrine and will therefore be described and compared.

McRaven derives six principles of special operation execution from his case study that dominate every successful mission. These principles are essential to overcome the special operations paradox and achieve relative superiority as soon as possible in an engagement. The six principles are: Simplicity - achieved by three elements: limiting the number of objectives, good intelligence, and innovation; Security - prevent the enemy from advantage by foreknowledge of the operation; Repetition - repetition and routine is necessary to eliminating the barriers to success; Surprise - catching the enemy off guard through deception, timing, and taking advantage of the enemy's vulnerabilities; Speed - over time the frictions of war work only against the SOF and not against the enemy. It is therefore essential to move as quickly as possible regardless of the enemy's reaction. With high speed the enemy's reaction is not even a factor; Purpose - the understanding and execution of the mission's prime objective regardless of emerging obstacles or opportunities by: a clear mission statement that focus the effort on what is important, and personal commitment to see the mission completed.

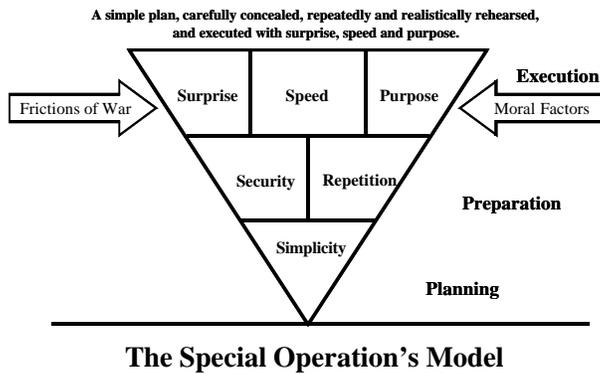
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<sup>55</sup> Edward N. Luttwak, Steven L. Canby, David L. Thomas, *A Systematic Review of “Commando” (Special) Operations 1939-1980*, (Potomac, Md.: C & L Associates, May 24, 1982), I-33.

<sup>56</sup> U.S. Department of the Army. *Field Manual 3-0: Operations*, (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, June 2001), 4-11.

The principles in this model reflect the idea that:

special operations succeed in spite of their numerical inferiority, when they are able to gain relative superiority through the use of a simple plan, carefully concealed, repeatedly and realistically rehearsed, and executed with surprise, speed and purpose.<sup>57</sup>



A comparison with current U.S. doctrine reveals a number of similarities, but also differences. The doctrine for joint special operations, JP 3-05, address the nine principles of war applied to special operations: Objective - that accomplish a strategic or operational objective;

Offensive - SO are inherently offensive in nature; Mass - effect is concentrated at critical times and discriminate places; Economy of force - critical to successful conduct of SO due to its limited numbers; Maneuver - to strike the enemies where and when they are most vulnerable and to avoid their strengths; Unity of command - integrate and synchronize SO with the campaign plan; Security - protect the nature of the mission; Surprise - in order to deny enemy to react prior to mission accomplishment; and Simplicity - plans must be simple, direct, and adaptable. This doctrine has the limitation of the need to fit into the overall framework of U.S. doctrine. Therefore it has to squeeze special operations characteristics in to the principles of war established by the conventional framework.

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<sup>57</sup> William H. McRaven, *The Theory of Special Operation*, (Monterey: Naval Postgraduate School, 1993), 17.

Luttwak raises another interesting paradox when it comes to special operations principles and planning. Special operations are by nature a manifestation of a maneuver (see definition above) style of war, but are dramatically different from conduct by conventional forces in maneuver warfare, in that special operations require planning of the most detailed kind. This constitutes that special operations must be micro planned, to achieve speed, surprise, and gain relative superiority, but they cannot act on the assumption that they will be performed as planned, in other words how to combine micro planning with flexibility? This paradox reaches the core of the special expertise and special mindset of special operators according to Luttwak. The solution is first, organizationally, that SO force commanders do their own planning to make them true owners of the plan including all alternatives that have been rejected during planning. These alternatives must be retained in the collective memory of the force and thus be available instantly if needed. Secondly, the use of an interactive planning and rehearsal process that produces one plan while suggesting a number of plan alternatives.<sup>58</sup>

Since McRaven's principles, described above, are derived from a pure special operations perspective these are the principles that will be used in this paper if applicable.

## The Spectrum of Special Operations, Missions and Tasks

There is no doubt that there are a wide variety of special operations that can be conducted from peacetime to wartime. Colin S. Gray provides us with one example of a framework of how special operations missions can be explained in wartime. Peace-time operations like counter-drug, counter-terrorism, collective security are therefore not covered in his framework. He divides special operations in three categories: Exclusively covert operations, mostly reconnaissance activities; Semi-covert operations, such as direct action or diversionary

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<sup>58</sup> Edward N. Luttwak, Steven L. Canby, David L. Thomas, *A Systematic Review of "Commando" (Special) Operations 1939-1980*, (Potomac, Md.: C & L Associates, May 24, 1982), I-43.

operations; and overt operations, like symbolic activities. This paper will as we have seen divide these missions into ways of utilizing special forces, such as special operations, unconventional operations and other operations.

Gray also introduces a way of looking at missions and special operation forces. This framework is used to make an assessment of what SOF can do to contribute to the national team effort for the conduct of war or other types of conflicts. Gray suggests that it might be helpful to think in terms of four categories of potential tasks: a) that only special operation forces can perform; b) that special operation forces cannot perform at all; c) that special operation forces can do well; d) that special operation forces tend to do badly. For answers to tasks applicable to these questions of utility of special operation forces see appendix A.<sup>59</sup> Gray does not, contrary to this paper, distinguish between special and unconventional operations.

These ways to categorize special operations and tasks to special operation forces can be tools to a better understanding of the utility of special operations and special operation forces. It is imperative to remember that special operations in order to succeed only be conducted in pursuit of achievable objectives. Even tasks that only special forces can perform will have strategic utility only if they are chosen with respect to the total structure of a conflict. Hence, the close connection between special operations and the total military, paramilitary, intelligence, and conflict context in which they are nested needs to be emphasized.<sup>60</sup> The U.S. doctrine for joint special operations, as comparison, has nine core tasks (figure 10).<sup>61</sup> These different frameworks can help us increase our understanding of the nature of special operations and special operation forces missions and will therefore be compared below with Gray's framework. The frameworks

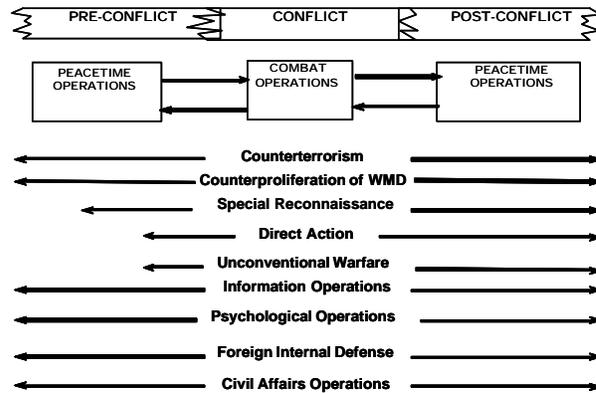
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<sup>59</sup> Colin S. Gray, *Explorations in Strategy*, (Westport London: Praeger 1998), 153.

<sup>60</sup> Colin S. Gray, ed., *Special Operations: What Succeeds and Why? Lessons of Experience, Phase I*. (Final report. Fairfax, VA: National Institute for Public Policy, June 1992), 22.

<sup>61</sup> USSOCOM, Posture Statement 2003-2004.

described above will be used to analyze missions to special operation forces as well as their significance as a special operation.



**Figure 10. USSOCOM Core Tasks and the Spectrum of Conflict**  
**Source: USSOCOM Special Operations Posture Statement 2003-2004**

A description of applicable or tentative special operation forces

missions follows. They are analyzed to what extent they belong to special or unconventional operations.

Reconnaissance and intelligence collection: information is a precious commodity in conflicts and special forces with reconnaissance missions are the

eyes and the ears of military and political authorities. Using a special operation force to conduct this should have a direct bearing on the conflict or the war, thus contributes greatly to the strategic effectiveness.<sup>62</sup> In the US doctrine Special Reconnaissance (SR) can also secure data concerning meteorological, hydrographic, or geographic characteristics as well as conduct reconnaissance within these areas: target acquisition, threat assessment, area assessment, coastal patrol and interdiction, environmental reconnaissance, armed reconnaissance as well as post strike reconnaissance.<sup>63</sup> Some of these tasks do not fall inside of the definition of a special operation though.

SR offers an opportunity for misinterpretation, but is not to be confused with HUMINT, which is defined:

<sup>62</sup> Colin S. Gray, ed., *Special Operations: What Succeeds and Why? Lessons of Experience, Phase I*. (Final report. Fairfax, VA: National Institute for Public Policy, June 1992), 34-35.

<sup>63</sup> U.S. Joint Chief of Staff. *Joint Pub 3-05: Doctrine for Special Operations*. (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1998), II-5-II-6.

Human resources intelligence — The intelligence derived from the intelligence collection discipline that uses human beings as both sources and collectors, and where the human being is the primary collection instrument. Also called HUMINT.<sup>64</sup>

This does not mean that special forces operators can not be excellent collectors of intelligence from, e.g., indigenous populations. They can for sure, especially using the skills of units trained for conducting resistance activities, i.e. UW or FID. But special forces are not the owner of HUMINT and the way it is conducted does not fit in the definition of a special operation.

SR is derived from the original use of special operations to conduct deep reconnaissance and intelligence raids, and thus is SR to be considered offensive in nature and is conducted when no other intelligence means are available or feasible.<sup>65</sup> SR is one of the special operations

Direct Action (DA): DA involves direct application of force and face-to-face engagement with the enemy using sabotage, ambushes, assaults, raids, and demolition missions frequently behind enemy lines. These actions can have an effect of their own on the strategic level. They can also be effective on the operational level facilitating larger operations by setting the stage, protecting a flank, attack critical targets, etc, as in the Falklands or at the Normandy landing in WW II.<sup>66</sup> The U.S. doctrine defines DA as “short-duration strikes and other small scale offensive actions ... to seize, destroy, capture, recover or inflict damage on designated personnel or materiel.” It further defines which kind of activities this might include as: raids, ambushes, direct assaults, standoff attacks, terminal guidance operations (TGO), recovery operations, precision destruction operations, anti-surface warfare, amphibious warfare, and mine warfare.<sup>67</sup> This

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<sup>64</sup> U.S. Joint Chief of Staff, *Joint Pub 1-02: U.S. Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms*, (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 2001), 201.

<sup>65</sup> Edward N. Luttwak, Steven L. Canby, David L. Thomas, *A Systematic Review of “Commando” (Special) Operations 1939-1980*, (Potomac, Md.: C & L Associates, May 24, 1982), I-1-I-5.

<sup>66</sup> Colin S. Gray, ed., *Special Operations: What Succeeds and Why? Lessons of Experience, Phase I*. (Final report. Fairfax, VA: National Institute for Public Policy, June 1992), 35-37.

<sup>67</sup> U.S. Joint Chief of Staff. *Joint Pub 3-05: Doctrine for Special Operations*. (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1998), II-3-II-5.

category includes tasks like hostage rescue (HR), liquidation of important personnel, amongst others. DA is the mission that is closest associated with a special operation defined.

Diversionary Action: Gray describes diversionary action as a show or demonstration to confuse the enemy and redirect his attention from more important activities. A diversionary action by necessity implies a larger coordinated military operation. The SO contribution will be on the level of operational support to the strategic level, where the value of this diversionary action has its effectiveness.<sup>68</sup> This action does not have any equivalent in the U.S. doctrine and will probably fall under the direct action missions. The utility of a special operation conducted with this purpose will therefore be indirect through the tactical and/or the operational level and is therefore in most cases to be considered as other operations.

Deception and psychological operations: these operations are unlike diversionary activities less likely to require the employment of force for their execution. They will include military actions, deception, and psychological missions. They are also closely related to political activities in order to win the conflict. These operations purpose is to subvert the morale, and influence the will of the enemy leader and soldiers and thus give them a potential strategic value beyond any doubt.<sup>69</sup> U.S. doctrine defines the purpose of psychological operations (PSYOP) as “to induce or reinforce foreign attitudes and behaviors favorable to the originators objectives.”<sup>70</sup> PSYOP activities include: developing, producing and disseminating programs, coordinating and directing PSYOP programs, and providing support to host nation (HN) assistance support operations. Operations of this type include activities that can be defined as special operations will

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<sup>68</sup> Colin S. Gray, ed., *Special Operations: What Succeeds and Why? Lessons of Experience, Phase I*. (Final report. Fairfax, VA: National Institute for Public Policy, June 1992), 37-38.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid, 38-39.

<sup>70</sup> U.S. Joint Chief of Staff. *Joint Pub 3-05: Doctrine for Special Operations*. (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1998), II-8-II-9.

certainly have an indirect strategic utility and therefore rarely be considered a special operation per se.

Targeting: Gray elaborates over the need for a detailed map of critical military, political and industrial targets available to the commander. Some of these targets can be identified only by feet's-on-the-ground activities and special operation forces are uniquely capable of doing that. He covers, under this headline, a lot of what in the U.S. Doctrine are considered as direct action missions, for example, terminal guidance, battle damage assessment and uses as an example the U.K/U.S "scud hunt" during Desert Storm, and can thus be conducted as a special operation, and have its utility, on the operational or even strategic level.

Incitement of rebellion: Gray looking at the incitement of rebellion as an alternative way to achieve victory, short of or, in war is to incite disaffected citizens and soldiers to the enemy regime to rebel. Special operation forces make contact with dissidents, behind enemy lines, and train them in guerilla warfare and sabotage. The strategic value lies in disruption, destruction of military assets or political turmoil these rebels may cause within enemy ranks and his will to proceed the war.<sup>71</sup> U.S. doctrine calls this unconventional warfare, which consists of a broad spectrum of military and paramilitary operations of long duration conducted by indigenous or surrogate forces. In the framework of unconventional warfare unconventional forces advise, assist, organize, train and equip indigenous forces and resistance movements. Unconventional forces also facilitate or conduct guerilla warfare, subversive operations, sabotage, and escape and evasion networks.<sup>72</sup> Examples in this category are operations in Germany during WW II or in Kuwait during Desert Storm. This role is debatable when it is conducted outside of a declared war. When can you legally, by international law, enter another country and conduct these

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<sup>71</sup> Colin S. Gray, ed., *Special Operations: What Succeeds and Why? Lessons of Experience, Phase I*. (Final report. Fairfax, VA: National Institute for Public Policy, June 1992), 40-41.

<sup>72</sup> U.S. Joint Chief of Staff. *Joint Pub 3-05: Doctrine for Special Operations*. (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1998), II-6-II-8.

operations to overthrow a legal government? There is of course no easy answer to this question, and it will not be further discussed in this paper. Luttwak has, as discussed earlier in this chapter, the opinion that this is not a mission to be conducted by the same force which conducts special operations.

Symbolic activity: these operations are overt symbolic demonstrations with the purpose of show intentions and the will to go beyond rhetoric. They may have both military and political significance, for example, in the Falklands when the British SAS and SBS recaptured the South Georgia Island as a way to show the resolve to prosecute the war against Argentina.<sup>73</sup> This role does not have an equivalent mission in the U.S. doctrine and must therefore be seen as a way to use any kind of force, not specifically SOF even if they in many cases can conduct them to lowest cost possible. In the examples above a special operation can be conducted with strategic utility through the operational level, and thus a special operation can be conducted as DA to achieve a symbolic purpose.

Liaison: liaison is a role or task that not is unique to SOF, but especially U.S. SF (in this study defined as unconventional forces) can perform this activity extremely well, as it was shown in Desert Storm in the multinational environment the coalition held. Unconventional forces capabilities given discipline, familiarity with other cultures, and language abilities make them suitable for this mission.<sup>74</sup> This mission is one of the special operation collateral activities and JP 3-05 states that Coalition support (CST) activities improve the interaction of coalition partners and U.S. military forces and includes training on tactics and procedures, assisting with

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<sup>73</sup> Colin S. Gray, ed., *Special Operations: What Succeeds and Why? Lessons of Experience, Phase I*. (Final report. Fairfax, VA: National Institute for Public Policy, June 1992), 41-42.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid, 42.

communications interface, and establishing liaison to coordinate for combat support and combat service support.<sup>75</sup> This is naturally not a special operation.

Escalation control: acting as a direct instrument of policy a state might undertake special operations to control the intensity and scope of a conflict. SOF may be employed to provide a low ceiling on the level of violence in order to forestall more violent activities, or to bring about a quick resolution to a conflict or to a crisis.<sup>76</sup> Again a special operation can be conducted to achieve this purpose, most likely as a DA, or maybe unconventional forces can conduct a unconventional operation to achieve the same purpose.

The U.S. doctrine for joint special operations has a few missions not discussed, in Gray's framework above, which can be of significance for this paper. This description will only briefly cover missions in U.S. SOF doctrine that does not belong to special forces.

Foreign Internal Defense: this is an interagency activity to organize, train, advise, and assist host nation (HN) military and paramilitary forces with the goal to enable them to maintain the HN's internal stability. Activities or task conducted are for example aiding and assisting HN military (training, advice etc) and providing population security (isolate insurgents and protect the civil population). This is a typical mission that is not unique to special operation forces, but that unconventional forces normally conduct well due to its skills and characteristics. It is therefore not a special operation.

Counterterrorism: the counterterrorism actions include antiterrorism (AT), which is defensive measures to reduce vulnerability to terrorist acts, and counterterrorism (CT), which is offensive measures to prevent, deter, and respond to terrorism. Special forces role in counterterrorism is to preclude, preempt, and resolve incidents and include a number of activities

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<sup>75</sup> U.S. Joint Chief of Staff. *Joint Pub 3-05: Doctrine for Special Operations*. (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1998), II-11.

<sup>76</sup> Colin S. Gray, ed., *Special Operations: What Succeeds and Why? Lessons of Experience, Phase I*. (Final report. Fairfax, VA: National Institute for Public Policy, June 1992), 43.

such as: recovery of hostages or sensitive materiel from terrorist organizations, and attack of terrorist infrastructure. The CT role is traditionally a typical special forces DA mission and is therefore probably a special operation depending on the level it is conducted.

Civil affairs (CA): these are activities that establish, maintain, influence, or exploit relations between military forces and civil authorities. They are both governmental and nongovernmental and may include the creation or improvement of infrastructure in a peacetime environment and in wartime to make sure that civilians do not interfere with operations. This is an mission associated with unconventional operations.

Counterproliferation (CP) of weapons of mass destruction (WMD): CP are actions taken to seize, destroy, render safe, capture, or recover WMD, which are conducted by SF and SOF using missions like DA, SR, CT and IO, and can thus be a special operation in certain cases.

Information operations (IO): this mission affects the enemy's information and information systems while defending one's own. The above described missions of DA, SR, PSYOP, CA, and FID supports in conducting information operations but this task is mainly associated with unconventional operations.

The special operations forces collateral missions were recently removed from US doctrine. They are good examples of other missions SOF conducts though, and consist of: Coalition Support (CST); Combat Search and Rescue (CSAR) ; Counterdrug Activities (CD); Countermine Activities (CM); Foreign Humanitarian Assistance (FHA); Security Assistance (SA); and Special Activities - actions that are conducted abroad in support of national foreign policy objectives, mostly clandestine operations and require a Presidential finding and Congressional oversight. During contemporary circumstances US SOF are a little bit strained which probably is the reason to cut these collateral missions away and focus on the core tasks.

## Utility of Special Operations and Special Forces

Colin S. Gray's concept of strategic utility means "the contribution of a particular kind of military activity to the course or outcome of an entire conflict."<sup>77</sup> Strategic utility or strategic effectiveness flow from action in the field and special operation forces may generate: Tactical utility, by impacting a particular battle or engagement; Operational utility, both as its direct impact on operational objectives and indirect as an outcome of the tactical utility SOF facilitated; Strategic utility, direct as the consequences upon the war as a whole or indirect through the operational level which they facilitated or achieved independently.

The tactical utility does not follow what has earlier been stated as the definition on a special operation with regards to have significant military or political influence on foreign policy. This seems to be the case were special forces support a larger campaign conducting tasks that they can perform well. This is however not to be defined as a special operation since it is not an alternative to conventional operations (see figure 4). It can therefore be considered a too risky way of utilizing these valuable resources, which should be used mainly for special operations on the operational and strategic level. If special forces are used, in support of a larger campaign, and thus with tactical or operational utility and not a direct strategic utility, it is imperative that they be considered as a supporting effort. This follows that they must be integrated into the conventional campaign as a generic part thereof still utilizing their inherent characteristics.

In identifying the strategic utility of special operations for the course and outcome of different classes of conflict; that strategic utility is indifferent as to the character of the active agent (e.g., military damage or political encouragement). Colin S. Gray groups the strategic utility of special operations into nine categories.<sup>78</sup> Two of them are more important than the others and

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<sup>77</sup> Colin S. Gray, *Explorations in Strategy*, (Westport London: Praeger 1998), 163.

<sup>78</sup> Gray does not distinguish between special and unconventional operations, which are important to remember reading this part.

are therefore termed “master claims”, while the other seven are termed “other claims”. Every claim described below is very well defined in “Explorations in Strategy”.<sup>79</sup>

## Strategic Utility of Special Operations

### Master Claims

- |                     |                        |
|---------------------|------------------------|
| 1. Economy of force | 2. Expansion of choice |
|---------------------|------------------------|

### Other Claims

- |                             |                             |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 3. Innovation               | 7. Humiliation of the enemy |
| 4. Morale                   | 8. Control escalation       |
| 5. Showcasing of competence | 9. Shaping the future       |
| 6. Reassurance              |                             |

**Figure 11. Gray’s Strategic Utility of Special Operations**  
**Source: Colin S. Gray, *Explorations in Strategy*, (London: Praeger Publishers, 1996), 169.**

Master claims: *Economy of force* – special operations can achieve very good results with limited forces; *Expansion of choice* – special operations can make a broader span of options available to political and military leaders. The other seven claims are: *Innovation* –

special operations can show that a new tactical doctrine, equipment and military methods work; *Morale* – special operations can raise the public morale and strengthen the political will; *Showcasing of competence* – special operations can show the political standing of a country by demonstrating military powers; *Reassurance* – When special forces is used it can reassure an angry or fearful public or ally that something is being done; *Humiliation of the enemy* – special operations can embarrass the enemy and make him lose face without triggering a much wider conflict; *Control escalation* – special operations can limit the spreading and intensity of a conflict; *Shaping the future* – special operations using unconventional warfare can help shape the future course of political events.

Looking at the two concepts described above, strategic utility of special operations and utility of special operation forces by assessing what they can perform, the two most important categories are the master claims; economy of force and expansion of choice. This is where these concepts come together:

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<sup>79</sup> Colin S. Gray, *Explorations in Strategy*, (London: Praeger Publishers 1998), 164-180.

Much of what special operations can accomplish uniquely – though not necessarily wholly independently – or which they tend to do well bears more or less directly upon these two central ideas. It is the closeness of fit between character of special operation forces and of special operations – properly understood – and the idea of economy of force which propels these judgements.<sup>80</sup>

Special force's strategic value does not depend solely on how they perform but also, as discussed earlier, on the strategic context in which they are used and how important for the war as a whole their missions are. Since low-intensity conflicts has been the predominantly type of conflicts in the post cold-war period special operation forces role as an instrument of military power has increased, low intensity does not mean low importance though. Relative to conventional military operations, special operations will be more utilized in a peacetime and low-intensity conflict environment. While strategic utility in mid- or high-intensity conflicts generally are hypothetical “the absolute strategic value of special operation forces in a mid-intensity-conflict, let alone a high intensity one, is likely to outweigh their value in wars of low intensity.”<sup>81</sup> The utility of special operation forces in the post-cold war low intensity conflict world seem to have led to a utilization of these forces more in the realm of tactical utility. Special operation forces are used to conduct tasks that they can do due to its special characteristics (e.g. be able to operate in a harsh environment) and not necessarily conducting special operations using the definition earlier established. Special operation forces also seem to be more frequently used in collateral activities and missions than they were before the cold war ended.

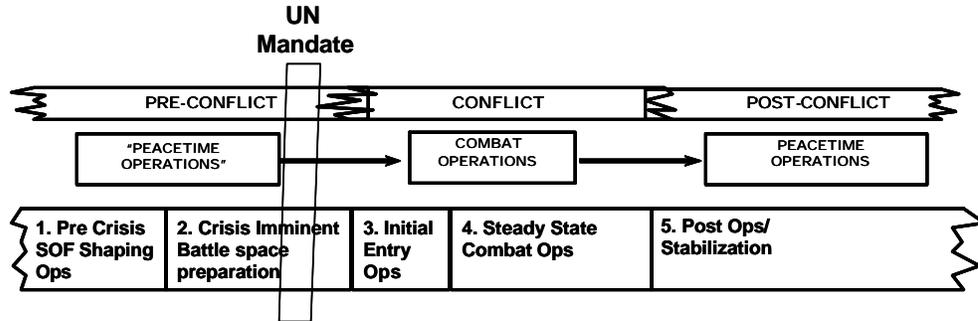
The utility of special forces in a conflict can be divided into the different phase of a conflict or an operation. In this paper the phases used in the SOF curriculum at US Army Command and General Staff College will be used. These phases are: Pre-crisis - SOF Shaping

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<sup>80</sup> Colin S. Gray, *Explorations in Strategy*, (London: Praeger Publishers 1998), 185.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

Ops; Crisis Imminent - Battle space preparation; Initial entry operations; Steady state operations; and Post operations/ stabilization phase.<sup>82</sup>



**Figure 12. Spectrum and Phases of Conflict**

*Source: Special Operations Element; Department of Joint, Multinational Operations, U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, 2003; and Ronny Modigs.*

The ability to act in a pre-crisis situation will be influenced by the nation or organizations situation in the international community. In this study of the EU a UN mandate will be a prerequisite for the EU to deploy forces, conventional and special forces (see figure 12). Likewise is it not likely that the EU would employ special forces in a covert or clandestine operation, which different nations that uses military power to pursue their strategic national interests outside of their homeland can do. A situation can develop, though, that started with one nation deployment of SF that leads to a UN mandate and an EU deployment.

## Conclusion Special Forces Theory and Analysis Model

Special operations have been defined to be small scale, covert or overt, unorthodox (mission and methods) and high-risk (physically and politically), and especially undertaken to achieve important military or political objectives. Special operations are inherently joint,

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<sup>82</sup> Special Operations Element; Department of Joint, Multinational Operations, U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, 2003.

offensive by nature, and often self-contained. Special operations can be conducted on all levels of war and the whole spectrum of conflict. Special operations are normally conducted by forces selected, equipped, and trained to for it, special forces, because regular forces functioning regularly cannot perform these operations. But, as Gray puts it: “It is important that one not be captured here by the circular law of the instrument-that special operations are what special operation forces do.”<sup>83</sup>

Special operations have been defined to exclude resistance activities i.e. UW and FID, which contradicts current US doctrine, mainly due to the differences in characteristics needed to conduct these fundamentally different operations. Therefore is an alternative definition suggested that distinguish special operations from unconventional operations and thus by necessity has to be conducted by other operators and units. Thus a distinction is suggested between different kinds of special operation forces; special forces, unconventional forces and military strategic intelligence forces. As a part of this suggested definition there are also other operations, tasks, or missions that special operation forces can perform due to their inherent capabilities.

It is useful to look at a special operation, as well as unconventional operations, as an alternative to joint conventional operations to determine the utility of a particular special operation. The utility needs to be on the operational but most often on the strategic level to be considered a special operation. If a mission, normally considered a special operation by exception, is conducted on the tactical level it should be fully integrated with the joint conventional forces it is expected to be a part of. The consequence of a special operation has to be strategic effect towards the desired outcome of the conflict as a whole. The primary strategic utility of special operation forces are the use of economy of force and the expansion of choice they provide decision makers, according to Gray’s master claims.

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<sup>83</sup> Colin S. Gray, *Explorations in Strategy*, (London: Praeger Publishers 1998), 156.

Direct action is the original and most applicable special operation mission, which the definition in this chapter most certainly shows. Direct action is together with special reconnaissance core SOF missions. This comes out of a number of characteristics of special operations defined, e.g., offensive in nature, self-contained (depends on one's own forces), conducted within hostile territory with specific goals and whose time frame is short. The characteristic described above requires a certain mindset that is not only unorthodox but also offensive and aggressive enough to conduct these offensive operations. This offensive mindset is also applicable in special reconnaissance which is the second most applicable mission, a mission originally derived from deep scouting and intelligence raids.<sup>84</sup>

Since a special operation normally attacks stationary targets, the enemy is on the defensive side and thus a special operation has to attack the stronger form of warfare with inferior numbers – this constitutes McRaven's special operation paradox. To overcome this, special operations have to achieve relative superiority early in an engagement before the enemy is alarmed, thus to achieve relative superiority is surprise essential. In order to surprise a stealth performance is normally needed. The relationship between the size of a force and its stealthiness is obvious and will lead a special operations force to be smallest possible instead of biggest. Except for surprise, a number of principles for special operations can be deduced. McRaven's principles used for a successful special operation is best described by his quote: "the use of a simple plan, carefully concealed, repeatedly and realistically rehearsed, and executed with surprise, speed and purpose."<sup>85</sup>

Special forces are forces that are selected, trained, and equipped to conduct special operations. Special forces are defined as the elite of the special operation forces due to its skills

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<sup>84</sup> Edward N. Luttwak, Steven L. Canby, David L. Thomas, *A Systematic Review of "Commando" (Special) Operations 1939-1980*, (Potomac, Md.: C & L Associates, May 24, 1982), I-1-I-5.

<sup>85</sup> William H. McRaven, *The Theory of Special Operation*, (Monterey: Naval Postgraduate School, 1993), 17.

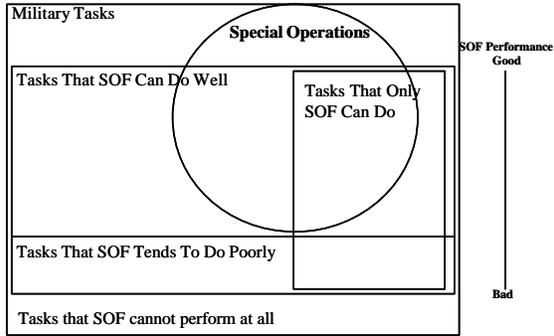
and its quality as well as the smaller scope in which they can conduct operations. Special forces' attributes make their utility greater than just conducting special operations. They can perform other tasks well due to their special characteristics and training. The post cold war environment has increased the use of special operation forces outside of what is to be considered special operations and also more in the realm of tactical utility in support of joint conventional operations. This development creates the risk of overutilizing special forces and thus decrease their strategic utility due to limited training and readiness, to conduct their trademark, special operations.

As we have seen the variety of special operations are wide, but in reality they are decided by the situation at hand and its boundaries. Special operations are therefore finely tailored unorthodox operations, tailored by a number of factors in the context of the situation, mostly by policy and strategy. Other factors as: regular force missions, time available, geography and climate, the character of men, and the weapons and technologies available on the tactical and operational level will also shape SF missions. The ability to tailor or adapt to the situation, and employ unorthodox creative solutions, will heavily decide the strategic impact a special operation will have on the outcome of a conflict, as well as how well the special operation support and complement the regular forces activities.<sup>86</sup>

For the purpose to analyze the case studies in this paper's next chapter, a model has been developed. This model is a fusion of Gray's categorization of potential tasks for special operations forces to perform to contribute to the national team effort and the definition of special operations in this chapter (see figure 13). Likewise will the model in figure 12 of spectrum and phases of a conflict be used to analyze when in an operation SF have their predominant role.

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<sup>86</sup> Colin S. Gray, ed., *Special Operations: What Succeeds and Why? Lessons of Experience, Phase I*. (Final report. Fairfax, VA: National Institute for Public Policy, June 1992), 33.



**Figure 13. Analysis Model from a fusion of Gray's Categorization of SOF Tasks (free interpretation) with Special Operations as defined in this paper. Source: Colin S. Gray, *Explorations in Strategy*. (London: Praeger Publishers, 1996), 153; and Ronny Modigs.**

## Chapter Three - Special Operations Forces Case Studies

These case studies serve to give a brief overview of operations conducted in the near past, which has a similar context as the missions the EU is supposed to conduct under the premises of the Headline Goal's Petersberg tasks. They serve to deduce what special forces capabilities and missions the EU military force need to focus on in building up their special forces capability, as well when in a conflict SF has their highest utility and therefore prepare for the right readiness. These case studies also deduce organizational and multinational issues involved in these types of operations. An attempt has been made to select operations during the 1990s that cover a wide perspective of operations conducted by SOF in different environments. These case studies are not fully comprehensive due to the inherent secret nature of special operations and all sources used in this study are open. In the analysis model the following abbreviations will be used, for example SLD, 3, first letters means country of operation or operation in this case Sierra Leone. Last letter is the SOF task (could be followed by a number if more than one task of the same kind have been solved). The number after the comma is the phase in which the mission have been conducted according to the "spectrum and phases of conflict" figure 12. There will be a

short definition under each picture. The model also has a scale of SF performance to the right in the model. SF performance will be subjectively measured relative other forces capability to solve the same task.

## **Somalia**

In 1993 the UN Operation in Somalia (UNSOM II)<sup>87</sup> followed the earlier US led UNITAF (United Task Force). The initial resolution (794) included the mission President Bush had agreed to lead, to establish as soon as possible a secure environment for humanitarian relief operations under Chapter VII in the UN charter.<sup>88</sup> The situation in Somalia was a “failed state” situation with the national government literally collapsed. The warlords fighting for control and power escalated the situation. The control of these violent armed fractions was one of the roles for the UN. The warlords started ambushing the UN in obvious attempts to start a general offensive against the UN. One of the warlords, General Mohammed Farah Aidid, was seen as a key to alter the situation. The SOF missions in Somalia can be divided into three different groups; FID or UW (Foreign Internal Defense or Unconventional Warfare), Task Force Rangers DA (Direct Action) missions and Sniper Missions.

The 5<sup>th</sup> SFG (Special Forces Group) was present in Somalia during both UNITAF and UNOSOM II conducting low profile unconventional missions with the local clans far from the capital, Mogadishu.<sup>89</sup> After a mine killed four US MPs on the 8<sup>th</sup> of August, the US agreed to dispatch SF asked for by Boutros-Ghali with a possible mission to snatch Aidid.<sup>90</sup> Task Force

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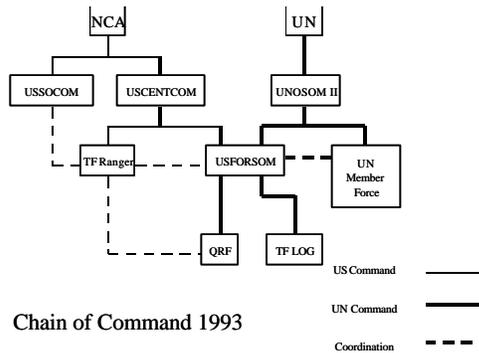
<sup>87</sup> UNSOM II, United Nations Operation in Somalia, followed the US led mission UNITAF (United Task Force) in the summer of 1993.

<sup>88</sup> Daniel P. Bolger, *Savage Peace: Americans at War in the 1990s*, (Novato, California: Presidio Press, 1995), 283.

<sup>89</sup> Thomas K. Adams, *US Special Operations Forces in Action*, (London: Frank Cass Publishers, 1998), 258.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid*, 261-262.

Ranger was formed, a combined force of about 450, made up of JSOC's deployable HQ, C Troop of Delta, support personnel, Army Rangers from B Company 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion, and 160<sup>th</sup> SOAR with different types of helicopters.



**Figure 14. Chain of command UNOSOM 1993.**

**Source:** Daniel P. Bolger, *Savage Peace: Americans at War in the 1990s*, (Novato, California: Presidio Press, 1995), 309.

Task Force Ranger was not under control of the UNOSOM: it was under unilateral US Command. Task Force Ranger kept the pressure on Aidid by upsetting his command arrangements and in arresting a number of his top aides. On the 3<sup>rd</sup> of October Task Force Ranger set out to raid the Olympic Hotel where Aidid was believed to meet with his senior lieutenants and supporters. Even if they did not find Aidid, the raiding force succeeded in capturing 24 senior members of his clan and two

of his personal aides. Extraction was called for within 20 minutes.<sup>91</sup> Due to the hostile situation in the city the situation escalated and led to the “famous” “Black Hawk Down”. The Raid is considered to be a success from a tactical standpoint where Aidid’s faction had been severely weakened and demoralized by the raid and subsequent firefight. The repercussions came on the operational and strategic levels, where the successful operation turned in to an incredible political defeat.<sup>92</sup>

Another mission conducted in Somalia was the use of US SOF sniper teams to enforce the ban on heavy weapons.<sup>93</sup> SOF snipers’ operated in both UNITAF and UNOSOM and engaged

<sup>91</sup> Thomas K. Adams, *US Special Operations Forces in Action*, (London: Frank Cass Publishers, 1998), 263.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid*, 265.

<sup>93</sup> Michael S. Reilly, *The Rules of Engagement in the Conduct of Special Operations*, (Monterey California: Naval Postgraduate School, December 1996), 150.

targets on at least 15 occasions.<sup>94</sup> The snipers effectiveness together with very little collateral damage made an attractive choice for commanders. They ensured that heavy weapons and Somalis in Toyota trucks with machine guns and grenade launchers were removed from the streets of Mogadishu. The snipers operated from stationary positions at UN posts, helicopters and various other locations.<sup>95</sup>

There are of course a number of lessons learned from the operations conducted in Somalia Mark A. Strong summarizes some of them in his thesis. For example, opportunities to assess the situation in Somalia were ample, since UN and US personnel had been operating in Somalia for months. Somalia was not a closed country, at least not from the perspective of an operator. Special forces teams could have infiltrated either overtly or covertly and assessed the true nature of the Somali military threat.<sup>96</sup> Special operations forces personnel are also trained to mix with the indigenous population as much as possible to discover the insurgent vulnerabilities and deny him his niche. Conventional commanders think this is too risky which in reality increases the risk when avoiding the populace.<sup>97</sup> If a SOF led force had conducted initial entry into Somalia with improved HUMINT-based intelligence picture, the force would have been smaller, cheaper, and more mobile. As another officer put it “deploying SF to Somalia, as a collection asset, prior to D day might have produced HUMINT on clan leader intent. Such HUMINT would have had a major impact on strategic IPB and force projection planning.”<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> Tony Capaccic, “U.S. snipers enforce peace through Gun Barrels”, *Defense Week Vol. 15, no. 5*, 31 (January 1994), 30; quoted in Michael S. Reilly, *The Rules of Engagement in the Conduct of Special Operations*, (Monterey California: Naval Postgraduate School, December 1996), 168.

<sup>95</sup> Michael S. Reilly, *The Rules of Engagement in the Conduct of Special Operations*, (Monterey California: Naval Postgraduate School, December 1996), 169-170.

<sup>96</sup> Mark A. Strong, *Joint Task Force XXI: SOF as executive Agency in Military Operations Other Than War*, (Monterey California: Naval Postgraduate School, Dec 1997), 109.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid*, 110.

<sup>98</sup> CALL Operation Restore Hope Lessons Learned Report, p ix-2; quoted in Lauri J. Snider, *U.S. Army Special Operations Forces as providers of Human Intelligence in Humanitarian Assistance Operations*, (US Army CGSC: School of Advance Military Studies, 1996), p 31.

It would have been more effective, in that the initial key installations would have been more quickly secured, and follow on forces could have moved to Phase II more quickly. In order to compensate for its size, Quick Reaction Force Contingency Task Units (CTUs) capable of rapid response by air and ground has to be used.<sup>99</sup> Using forced-entry capabilities such as in Somalia (as in most LIC environments) is often a waste of assets, is slow, and provides the enemy with ample opportunity to remain proactive.<sup>100</sup>

Only a low-key unconventional-minded force spread throughout Somalia could hope to produce long-term effects without appearing as invaders to the indigenous and possible provoking belligerents such as Aidid to precipitous action.<sup>101</sup>

Tasks and capabilities: Secure facilities, installations and relief points, security and assistance to Human Rights Organizations. FID deployments will continue to be the most applicable to smaller scale contingencies (SSC). Language training will remain a critical individual skill, as will the cultural attenuation to be gained from FID. SF should maintain their combat capabilities such as Direct Action (which is seen in the Task Force Ranger situation), and Special Reconnaissance.<sup>102</sup>

## Conclusion Somalia

The special operation force's mission set used and needed in Somalia is a pretty clear cut. Task Force Rangers missions to conduct DA i.e. raids to hunt down, or snatch, important personnel (nowadays defined as manhunt operations whether they are hunted for war crimes or just out of their importance in the specific case) was significant and conducted by the most skilled special operators of the U.S. supported by Rangers. TF Ranger was under unilateral US command

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<sup>99</sup> Mark A. Strong, *Joint Task Force XXI: SOF as executive Agency in Military Operations Other Than War*, (Monterey California: Naval Postgraduate School, Dec 1997), 110.

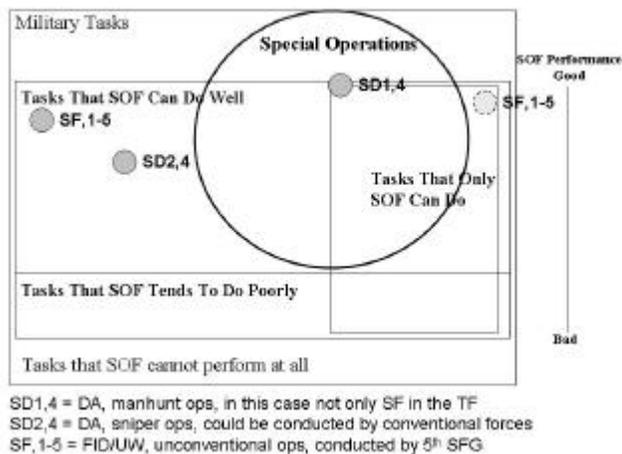
<sup>100</sup> Ibid, 111.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid, 120.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid, 129

and very little interaction with other forces and nations seems to have taken place. Other DA missions are the sniper missions, with the purpose to enforce the ban on weapons also achieved force protection and created a secure environment on the streets of Mogadishu.

The third category of missions in this operation were unconventional, FID and UW, capabilities of unconventional forces were used, without sufficient emphasis, on the countryside to support the population. These assets as we can see in the lessons learned could have been used in a much more efficient way to conduct SR, and as collectors of HUMINT, to make a better IPB in order to prepare the area for force entry of the major combat forces. Even if the SFG conducted these missions was under the UN force command, it has been hard to determine any significant coordination with conventional and multinational forces. The potential use of SF and unconventional forces to prepare the battlefield for the entry of the major combat forces would probably have had a significant impact on the strategic assessment of the situation and led to a



**Figure 15. Analysis Somalia**

more adequate planning and execution of force projection to Somalia and thus a most likely a more successful strategic outcome of the whole operation.

The analysis model shows that special forces were used conducting special operations as well as performing other tasks that is not unique to special forces but

which they perform well. One mission defined as special operation is defined the TF Ranger DA assault. The sniper mission was conducted over an extended period of time and did not have strategic impact thus, even if it is a DA, it is not a special operation per se. The mission conducted by 5<sup>th</sup> SFG, is not a special operation due to its long term and relative unknown outcome. It is

definitely an unconventional operation. It is not clear if it was conducted as a FID or a UW mission, and the difference might be hard to tell in this elusive environment. A FID mission is portrayed in the left of the model (SF, 1-5), which means that UF does it well, but other forces could also do it. If it had been a UW mission it would have showed where the lighter circle with the dashed line is showed to the right, as a task that only unconventional forces can do, and do well.

## **Bosnia**

In Bosnia a number of different countries have been involved with their special forces. A few cases will be described here: the British experience during UNPROFOR and the US experience during IFOR and SFOR. By 1991 Yugoslavia was falling apart due to the fall of the Berlin wall and its repercussions with nationalism among Yugoslavia's ethnic groups. In June 1991 Croatia and Slovenia declared independence and two days later when Serb troops intervened, civil war was a fact. In early 1992 the European community and UN intervened to stop the fighting and on the 21 February UN Security Council approved dispatch of a peacekeeping force, UN Protection Force (UNPROFOR) was established. UNPROFOR's tasks included: demilitarization of UN protected zones, verifying cease fires, overseeing disarming of combatants, supervising local authorities and police, ensuring safe passage of humanitarian convoys, and monitoring evacuation of the injured.<sup>103</sup>

### **British Special Forces in Bosnia**

Sir Michael Rose, former commander of the Special Air Service (SAS) Regiment, took command of the Bosnia –Herzegovina sector of UNPROFOR in January 1994. The conflict was

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<sup>103</sup> Daniel P. Bolger, *Savage Peace: Americans at War in the 1990s*, (Novato, California: Presidio Press, 1995), 343.

very complex with the three factions, the Croats, Bosnian Muslims, and Bosnian Serbs fighting each other in different areas. Sir Michael Rose soon recognised the need to get the factions to the negotiation table, but then he needed a good understanding of the situation and the different positions of the factions so he could negotiate a peace settlement.

At the time the SAS was already deployed in Bosnia with D-Squadron, but for this mission due to the delicate situation, the short time and the high-risking operation at hand Rose needed reinforcements. He called for another troop from the SAS (A-Squadron). They were given a new mission by Rose, to get the Croats and Muslims lines mapped, if they could achieve this, the factions had agreed to recognize each others borders and call a ceasefire. The mission was also to be General Rose's eyes and ears, thus acting as a "directed telescope"<sup>104</sup>, because information was power and the only way Rose could force the aggressors to stand down. The SAS therefore became a force of covert intelligence gathering with a special brief of getting information out of the siege cities: places like Bihac, Maglaj, Gorazde, and Zepce, which had not seen a blue beret for along time.<sup>105</sup> The cover for the mission was that SAS acted as UKLO (United Kingdom Liaison Officers), another acronym used was Joint Commission Observers (JCO).<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>104</sup> Combat Studies Institute, *The Directed Telescope: A Traditional Element of Effective Command*, (USACGSC, Ft Leavenworth, KS by LTC Gary Griffith, July 1991), according to this study a "directed telescope" concept is the use of specially selected, highly qualified, and trusted young officers as special agents or observers for the commander to provide him the most rapid, reliable, and efficient means of providing tactical information, communicating critical orders and controlling subordinate units; quoted in Michael L. Findlay, *Special Forces Integration with Multinational Division North in Bosnia-Herzegovina*, (USACGSC, SAMS Monograph, Ft Leavenworth, 1998), 21.

<sup>105</sup> Cameron Spence, *All Necessary Measures*, (Penguin Books, London 1998), 47; quoted in Ronny Modigs, *British Special Forces in International Operations*. (Stockholm: Swedish National Defence College, 2002), 9.

<sup>106</sup> Michael L. Findlay, *Special Forces Integration with Multinational Division North in Bosnia-Herzegovina*, (USACGSC, SAMS Monograph, Ft Leavenworth, 1998), 21.

The SAS had its Regimental Headquarters (RHQ) at Britbat HQ in Gornij Vakuf during their operations in UNPROFOR.<sup>107</sup> Later, with the establishment of the Implementation Force (IFOR) and the attached UK led CJSOTF, British JCO's were led from a HQ in Sarajevo.<sup>108</sup>

The mission of mapping the factions' strengths and locations was carried out during times when it was possible to get the factions to the negotiation table. The mission that became most important is probably the covert intelligence (as the directed telescope), where they made an intelligence web and delivered the only reliable information from areas closed to all other parties where no other UN troops could or would go. The intelligence gathering involved both collecting new information and verifying what the factions claimed from close interaction with the belligerents (often non-reliable information and double-dealing) to get an advantage in some way, e.g., in the negotiations.

As the conflict continued and it was not possible to get the factions to the negotiation table, NATO got a bigger role in "solving the conflict the hard way", hence the UN and other political actors started to discuss air strikes to relieve the besieged cities and to stop the factions from attacking and fulfilling ethnic cleansing in these areas. In this situation the SAS forward air control (FAC) skills together with their already established intelligence web made them the obvious choice to direct air strikes with NATO aircraft from bases in Italy against the factions. The mission to target air strikes was conducted through infiltration behind faction lines to target artillery, heavy mortars, command posts etc, using laser designators to guide smart bombs to particular vital targets, like the one well-tested in the Gulf<sup>109</sup>. This bombing would not have been

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<sup>107</sup> Cameron Spence, *All Necessary Measures*, (Penguin Books, London 1998)

<sup>108</sup> CW3 John Rikard, Slide from 10<sup>th</sup> SFG briefing on CJSOTF, 1 Dec 97; quoted in Michael L. Findlay, *Special Forces Integration with Multinational Division North in Bosnia-Herzegovina*, (USACGSC, SAMS Monograph, Ft Leavenworth, 1998), 24.

<sup>109</sup> Daniel P. Bolger, *Savage Peace: Americans at War in the 1990s*, (Novato, California: Presidio Press, 1995), 355. See also Reuters Business Briefing, 02 May 1994, quoted in Ronny Modigs, *British Special Forces in International Operations*. (Stockholm: Swedish National Defence College, 2002), 10.

possible without covert guidance from the ground in this kind of terrain. The mission also included verifying whether the air strikes had any effect (Battle Damage Assessment) and to abort an air strike if the target had been moved or civilians were to be hurt during an attack.

VIP protection was another important task conducted by the SAS during the UNPROFOR in Bosnia. The close protection was conducted for General Rose as well as political visitors that came to assess the situation or to take part in some negotiations. One example is when Britain's Prime Minister John Major and his defence secretary Malcolm Rifkind visited Sarajevo and did a hair-raising trip around Sarajevo and through "Sniper Alley". However the bodyguards did well and it passed without incident.<sup>110</sup>

The last, but not least important mission on the agenda for Bosnia was the capture of war criminals. This is a mission where the SAS can use its Counter-Terrorism (CT) and Hostage Rescue (HR) skills. In 1998, there was a report confirming that a war crime suspect was arrested in Bosnia by SAS troops inside Serbia. This operation was considered one of the regiments most daring snatch operations.<sup>111</sup> Later another report stated that the Serb war criminal Radovan Karadzic was still on the run despite a huge NATO operation led by the SAS to capture him.<sup>112</sup>

The UN lead Peace Support Operation (PSO) had its problems and later NATO took over the mission in Former Yugoslavia. NATO established the Multinational Implementation Force (IFOR) after the Bosnia Peace Agreement was signed in Dayton in 1995. The operation was called Operation Joint Endeavour and with it the situation changed significantly with an increased US engagement.

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<sup>110</sup> Cameron Spence, *All Necessary Measures*, (Penguin Books, London 1998), 131

<sup>111</sup> Reuters Business Briefing, 11 November 1998 quoted in Ronny Modigs, *British Special Forces in International Operations*. (Stockholm: Swedish National Defence College, 2002), 11.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid.

## Operation Joint Endeavour, Joint Guard and US Special Forces in Bosnia

In December 1995 NATO assumed responsibility from the UNPROFOR for peacekeeping in Bosnia-Herzegovina. The first NATO force was called IFOR (Implementation Force) and had stronger heavier military capacity and a better political construct under which to operate, the Dayton Peace Accords.<sup>113</sup> The multinational force commenced implementation of its mandate in a series of activities in the framework of Operation Joint Endeavour. IFOR's command structure for special operations was conducted through a Special Operations Command – SOCIFOR that established a CJSOTF subordinate to the ARRC. A British Brigadier initially led this CJSOTF, which consisted of special forces units from US, UK, France, Netherlands, Italy, and Denmark.<sup>114</sup> US deployed the 10<sup>th</sup> SFG which together with UK special forces were the bulk of special forces in the area. Three essential special operations tasks were identified: 1) develop a liaison/advisory assistance capability for the non-NATO forces in IFOR, 2) continue the JCO concept, and 3) continue to maintain a rapid reaction special operations capability to support the IFOR commander.<sup>115</sup> Besides these primary missions SF conducted Humanitarian Demining Operations (HDO) training, which will be considered as FID training with Bosnians.<sup>116</sup>

The first mission for US SF became the establishment of Liaison Coordination Elements (LCE) to a number of non-NATO countries, e.g., Poland, Russia, Czech, Malaysia etc. LCE can be seen as a variant of the coalition support teams (CST) that was used in Iraq.<sup>117</sup> LCE was a SF

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<sup>113</sup> Jonathan D. White, *Doctrine for Special Forces in Stability and Support Operations*, (Ft Leavenworth: USACGSC, SAMS Monograph, 1998), 19.

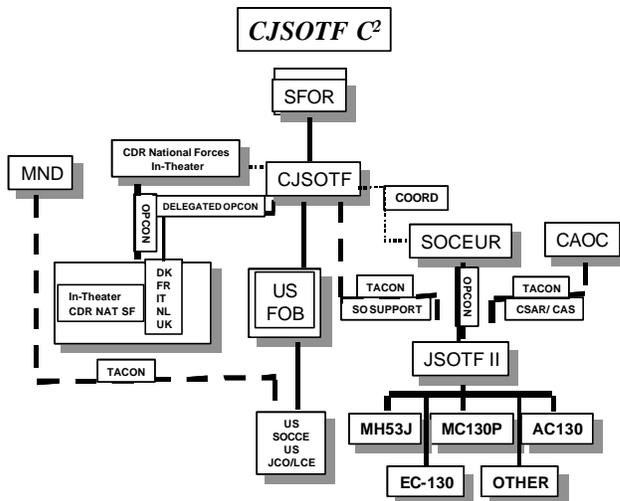
<sup>114</sup> Michael L. Findlay, *Special Forces Integration with Multinational Division North in Bosnia-Herzegovina*, (USACGSC, SAMS Monograph, Ft Leavenworth, 1998), 14.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid*, 22.

<sup>116</sup> Interview with COL Heineman, SOCEUR J3, 26 Nov 97; quoted in Michael L. Findlay, *Special Forces Integration with Multinational Division North in Bosnia-Herzegovina*, (USACGSC, SAMS Monograph, Ft Leavenworth, 1998), 3.

<sup>117</sup> Charles T. Cleveland, *Command and Control of the Joint Commission Observer Program U.S. Army Special Forces in Bosnia*, (Carlisle: U.S Army War College, 2001), 4.

A-team augmented with a Special Operations Tactical Air Control airman.<sup>118</sup> The LCE mission was to “facilitate NATO C3I and access to NATO CAS, and CASEVAC for supported non-NATO unit, in order to enable interoperability with IFOR”. Their functions were to coordinate CAS or indirect fire, coordinate CASEVAC, intelligence connectivity, secure communications connectivity, and tactical level liaison.<sup>119</sup>



**Figure 16. SFOR SOF Structure as of 1997**  
**Source: Michael L. Findlay, Special Forces Integration with Multinational Division North in Bosnia-Herzegovina, (USACGSC, SAMS Monograph, Ft Leavenworth, 1998), 17.**

The second task was to continue the Joint Commission Observer concept. The UK special forces already in the area initially conducted these tasks. The JCO teams normally consisted of six men living among the population and wore simple uniforms without rank or unit insignia and wore no helmets or flak jackets. UK SF continued to function as a “directed telescope” for the

commanders of the ARRC and IFOR and to the commanders in the different Multinational Divisions (MND) areas. The JCO team’s task was to conduct direct liaison, communications, and information exchange with the Former War fighting Factions (FWF) forces. Through long term,

<sup>118</sup> Jonathan D. White, , *Doctrine for Special Forces in Stability and Support Operations*, (Ft Leavenworth: USACGSC, SAMS Monograph, 1998), 19.

<sup>119</sup> Interview with MAJ Taylor Beattie, SOCCE Cdr in MND-N, 17 Dec 97; quoted in Michael L. Findlay, *Special Forces Integration with Multinational Division North in Bosnia-Herzegovina*, (USACGSC, SAMS Monograph, Ft Leavenworth, 1998), 14.

special relationships with the faction's leaders made them a valuable source of information and instrumental in defusing crises at an early stage.<sup>120</sup> The JCO's efficiency is probably best described in this quote by Colonel Cleveland:

Building on a highly successful British program, the JCO program established a new and unique role for U.S. Army SF in peacekeeping operations. Using this core of professional, mature special operations soldiers as his eyes, ears and voice in the affected communities, the JTF commander or CINC can mitigate the risk to his conventional force by reducing their exposure to the population. ...because of the combat expertise of the SF teams allowed them to be inserted on a permanent basis into dangerous and highly uncertain environments. These soldiers are neither intelligence operatives nor are they conducting traditional SF combat missions. Instead they cultivate and provide access to key individuals who wield power at the local, regional and national level.<sup>121</sup>

It is hard to define this task, but it seems to be a combination of special reconnaissance, HUMINT, and liaison in order to achieve force protection and to facilitate solution of the overall conflict.

After the September elections in 1996, when the time period for IFOR expired, NATO organized a subsequent force to stabilize the peace process. Operation "Joint Guard" was implemented and the stabilization force (SFOR) was activated in December 1996. COMSFOR directly command the Multinational divisions instead of through the ARRC commander during IFOR. For the SOF community this meant that the SOCIFOR was disestablished and the CJSOTF now became subordinate directly to COMSFOR. The CJSOTF became US led and the JCO missions were passed to US special forces after a while, but UK JCO's stayed in limited numbers in some areas. The US JCO teams increased from 2 to 12 and their deployment was completed in March 1997. These changes also influenced the overall JCO mission. Decentralization of the JCO's to the division level as well as changes in modus operandi when the US SF took over

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<sup>120</sup> Jonathan, White, D., *Doctrine for Special Forces in Stability and Support Operations*, (Ft Leavenworth: USACGSC, SAMS Monograph, 1998), 22.

<sup>121</sup> Charles T. Cleveland, *Command and Control of the Joint Commission Observer Program U.S. Army Special Forces in Bosnia*, (Carlisle: U.S Army War College, 2001), 4.

brought a risk to COMSFOR's overall program and the ideas of JCO's.<sup>122</sup> The JCO mission changed from "provide access to FWF" to:

on order, SF conducts Information Operations in MND North to assist in monitoring the GFAP<sup>123</sup>, promoting stability and reducing hostilities by providing timely information on the sentiment and attitudes of the general population and commander's Priority Information Requirement (PIR).<sup>124</sup>

The establishment of a strong SOCCE that would ensure that MND commander's priorities were articulated to the JCO teams was also an enabler to the US employment of SF in Bosnia.

US SF was also part of the hunt for people indicted for war crimes (PIFWC). US involvement started when the Dayton Peace Accord was signed in December 1995 when US leaders insisted on arresting these PIFWC's. SEAL Team 6 was deployed to Bosnia to conduct these operations. The results were low due to security problems, distrust among allies, lack of useful intelligence, and disagreements among senior officials over how much to risk in the attempts to catch the PIFWC's.<sup>125</sup>

## Conclusion Bosnia

The British SF was initially tasked to operate as a "directed telescope" providing essential information to the commander of the Bosnia-Herzegovina (B-H) sector, this can be considered as a SR task. Another initial task was the liaison role. This JCO/LNO role is hard to define, but as discussed earlier it is a combination of SR, HUMINT and liaison in order to facilitate negotiations among factions as well as create a secure environment for the population as

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<sup>122</sup> Michael L. Findlay, *Special Forces Integration with Multinational Division North in Bosnia-Herzegovina*, (USACGSC, SAMS Monograph, Ft Leavenworth, 1998), 17.

<sup>123</sup> General Framework Agreement for Peace

<sup>124</sup> Memorandum to CG 1<sup>st</sup> ID and COMSOCEUR, subject: concept of SF support, LTC Cleveland, 16 Nov 97; quoted in Michael L. Findlay, *Special Forces Integration with Multinational Division North in Bosnia-Herzegovina*, (USACGSC, SAMS Monograph, Ft Leavenworth, 1998), 28.

<sup>125</sup> Richard M. Bennet, *Elite Forces; an Encyclopedia of the World's most Formidable Secret Armies*, (London: Virgin Books Ltd, 2003), 16-17.

well as force protection for the forces. This task can be considered a collateral activity and is a task for special operations forces in line with “peacekeeping is not a job for soldiers but only soldiers can do it”. Liaison is not a job for special operations forces but in some environments their inherent capabilities and characteristics make them the only suitable choice. When the situation in B-H got worse the SAS was used for pure SR missions doing threat and target assessments. Conducting the DA missions terminal guidance operations and the post strike reconnaissance or BDA followed this reconnaissance. This SR mission was conducted when UN, and later NATO, conducted air strikes against the factions, thus turning it into a terminal guidance operation and a DA mission.

The British SF also conducted VIP protection for important personnel in the sector. This task must be seen as a collateral activity and is normally not conducted by special forces. Some special forces are trained for this kind of missions and others just end up conducting them anyway, again out of the inherent characteristics of these units they seem to be the choice when no units with this as their priority is available. The British SAS also conducted the DA mission of manhunts, in this case hunting down PIFWC’s.

The US special forces arriving with the change from UN to the NATO led operation IFOR continued to be used in the JCO/ LNO role, at least initially. Their role was also significantly widened to consist the collateral activity of coalition support, conducting support and liaison with other countries included in the operation. U.S. special forces came to be less used in the role of a directed telescope and were decentralized to the different multinational division commanders. They were instead used in a more conventional reconnaissance role including force protection tasks. The other part of the US special forces missions was the manhunt operations where U.S. special forces were used to hunt PIFWC’s. For U.S. special forces there was also a less significant role of conducting FID in the area. FID was conducted among other missions with regards to the humanitarian demining operations.

Organizational wise was SF initially led through unilateral British centralized command, without any real integration with other units. With IFOR a Combined Joint Task Force (CJSOTF) was organized under the COMARRC led by a Brit. This CJSOTF had tactical control (TACON) over the US SFG and the UK SF, but other SF still belonged to the MND (which was organized on the same level as the CJSOTF under the ARRC) commanders in their sectors. This provided a framework for a better integration both with conventional forces and multinational SF units. SFOR changed this situation again and simplified the command and control. During SFOR the commander was a US general and he had the delegated operational control (OPCON) of the different nations SF for agreed upon missions. At the same time TACON remained with the multinational division commanders for the JCO and LCE missions.

The organizational structure became more and more adapted to the realities in the operation and thus provided a decentralized command when it came to collateral activities but kept command centralized for the principal special operation forces missions. Integration with other forces as well as the multinational integration also grew better while the different nations kept their control through their national commanders and the mission set they had agreed to execute.

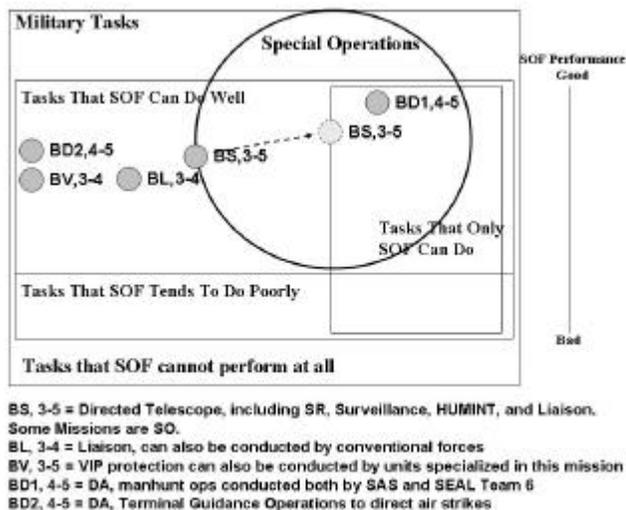


Figure 17. Analysis Bosnia-Herzegovina

The model shows us that the liaison and the VIP protection tasks in Bosnia are tasks that SF performs well under these harsh conditions, but they are not exclusively SF tasks. The directed telescope provides us with some difficulty to analyze. Other units could conduct most of the single

tasks included in this circle (BS, 3-5). In this case SF was especially trusted by the Commander to be his directed telescope. Some of the tasks conducted were special reconnaissance and definitely to be considered special operations, that is why the lighter, dashed circle (BS, 3-5) is put as a mission that only SF could do. The manhunt operations, DA, conducted when possible over time were a clear-cut example of special operations.

## **Sierra Leone**

### **Operation OBELISK**

In operation OBELISK, a Non combatant Evacuation Operation (NEO), a US SF Operational Detachment Alpha (ODA) team was involved. The team was deployed to Sierra Leone to execute training of the Sierra Leone Army in a routine Joint Combined Exchange and Training (JCET) rotation.<sup>126</sup> The situation got worse and a coup took place in Freetown. In this situation the ODA ended up as a supporting effort to the Marine led CJTF NEO in Sierra Leone in 1997. The ODA participated in a lot of different missions during this operation for example: reconnaissance and selection of evacuation site, coordinate civilians and Nigerian Peacekeepers to assist with local security, establish landing zones, and provide security while evacuation were conducted.<sup>127</sup> One of the most useful capabilities of the ODA that came to be important was the standard communication package that the ODA has. This communication capability became the primary means of secure, and most reliable, communication with the JTF commander, and was considered one of the key elements the ODA provided to the NEO.<sup>128</sup> Other tasks conducted by

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<sup>126</sup> Francis M. Beaudette, *The Role of United States Army Special Forces in Operation OBELISK*, (Fort Leavenworth: MMAS, 2001), 10.

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid*, 81

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid*, 78, 99.

the SF ODA were: monitor the situation (SR), defend facilities and personnel, escorts, NEO planning and reconnaissance.

## Operation BARRAS

During the ongoing UN Peace Support Operation (PSO) UNAMISIL in Sierra Leone, in 2000, eleven soldiers from the Royal Irish Regiment were taken hostage. The hostage taker was a “renegade militia” called the West Side Boys.<sup>129</sup> Almost 300 Service personnel were involved in the operation that started with D Squadron of the SAS and SBS conducting reconnaissance of the West Side Boys stronghold for almost two weeks. The authorization to conduct the rescue operation came “once it became clear to us that the negotiations for their release were not being carried out in good faith and lives were in danger”, with the captors repeatedly threatening to kill the hostages and that mock executions had taken place.<sup>130</sup> The operation started at first light on August 10, after two weeks of intensive planning and training, including debriefing with the released hostages. The mission was to rescue the hostages, capture the leader, “Brigadier” Foday Kally, of West Side Boys and recover the three armed Land Rovers.<sup>131</sup> Operation Barras was conducted by the British special forces (SAS and SBS), who carried out the actual hostage rescue and snatched Kally. 1. Parachute Regiment provided the fire-support, diversion and outer perimeter combat needed because of the strength of the “West Side Boys” and the big area divided by Rokel Creek in which the operation took place. Lynx gunship provided fire-support and cover and Chinooks provided transport of troops as well as rescued personnel and freed

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<sup>129</sup> Richard M. Bennet, *Elite Forces; an Encyclopedia of the World's most Formidable Secret Armies*, (London: Virgin Books Ltd, 2003), 274-275.

<sup>130</sup> Tony Blair, Reuters Business Briefing, 11 September 2000; quoted in Ronny Modigs, *British Special Forces in International Operations*. (Stockholm: Swedish National Defence College, 2002), 14.

<sup>131</sup> Ronny Modigs, *British Special Forces in International Operations*. (Stockholm: Swedish National Defence College, 2002), 14.

hostages.<sup>132</sup> Two hours after the operation had begun all hostages were safe back in Freetown together with the captured “Brigadier” Kally. The Paras continued fighting and the whole operation took about five hours with the final result that one British soldier and at least 25 “West Side Boys” were killed and another 18 “West Side Boys” were taken prisoners.

## Conclusion Sierra Leone

The U.S. non-combatant evacuation operation OBELISK clearly shows the utility of special operation forces outside of their principal missions. In the framework of a collateral activity unconventional forces in this case shows their versatility and thus assists the joint force commander. In this case unconventional forces using the width of their capabilities and equipment, conducting reconnaissance or SR, threat assessment, force protection etc. in a high-risk environment.



**Figure 18. Analysis Sierra Leone**

The British operation BARRAS, on the other hand, shows a clear-cut special operation being conducted. Operation BARRAS was a DA, a raid or direct assault; a hostage rescue to rescue the captured British soldiers as well as a manhunt operation to capture Brigadier Foday. Due to lack of

special operators for a mission of this size the 1.Parachute Regiment provided outer parameter

<sup>132</sup> Richard M. Bennet, *Elite Forces; an Encyclopedia of the World's most Formidable Secret Armies*, (London: Virgin Books Ltd, 2003), 275.

support in this special operation, as the commandos they are. That an A-team in Sierra Leone is insufficient to conduct a NEO with a JTF including civilians is an understatement. SOF are probably very suitable to advice, plan, and assist in the execution of a NEO, but will rarely be sufficient in numbers to conduct one on their own. Therefore is that mission (SLN, 4) plotted on the border line to what SF tends to do poorly. Operation Barras on the other hand is good example of a special operation. A special operation where special forces operators are insufficient in number and supporting fire power, why, in this case other elite units are included in the special operation. That is why the operation (SLD, 4) is plotted as a special operation with parts outside the framework of what SF can do on their own.

### **Iraq - Operation Provide Comfort**

In the wake of Desert Storm in late March 1991 the Kurdish population in northern Iraq rose in rebellion against the regime of Saddam Hussein. Saddam Hussein's forces crushed the Kurdish rebellion quickly and ruthlessly and soon the defeated Kurds fled into the mountains along the Turkey-Iraq border.<sup>133</sup> On the 5<sup>th</sup> of April UN Security Council resolution 688 was promulgated and opened the way for what would become Operation Provide Comfort.<sup>134</sup> Provide Comfort was a humanitarian intervention operation mounted in the request of the UN to relieve the suffering of the Kurdish refugees.<sup>135</sup> The same day airdrops of food and water started to the refugees. It soon became clear that this was not enough and 10<sup>th</sup> Special Forces Group was alerted the next day for operations in Iraq. On the 16<sup>th</sup>, President Bush supported the formation of a combined British/French/US Task Force called Provide Comfort under command of the US

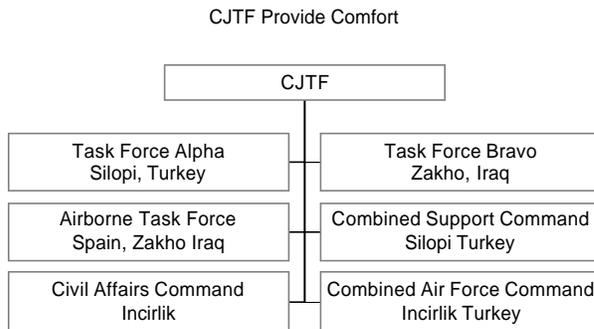
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<sup>133</sup> Thomas K. Adams, *US Special Operations Forces in Action*, (London: Frank Cass Publishers, 1998), 245.

<sup>134</sup> Daniel P. Bolger, *Savage Peace: Americans at War in the 1990s*, (Novato, California: Presidio Press, 1995), 234.

<sup>135</sup> Janice L. Mitchell, *Special Forces as Humanitarians? – You Bet!*, (Newport, Naval War College, 1993), 18-19.

general Galvin. The CJTF mission was “to conduct multinational humanitarian operations in Turkey and Iraq to provide immediate relief to displaced Iraqi civilians until international relief agencies and private voluntary organizations can assume overall supervision”.<sup>136</sup> The order specified humanitarian tasks including delivery of relief supplies by air and land, development of transit camps near relief camps, movement of displaced Kurds back to their homes, and withdrawal of the force from the region.<sup>137</sup>



**Figure 19. CJTF Provide Comfort as of 1 June 1991**  
**Source: Daniel P. Bolger, *Savage Peace: Americans at War in the 1990s*, (Novato, California: Presidio Press, 1995), 240-243.**

The organization was building on two Task Forces, were TF Alpha consisted of 10<sup>th</sup> SFG, 40 Commando, Royal Marines (Britain), Infantry platoon (Luxembourg), elements of 4<sup>th</sup> PSYOPS group, and 39<sup>th</sup> Special Operations Wing. TF Alpha’s basic mission was to stop the dying and stabilize the situation, and then

begin moving refugees to internationally protected sites near Zakho.<sup>138</sup> TF A main area of operations where the northern part of the AO, which also was the most mountainous and inaccessible area. TF Bravo was created of Elite NATO infantry battalions to establish a secure zone in northern Iraq, with three huge refugee camps, in preparation for the Kurds to go home. The Civil Affairs Command orchestrated all ties to Turkey, UN relief agencies, humanitarian organizations, and different Kurdish leaders.<sup>139</sup>

<sup>136</sup> Daniel P. Bolger, *Savage Peace: Americans at War in the 1990s*, (Novato, California: Presidio Press, 1995), 238.

<sup>137</sup> Ibid.

<sup>138</sup> Thomas K. Adams, *US Special Operations Forces in Action*, (London: Frank Cass Publishers, 1998), 247.

<sup>139</sup> Daniel P. Bolger, *Savage Peace: Americans at War in the 1990s*, (Novato, California: Presidio Press, 1995), 238.

Operation Provide comfort proved to be a success. The success is attributed to a number of different factors. One of the main reasons is the capability of the SOF, in this case: to have good survivability to survive in this environment is a requirement to be able to help someone else; the fact that 10<sup>th</sup> SFG had previous knowledge of the region; despite the humanitarian nature of the operation, it occurred in a heavily armed environment; the ability to assess the state of the population in terms of health, welfare, morale, and medical needs.<sup>140</sup> Another skill inherent in SOF that showed essential in this situation was their paramedics' skills, facing medical problems from chronic diarrhea to back pain, scabies, malnutrition, and dehydration without interpreters to help them.<sup>141</sup> The unconventional warfare training to build up trust amongst the population was also a great benefit of the SOF soldiers; this was well supplemented by the civil affairs and PSYOPS capabilities in the operation to gain the support of the population. One of the most significant abilities needed, in the operation's trackless high country, was the ability to bring in a large number of transport aircraft and cargo helicopters, to coordinate these transports was an ability of each team which already was trained together with SOF inherent air assets.<sup>142</sup>

## Conclusion Provide Comfort –Iraq

Provide Comfort is a foreign humanitarian assistance operation and a special forces collateral activity according to US doctrine. Special operators and commandos together with other forces and organizations conducted the operation. This mission shows a typical situation when the utility of special operation forces is great at least initially. This is due to the ability to operate in a harsh environment, the rapid deployability, and the fact that special operation forces

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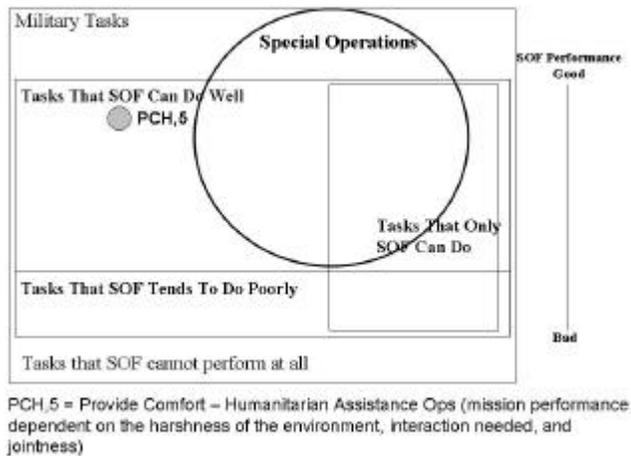
<sup>140</sup> Thomas K. Adams, *US Special Operations Forces in Action*, (London: Frank Cass Publishers, 1998), 247.

<sup>141</sup> John T. Carney JR, Benjamin F. Schemmer, *No Room for Error: the Covert Operations of America's Special Tactics Units from Iran to Afghanistan*, (Toronto, Canada: The Ballantine Publishing Group, 2002), 238.

<sup>142</sup> Daniel P. Bolger, *Savage Peace: Americans at War in the 1990s*, (Novato, California: Presidio Press, 1995), 243.

are inherently joint, a benefit shown in the coordination needed in this operation with regards to humanitarian support, relief and medical evacuations. In a well planned operation with time for build up like most peace support operations, special operation forces are probably not the first force of choice. In this operation the time, the problematic environment, and the operator's ability to interact with the population proved crucial to mission success.

With regards to organization, the special forces were organized in a Task Force responsible for the harder terrain in the north. The more conventional forces were organized in another Task Force in the more open area in the South to handle the more imminent threat from the Iraqi forces. The organization was multinational and the interaction with non-governmental organizations became important. The mission was an overall a success and the special operation forces could withdraw within a few months. The operation had proven again that special operations forces are suitable for other missions than special operations in a conflict. It proved that special operation force's characteristics, organization and capabilities are needed outside of pure special operations.



**Figure 20. Analysis Provide Comfort Iraq**

**Operation Provide**

Comfort was a Humanitarian Assistance operation in a very harsh environment. It turned out that special operation force's inherent capabilities, equipment and characteristics were very suitable, not to say essential, to accomplish this mission. It can not be defined as a special or an

unconventional operation though, and is therefore plotted high on the scale of tasks that special forces can do well. Other forces, probably with another outcome, could have conducted this operation.

## **Chapter Four - Special Forces Capabilities for the Future EU Military Force**

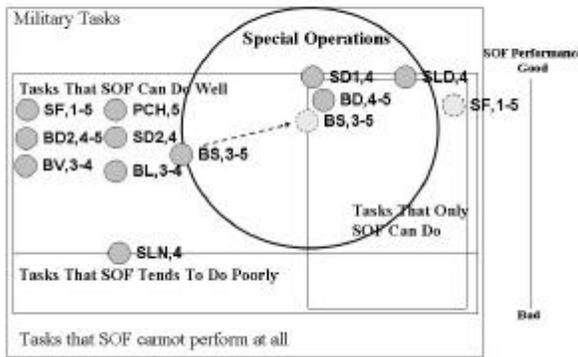
This chapter analyzes the future EU military force need for special operations and special force's capabilities in crises management operations. The analysis is deduced from chapter two and three and will be conducted according to the criteria: special operation forces capabilities, defined by its mission set, and SF integration, defined by command and control, organizational structure and integration with conventional forces, and interoperability in multinational operations. The analysis will be conducted with support of the two analysis tools introduced earlier.

### **Capabilities**

The analysis model in figure 21 shows us that a preponderance of missions conducted in the operations studied has been other tasks that special forces and/or unconventional forces, can do well due to its skills and characteristics. A smaller number of tasks can be defined as special operations and only one task can be defined as an unconventional operation. Further only one task has been assigned that touches the realm of tasks that SF tends to do poorly. The preponderance has been tasks that SF can do well and five tasks that only SF can do, amongst them the unconventional operation in Somalia.

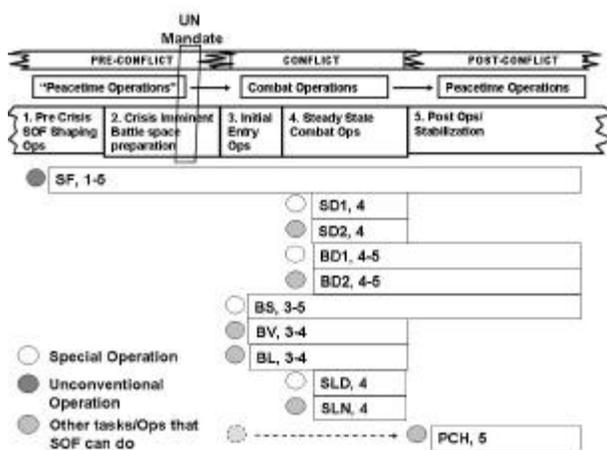
A few of the tasks that SF can

do well could have been in the framework of tasks that only SF can do due to the environment in which it is executed, e.g., the DA, Terminal Guidance Operations conducted in Bosnia. They could as well have been conducted by other FAC, but in certain areas SF infiltration skills were needed to execute the mission.



**Figure 21. Conclusive Case Study Analysis, Types of missions**

Turning to the analysis model in figure 22, which show us when in an operation SF units was used. The unconventional operation in Somalia was the only operation that was going on before the actual major forces were employed in the operation. The lessons learned from the operation in Somalia, as we have seen, are that a better utilization of SF to prepare the battlefield would have significantly increased the initial entry effectiveness of the major forces in the operation.



**Figure 22. Conclusive Case study Analysis, In what phase an operation took place**

This analysis also reveals that most special operations were conducted in phase four, the steady state or combat phase. These operations were mainly manhunt, PIFWC, and hostage rescue missions. These types of operations are not continuously on-going operations.

They rather reflect operations conducted surgically in a short time frame where

readiness to act when an opportunity or a situation occurs is essential to mission success. The other special operation we can find in this analysis is the special reconnaissance conducted in

Bosnia as an initial entry and directed telescope mission for General Rose, accessing information in an environment not suitable for other forces.

The preponderance of operations in the category of other tasks that SF can do is initial entry operations. Typical for this is Provide Comfort, an operation in the aftermath of Desert Storm, an operation where special operating forces executed the first crucial stage as initial entry force to assess the situation and start coordinating force projection and humanitarian aid. Due to its readiness, characteristics and inherent joint capabilities special operations forces was the only feasible option in this case.

## Conclusion

European Union military force should develop a capability to conduct special operations in the realm of crises management. These special operations missions should be direct action: manhunt or capturing of, e.g., PIFWC's; hostage rescue or recovery of designated personnel; and counter-terrorism (a mission not seen in this case study but a prerequisite in the future environment). Special reconnaissance is another special operation mission that should be developed by the EU military force, to be conducted as: directed telescope, reconnaissance, and surveillance to obtain or verify information no one else can get access to.

Unconventional operations: it is hard to see the need to develop this capability for the EU military force. This capability is mainly used as unconventional warfare in insurgencies and this will not be the case in the framework of operations analyzed in this monograph. To conduct unconventional operations as foreign internal defense can as well be a mission for regular forces, training the local military. The European Union's vast different cultures and language abilities would probably be sufficient to find the most suitable unit or force to conduct these operations when needed.

Other operations, missions or tasks that special forces can perform: among these tasks there are a lot of tasks that SF are not the only forces able perform. Among these tasks, however,

some will turn out to be uniquely SF tasks due to the situation and environment in which no other forces can operate. Among these tasks, the capability to provide the EU military force with an initial entry force seems to be the most feasible. Using the inherent joint and other SF characteristics that make SF able to sustain a self contained operation in a harsh environment must be the best way to prepare the battlefield for a conventional force entry. As we have seen in the case of Somalia, Bosnia, and Provide Comfort spearheading other forces or coalition initial efforts is a good way to utilize SF outside of pure special operations. The most important is, as we have seen in Chapter Two, that special forces has strategic utility to the outcome of the conflict as a whole.

### **Special Forces Integration and interoperability**

A great challenge for the EU military force is beyond any doubt command, control, and interoperability, so also for the SF community. This study shows, in most cases, that special operations have been conducted with unilateral national strategic level command and control. The Somalia TF Ranger and the hostage rescue in Sierra Leone are good examples of this. Of the operations studied, special operations and other tasks, except Sierra Leone, have on the tactical level, been conducted by national teams forming Task Groups.

All joint integration of supporting assets, for example aviation and maritime, has been conducted on national level with the exception of humanitarian assistance transportation in Provide Comfort. The issue of interoperability and ability to operate combined as well as joint is a great challenge to the future SF concept of the EU. A formula must be created that allows these essential capabilities for employment of special forces to be used combined. It is important for the EU to have not only different national tactical capabilities, but also a combined operational level capability.

As we have seen, as soon as more than one nation has been involved with special forces, Task Forces have been created with national task groups. To create a Task Force also seems to

have been necessary to integrate special forces with conventional forces on the operational level. A single Task Group would otherwise be integrated only under another conventional tactical level command, under another Task Force and thus not be utilized in an optimal way. Therefore must the EU special forces concept have a operational level command and control structure to integrate with conventional forces for overall higher performance of the EU military forces.

Other areas not studied in detail in this monograph are technical, e.g., communications, and doctrinal interoperability, which most certainly are reasons for the command and control structures we have seen in many of these cases. These interoperability issues are also great challenges to a future EU military force.

### **Conclusion SF Integration, Command, Control, and Interoperability**

That special forces are able to operate in a full spectrum environment is obvious. This means that special forces can be the force or operation of choice for the EU as a single operation of economy of force or as an alternative to other options. To have this strategic utility the EU SF concept must have a command and control structure that allows strategic command and control of special operations as the single instrument of EU policy in a conflict or situation. The EU SF command and control structure must also have an operational level capability to command and control SF conducting initial entry operations, that later evolves into a supporting effort to a conventional force.

Tactical level command and control should stay on the national level forming Task Groups. The tactical level issue remains to be the integration and interoperability of combined and joint supporting assets, i.e., aircraft, helicopters, ships and boats etc Assets necessary to have a trustworthy special forces capability. If these assets remain a national issue, and thus limit participation of SF forces from countries that cannot provide these assets, it will have severe consequences for the whole concept.

## Chapter Five - Conclusions and Recommendations

This monograph has analyzed the special operations forces side of the instrument of military power. It suggests, as an alternative to Colin S. Gray's perspective, to use as instruments of military power the ways (types of operations) of applying military power. In this framework, both special operations as well as unconventional operations has its place, while other operations, tasks or missions, that special operation forces conduct are not a way of applying military power. These operations, tasks or missions will instead become a supporting effort to an operational or tactical level effort of a joint conventional operation and must thus be conducted in full integration and coordination with conventional forces.

It is important to remember that special operations and special operation forces serve policy and strategy and thus policy and strategy decide what problems special operations need to solve and what capabilities special operation forces need to have and not the other way around. It is clear that special forces have to have strategic utility to justify their existence. Gray's master claims of expansion of choice and economy of force serves to justify this claim.

The danger of having a too narrow definition of special operations is clear, that special operations turns into what special operation forces do. This would certainly limit one of the historically most successful traits of special operations, unorthodoxy in mindset and in methods. Unorthodoxy has just as many times been developed outside of special operation forces, as a way to solve complex problems. Therefore, special operations will always be defined by what can and need to be done to solve special problems in the realm of the definition established in this paper, not by what special operations forces can do.

The recommendation for the EU military force is to develop its capability to conduct special operations, i.e., direct action and special reconnaissance, but not unconventional operations since they do not have the legitimacy of a UN mandate, which an EU operation in the Petersburg framework will need. It is also recommended that the EU develop its ability to conduct certain other tasks with its special forces, in this case initial entry operations to spearhead

coalition conventional forces' efforts in order to conduct preparation of the battlefield. This leaves, though, a numbers of missions that special forces have been conducting in the post cold-war environment to other forces to perform. This is essential that special forces do leave these missions to other units, so it can focus its efforts on conducting the operations here recommended. The tasks recommended still allow special forces to keep a spectrum of missions to conduct wide enough in order not to lose the unorthodox mindset they so desperately need to have. It is also necessary in order to mitigate the risk of over utilizing special forces and thus not have the quality and readiness needed when required. At the same token this means that the interface, or the grey zone between missions special forces conduct and other forces conduct, i.e. commandos and conventional forces, must be thoroughly analyzed and defined, in order not to have too redundant capabilities. If not, the EU special forces will face the risk to be utilized as light infantry in a fire brigade role, a mission and scope that would put this valuable asset at unnecessary risk, and thus limit their availability for missions only they can conduct.

There is no doubt that when it comes to command and control the name of the game today is to build task forces and task groups to lead combined and multinational forces. Task groups are not a problem since they are based on national level, and most certainly, already established units. The joint interaction in a multinational and multi branch environment creates the problem. For special forces this means the interoperability with joint assets, e.g., aviation, air force, and maritime assets, as well as countries, since very few countries have a fully developed concept of special forces including these supporting assets. As we have seen special forces are inherently joint, and the integration and utilization of these strengths of a combined joint special task force is the greatest challenge to the special forces concept of the EU.<sup>143</sup> To create a capability that goes beyond the tactical levels of task groups to have a strategic utility for the EU,

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<sup>143</sup> Franklin C. Bohle, *Army Special Forces; A Good Fit for Peace Operations*, (Carlisle: U.S. Army War College, June 1997), 22.

the special forces concept must have a combined and joint operational level capability. The contemporary solution is to create a task force at operational level.

Task force, most likely a concept derived from business organizations project groups is contrary to the leadership traits any military leader recognizes. It contradicts all leadership theory involving unity, morale, cohesion, training to standard, unity of command, and interoperability. Recent lessons learned in the U.S. have recognized this problem and attempts to create standing task forces headquarters have therefore emerged.<sup>144</sup> An ad-hoc created organization can be devastating to special forces, since they cannot, as we seen in Chapter Two, rely on superiority in numbers. Conventional forces on the other hand can compensate by numbers and quantity the lack of quality. The lack of quality in special forces and special operations means almost certainly failure, failure of high stake operations including political and strategic objectives, the loss of a small exclusive group of men as well as an essential capability that takes a long time to reestablish. Special forces are always inferior in numbers and must therefore relay on the principles of special operations: simplicity, security, repetition, surprise, speed, and purpose, to be successful. These principles mean that units and forces have to be trained to standard as teams, not as ad hoc task forces. A serious attempt to create an EU special forces capability must therefore mitigate these problems of joint interoperability and culture. The recommendation is therefore, to avoid failures like Desert One, to create a standing CJSOTF headquarter and a training centre within the EU military structure.<sup>145</sup>

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<sup>144</sup> Doty, Denis P. *Command and Control of Special Operation Forces for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Contingency Operations*, (Newport, Naval War College, February 2003), 20. Information also given at a briefing at the Command and General Staff College, Leadership Lecture Series, Standing Joint Task Forces Head Quarters, 2003.

<sup>145</sup> Operation Eagle Claw to rescue the U.S. hostage at the U.S. embassy in Iran 1980. A Joint mission that was aborted at Desert One when a helicopter crashed into a AC-130. Mission failure due to: compartmentalized training which hindered team building; no full-scale rehearsal; refuel training never adequately planned or rehearsed; too high OPSEC and inadequate maintenance of helicopters; and a plan with a small margin for error with a lack of flexibility and adaptability. Quoted in briefing: Operation Eagle Claw, given by Special Operations Element; Department of Joint, Multinational Operations, U.S. Army

A standing CJSOTF headquarter and training centre would give the EU military force a number of advantages. First and foremost the purpose must be to create the technical, doctrinal and cultural interoperability, needed among contributing countries. This would focus on a task force level to integrate task groups into the structure, but especially to integrate the joint assets which otherwise would severely restrict the utility of the special forces. Operations would certainly in many cases be limited to countries that already have this capability built into their task groups. The training centre would not have its focus on the task group level since one can expect that national units be trained to standard before committed to the EU military force. This does, however, not mean that they will not be trained. They will most certainly train together with these supporting assets to create interoperability.

A standing CJSOTF headquarters would also facilitate the readiness special forces have to have to conduct initial entry operations or to have the strategic utility for the EU leadership to act in a single operation as another choice of policy or due to economy of force. Special forces will most certainly be tasked to have the highest readiness in the EU military force.

A standing CJSOTF headquarters would also facilitate the command and control needs of the EU special forces concept, analyzed in Chapter Four. That is to integrate and coordinate the special forces on an operational level to conduct other operations, i.e., initial entry operations and also to conduct special operations during the steady state phase of an operation. The recommendation is that this command and control capability can operate in conjunction with conventional forces or independently conducting initial entry operations or conducting a self-contained special operations integrating necessary additional combined and joint forces to the operation. This will certainly mean that this CJSOTF will be deployable wherever needed.

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Command and General Staff College, 2003. See also Charlie A. Beckwith, Donald Knox, *Delta Force*, (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1983).

Another important task for this CJSOTF will be to educate the consumer, political and military patrons to understand what special forces can and can not be asked to do.<sup>146</sup>

As this monograph has demonstrated, there is no doubt that a special operations concept, correctly employed, will serve the EU in many ways. Special forces can be the force to expand the choice of decision makers, a small force early instead of waiting to get operational level effectiveness by building up a big conventional force, i.e., economy of force. They can also be the force that facilitates the establishment of a larger force in a harsh and ambiguous environment. Special forces can be there in all levels of conflict, or just show up and solve a particular situation, e.g., hostage rescue. Great challenges are ahead of us; special forces can be a force multiplier and a part of the solution.

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<sup>146</sup> Colin S. Gray, "Handfuls of Heroes on Desperate Ventures: When do Special Operations Succeed and Why?," *Parameters*, spring 1999, 2-24.

## Appendix

### Appendix A: Gray's Utility of Special Operations Forces

1. *What, uniquely, can special operation forces do?*
  - Establish and maintain personal contact with people in enemy-occupied territory and encourage and support them in their struggle to be free.
  - Wage unconventional warfare-as guerillas or as counter guerillas.
  - Execute clandestine, and hence deniable, coups.
  - Humiliate an enemy, on the ground, person to person, deep in supposedly secure hinterland.
  - Secure and update in real time precise intelligence on enemy targets not accessible to airborne or space sensors.
  - Solve politically sensitive security problems swiftly, precisely, and cheaply.
  
2. *What can special operation forces do well?*
  - Embarrass the enemy.
  - Wage conflict relatively (to regular forces) cheaply-with reference to resources committed and casualties (on both sides).
  - Act as a very economical force multiplier for the rest of the armed forces.
  - Deceive, distract, and disrupt the enemy, again at low cost.
  - Protract resistance even in circumstances of comprehensive, if temporary, defeat.
  - Provide tangible local evidence of continuing political commitment to a conflict.
  - Seize the initiative, if only briefly, and put the enemy on the defensive.
  - Capture and retrieve (or interrogate) small numbers of people or physically small items of equipment from enemy territory.
  - Entice the enemy into operational, strategic, or political error (e.g. overextension).
  - Control escalation.
  - Innovate in military method and equipment.
  - Raise friendly morale by daring deeds.
  - Send a political message for deterrence by demonstrating the will and ability to strike painfully.
  - Reassure the public that something is being done.
  
3. *What do special operations forces tend to do poorly?*
  - Attrite the enemy in large numbers.
  - Seize and hold distant objectives.
  
4. *What are special operation forces unable to do?*
  - Defeat large enemy forces on their own.
  - Win mid- or high-intensity conflicts by themselves or even play decisive roles in such conflicts. (Special operation forces can generate great strategic utility in mid- and high-intensity wars, but those conflicts are team efforts.)

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