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Help Me, Help You: Expanding the SOF Reserve FID Mission

by

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A paper submitted to the Faculty of the Joint Advanced Warfighting School in partial satisfaction of the requirements of a Master of Science Degree in Joint Campaign Planning and Strategy.

The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the Joint Forces Staff College or the Department of Defense.

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ABSTRACT

The world is no longer a safe place. The enemy does not stand on its side of the battlefield and wait for the fight to begin. The threat of terrorism is everywhere. The battle against terrorism cannot be won by winning one battle, by killing one leader, or by securing one country. Terrorists thrive and grow in weak nations and ungoverned areas around the world, and that is where it must be stopped.

The US National Security Strategy recognized this need to fight a “balanced” war. The balance must come from a direct and indirect approach to warfighting. The direct approach uses US forces, along with coalition partners, to fight and disrupt the current violent extremist organizations and their supporters. With the indirect approach, US forces work with host nation partners around the world so those partners can self-secure their borders, stabilize their regions, and prevent the growth of these terrorist organizations. The Department of Defense tasked USSOCOM as the “Global Synchronizer” for the Global War on Terror (GWOT) due to its expertise in Unconventional Warfare and successful history of fighting terrorism.

As a high demand, low-density force, USSOCOM is struggling to meet all its new worldwide commitments, and some of its Foreign Internal Defense (FID) missions are going unfulfilled. To balance these requirements, they must utilize their total force more effectively. USSOCOM can achieve this by reprioritizing the Special Operations Force (SOF) reserves to focus on FID and by expanding the current SOF reserve force. Refocusing and growth of the SOF reserves will alleviate pressure on the overburdened active duty forces, while helping to fulfill those indirect mission requirements necessary to stop the global expansion of terrorism.

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INTRODUCTION

America is at war. Since the September 11, 2001 attacks, the United States Special Operations Forces (SOF) have been totally engaged in the Global War on Terror (GWOT). The US military as a whole has extended its forces to meet the demands of this fight, but no combat element has felt the burden more than SOF. From October 19, 2001, when the first Special Forces Operational Detachment Alpha (ODA) team hit the ground in Afghanistan, to March 20, 2003 when the Naval Special Warfare (NSW) Sea-Air-Land (SEAL) teams secured the oil pumping station on the Al Faw peninsula in Iraq, SOF has engaged in the GWOT with no sign of a relief. SOF continues to provide outstanding support to the nation's overall national strategy in the execution of GWOT, but its requirements continue to grow year after year. To maintain the current operational level, SOF must efficiently employ its total force, both active and reserve components.

As the strategic environment changes due to the persistent engagement by the US forces in GWOT, the approach to the enemy must also change. With constant assessment conducted by senior military and administration officials, Secretary of Defense Robert Gates identified the defining principle of the Pentagon's National Defense Strategy as one of balance. According to Secretary Gates, "the strategy strives for balance in three areas: between trying to prevail in current conflicts and preparing for other contingencies, between institutionalizing capabilities such as counterinsurgency and foreign military assistance and maintaining the United States' existing conventional and strategic technological edge against other military forces, and between retaining those cultural traits that have made the U.S. armed forces successful and shedding those that hamper their

ability to do what needs to be done.”¹ To achieve this balance, the military must examine its application of direct and indirect military force. Secretary Gates views the GWOT as a prolonged, worldwide, irregular campaign that is a struggle between the forces of violent extremism and those of moderation. Direct military force to fight the enemy on the field of battle continues to play a vital role in US strategy, but “we cannot kill or capture our way to victory in the GWOT.”² To prevent festering problems from turning into crises, to counter the terrorist recruiting from moderate populations, and to build partner nation capacity to secure their own borders, an indirect approach is essential to accomplish long-term security.³

US Special Operations Command (USSOCOM) has a long history of both direct and indirect military force application. Since SOCOM’s inception in 1987, it has successfully conducted direct action through kinetic operations in every region and every conflict. In peacetime and in time of conflict, SOCOM has also conducted indirect operations through military-to-military engagements with partner nations in the form of Foreign Internal Defense (FID), Information and Psychological Operations, and Civil Affairs Operations. As the United States brings its diverse array of capabilities to bear on the problem and engage a complex and adaptive extremist enemy, the Department of Defense (DoD) assigned SOCOM the responsibility as the global synchronizer for GWOT operations. With the limited high demand/low density special operations resources available, SOCOM struggles to meet its requirements in the GWOT, while executing its

¹Robert M. Gates, “A Balanced Strategy,” *Foreign Affairs*, January/February 2009, <http://www.foreignaffairs.org/20090101faessay88103/robert-m-gates/a-balanced-strategy.html> (accessed February 17, 2009).

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

other global commitments. Recognizing the increased strain the GWOT puts on the nation's special operations forces, DoD authorized the increase of active duty SOF personnel by more than 15 percent in the 2006 Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR).⁴

USSOCOM faces the dilemma of balancing the direct and indirect approach to its mission requirements. SOCOM has to maximize every aspect of its organization to accomplish its assigned tasks and continue to provide global presence. Currently, about 80 percent of deployed SOF are operating in the US Central Command Area of Responsibility.⁵ The current fights in Afghanistan and Iraq are critical to US national security requiring sizable special operations capabilities. These GWOT requirements result in shortfalls of available SOF to support other global presence and high priority missions.

SOCOM reserves currently comprise about 20 percent of the total force. All of these reserve forces have proven themselves critical components to the total force by providing valuable support to the active component throughout GWOT operations. Each service has developed and organized its reserve component to meet its needs. The scope of this paper looks primarily at the Army National Guard (ARNG) Special Forces Groups (SFG) and the Naval Special Warfare (NSW) reserve component. The Army utilizes its ARNG SFG as a rotational force to augment and support its active component as a unit.

⁴Office of the Secretary of Defense, *Quadrennial Defense Review Report*, (Washington D.C.: US Government Printing Office, 6 February 2006), 5.

⁵ CRS Report for Congress, "U.S. Special Operations Forces (SOF): Background and Issues for Congress" by Andrew Feickert, Congressional Research Service, (January 16, 2009), 4-5.

The Navy has traditionally taken a different approach and used NSW reservists in an Individual Augmentation (IA) role to support active SEAL teams.

The current underutilization of SOF reserves can be resolved by focusing its primary taskings to Foreign Internal Defense (FID) missions. Reserve special operators are experienced members of the SOF community who meet all the same assessment standards as their active duty counterparts. Due to the part-time nature of the reserve force, its greatest limiting factor is time; time to conduct military training and time to deploy on extended operations. Describing the limitations, as well as the benefits the reserves provide, this paper will demonstrate how SOF reserve capabilities are particularly well suited to maximize support to FID missions. By maximizing the utilization of its reserves in this mission, USSOCOM can shift more of its active duty component deployments to combat operations or other high priority missions where the use of reserves is not optimum. Providing this mission focus to the SOF reserves will enable them to make a more meaningful contribution to the GWOT and extend the global reach of the total special operations force.

This paper will briefly cover the history and organization of SOCOM, from its establishment in 1987 to the present. It will highlight the evolution of SOCOM, looking at how mission and deployment requirements have steadily increased as the force matures and grows. Next, it will describe some of the challenges special operations forces face from the standpoint of resourcing, manning, and executing their assigned tasks. The following section covers the limitations and benefits of the reserve force, including case studies highlighting the success of the Army Special Forces soldiers and Navy SEALs.

Finally, the paper will provide recommendations to increase the utility of the reserves to be an even more effective component of SOCOM.

HISTORY

First organized in World War II under the Office of the Strategic Services (OSS), special operations forces have a long history in the United States military. SOF capabilities grew throughout WWII as the operators honed their skills to conduct clandestine missions behind enemy lines. Following the war, the individual Army, Navy, and Air Force service components maintained control of their SOF capabilities, providing guidance and oversight as they accessed, trained, equipped, and deployed SOF with little integration of other service SOF capabilities.

The separate services continued to manage their individual SOF assets for over 40 years. During this time, US SOF provided a significant contribution to the Vietnam War. Following the Vietnam War, the individual services focused all efforts on conventional capabilities in the Cold War, allowing the SOF skills to atrophy. The 1970's brought increased terrorist attacks against the US national interests, yet SOF was no longer the force it had once been and could only provide limited responses. On April 24, 1980, the US launched Operation Eagle Claw to rescue 53 Americans held hostage at the US Embassy in Iran. The mission met catastrophic failure at a remote rally point deep in the Iranian desert known as "Desert One." The strike force composed of Army Rangers and SF soldiers flew to the site by Air Force C-130s and Navy helicopters. Due to numerous mechanical problems with the helicopters, the on-scene commander called for a mission abort at Desert One. In the course of extracting the force, a Navy helicopter collided with a C-130 killing eight soldiers. Not only was this a tragic military loss, it was a huge

political disappointment and embarrassment to the Carter administration.⁶ This event marked the culminating point of a long period of declining special operation forces capabilities. This dark period in the late 1970's and the disastrous failure of Operation Eagle Claw resulted in significant SOF funding cuts and marginalizing of capabilities by distrustful conventional forces.⁷

President Carter ordered the Secretary of Defense to appoint an investigative panel, chaired by Admiral James Holloway, to examine the Iranian hostage rescue attempt and to make suggestions for improving future capabilities. Through the Holloway Commission and support from many advocates in Congress, US SOF capabilities began to get the attention needed for significant reform. As an amendment to the Goldwater-Nichols Department of Defense Reorganization Act of 1986, the Nunn-Cohen Act of 1987 established US Special Operations Command (USSOCOM) as a four-star flag or general level unified command. USSOCOM was unique among unified commands due to the responsibilities to manage Major Force Program-11 (MFP-11) funding for SOF. SOCOM still had to rely on the individual services to provide manning and some non-SOF specific equipment, but this independent funding source for SOF gave USSOCOM "service-like" responsibilities to develop and acquire specific special operations equipment.⁸ By aligning SOF under a single responsive headquarters, SOCOM fostered interoperability

⁶ Tom Clancy with General Carl Stiner (Ret.), *Shadow Warriors: Inside the Special Forces* (New York: Berkley Publishing Group, 2002), 8.

⁷ United States Special Operations Command, *USSOCOM History 1987 to 2007*, http://www.socom.mil/Docs/Command_History_26Feb07webversion.pdf (accessed September 3, 2008), 5.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 5-12.

among the services' special operations components with control over its own resources, enabling it to better train, organize, and equip SOF.

The activation of USSOCOM on April 16, 1987 was a significant turning point in the history of US special operations capabilities. USSOCOM guaranteed that service parochialism would not marginalize SOF skills, resulting in the return to the ill-equipped and unprepared force that failed in Operation Eagle Claw. US special operations forces quickly established themselves as a world-class organization, capable of executing the most challenging missions. The changing international environment after the Cold War required the frequent use of SOF and exposed the conventional military to the benefits and capabilities of SOF.

It was only a matter of months following its official activation before USSOCOM deployed its special operators into combat missions for the first time. In July 1987, Operation Earnest Will called for Navy SEALs and Army SOF aviation to provide secure transit of neutral oil tankers and merchant ships through the Persian Gulf during the Iran-Iraq War.⁹ The most important lessons to emerge from this operation was the recognition of the need for highly trained special operations forces capable of responding rapidly to crises and the need for interoperability between conventional and special operations forces.¹⁰ Flawlessly executed, this mission proved that SOF could once again be successful under the new SOCOM umbrella.

Between 1989 and 1991, USSOCOM provided significant combat power in Operation Just Cause, Operation Desert Shield, and Operation Desert Storm. These major

⁹ Ibid., 29.

¹⁰ Ibid., 31.

operations highlighted many of the unique capabilities that separate conventional forces from special operations forces. Parallel to these combat operations, the nation's special operations forces were forward deployed conducting significant indirect global presence missions through FID and other non-kinetic operations.

Joint Publication 3-07.1 defines Foreign Internal Defense as “the participation by civilian and military agencies of a government in any of the action programs taken by another government or other designated organization, to free and protect its society from subversion, lawlessness and insurgency.”¹¹ Historically, programs such as the Truman Doctrine and the Marshall Plan set the foundation for US support to friendly nations facing threats to their national security. The policy of helping friendly foreign nations develop and stabilize their governments to prevent the spread of communism continued until it finally culminated with the war in Vietnam.¹² It was the intense opposition of the Vietnam War that prompted President Richard M. Nixon to announce a new US approach to supporting friendly nations. The Nixon Doctrine expressed that the US would assist friendly nations, but it would require them to provide the manpower and be ultimately responsible for their own national defense, thus creating the basis for the current FID concept.¹³

Throughout the early 1990's, SOF averaged hundreds of annual FID deployments throughout every region of the world. The most prevalent FID activities conducted by special operations forces include Joint Combined Exchange Training (JCET) missions,

¹¹ Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Joint Publication 3-07.1 Joint Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures for Foreign Internal Defense (FID)*, (Washington, DC: 30 April 2004), I-1.

¹² *Ibid.*, I-2.

¹³ *Ibid.*, I-2.

Counter-Narcotic (CN) missions, and demining operations. These missions provide training and other assistance to foreign governments and their militaries, enabling them to provide internal security and stability. As SOF matured throughout these successful military-to-military engagements, the demand for their capabilities continued to grow. It was in these years of ever-increasing mission requirements that DoD labelled special operations forces “high demand/low density” assets. During fiscal year 1993, USSOCOM averaged 2,036 personnel deployed away from home station per week. By fiscal year 1996, the average had more than doubled, climbing to 4,613.¹⁴ In 1996 alone, SOCOM was committed in 142 countries conducting 120 CN missions, 12 demining training missions, and 204 JCET exercises.¹⁵ By 1998, SOF global FID missions included deployments to 152 countries, with the successful completion of 123 counter-drug missions in 104 countries, demining training missions in 17 countries, and over 280 JCET exercises.¹⁶

As 2001 approached, USSOCOM continued to execute its global presence missions. Operations in Bosnia and Kosovo required SOF participation, but nothing close to the extent of what was about to occur in Afghanistan. General Charles Holland assumed command of USSOCOM on October 27, 2000 with the nation’s special operations forces stressed by deployment requirements, budget reductions, and potential manning and resource shortfalls. He intended to draw back on some of the worldwide

¹⁴ *USSOCOM History 1987 to 2007*, 25.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 9.

¹⁶ Gen Peter J. Schoomaker, “Special Operations Forces in Peacetime: A Powerful Tool in Shaping the Security Environment,” December 1999, <http://usinfo.state.gov/journals/itps/1299/ijpe/schoom.html> (accessed October 17, 2008).

commitments, to reset the force, and implement necessary changes and reforms initiated by previous SOCOM Commanders.¹⁷ September 11, 2001 changed GEN Holland's priorities.

After the World Trade Center towers fell in New York, the call rang out across the nation for immediate action to bring those responsible to justice. Usama bin Laden and his al Qaeda terrorist organization were quickly targeted as the guilty party. With the Taliban regime providing safe haven for al Qaeda in the Afghanistan mountains, the US struggled to develop a course of action to quickly engage its new enemy located in some of the most difficult and unforgiving terrain on the planet. Special Operations Command, Central (SOCCENT), responsible for the planning, preparation, and command and control of special operations forces in the US Central Command (USCENTCOM) region, developed an Unconventional Warfare (UW)¹⁸ campaign plan for prosecuting the war against the Taliban and al Qaeda.¹⁹ The rapid deployment of special operations forces on the ground, in conjunction with US air power, gave the USCENTCOM Commander, General Tommy Franks, the lethal capability to initiate Operation Enduring Freedom within 30 days of the 9/11 attack.

¹⁷ *USSOCOM History 1987 to 2007*, 10.

¹⁸ Unconventional Warfare: A broad spectrum of military and paramilitary operations, normally of long duration, predominately conducted by indigenous or surrogate forces who are organized, trained, equipped, supported, and directed in varying degrees by an external source. UW includes guerrilla warfare and other direct offensive, low-visibility, clandestine, or covert operations, as well as the indirect activities of subversion, sabotage, intelligence activities, and evasion and escape. When UW is conducted independently during conflict or war, its primary focus is on political and psychological objectives. When UW operations support conventional military operations, the focus shifts to primarily military objectives. Special Operations Reference Manual, August 2008, p I-5.

¹⁹ *USSOCOM History 1987 to 2007*, 87.

From October 2001 thru March 2002, SOF became the lead effort in the initial US response to the global terrorist threat. The SOF approach during this time focused on Unconventional Warfare in cooperation with Afghanistan Northern Alliance forces that opposed the Taliban regime. The Taliban and al Qaeda were driven out of all the major cities in Afghanistan within months of US ODAs hitting the ground and supporting the Northern Alliance forces with equipment, training, and US Close Air Support (CAS). Also occurring on a smaller scale during this time were SOF Direct Action (DA) and Special Reconnaissance (SR) missions. These missions were extremely beneficial in bringing in enormous caches of weapons and intelligence.

This direct approach, combined with the success of the UW campaigns, unequivocally proved to President George W. Bush and Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld how professional, capable, and effective special operations could be in a major campaign. Once the interim government of Afghanistan became established, the primary mission of SOF transitioned from Unconventional Warfare to Foreign Internal Defense. The SOF focus shifted smoothly from working to overthrow the Taliban regime to one of building military capability for the new Afghan government. Requiring additional SOF assets to grow the Afghan army, USSOCOM introduced the first Army National Guard Special Forces Groups into the theater by mid 2002 to assist with this FID mission.

By the time Operation Iraq Freedom (OIF) officially began, SOF had proven to be an essential asset in the GWOT. With its initial success in Afghanistan, USSOCOM was again called upon to support OIF. Iraq represented the largest SOF deployment since the Vietnam War.²⁰ Army Special Forces soldiers conducted the UW mission in the northern

²⁰ Ibid., 11.

part of Iraq, but the majority of SOF conducted direct action and High Value Target (HVT) operations in support of the conventional main effort from the south along the Saudi Arabian and Kuwaiti borders. After the fall of the Saddam regime, the SF soldiers again transitioned from UW to FID.

The Global War on Terror has taken a toll on USSOCOM as requirements have dramatically increased. From FY 2000 to FY 2005, SOF personnel deployments increased by 64 percent.²¹ The vast majority of these deployments were to the Central Command Area of Responsibility (AOR) to support the Iraq and Afghanistan wars. The requirements from CENTCOM account for 80 percent of all deployed special operations forces outside the United States, leaving only 20 percent to cover the rest of the world.²² As of December 2008, the SOF requirements may increase even further as The National Security Council proposes a surge of special operations forces into Afghanistan. This proposal recommended an increase of “about another battalion’s worth” of troops to Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force-Afghanistan (CJOSTF-A), enlarging the task force by about a third.²³

USSOCOM has always answered the call of our nation. Providing significant combat capability through the years, special operations forces have been at the tip of the spear from Operation Earnest Will to the present fights in Afghanistan and Iraq. SOF has

²¹U.S. Government Accountability Office, *Special Operations Forces: Several Human Capital Challenges Must Be Addressed to Meet Expanded Role* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, July 2006), 30.

²²CRS Report for Congress, “U.S. Special Operations Forces (SOF): Background and Issues for Congress” by Andrew Feickert, Congressional Research Service, (January 16, 2009), 4-5.

²³ Sean D. Naylor, “Special Ops ‘Surge’ Sparks Debate,” *Army Times*, December 23, 2008, <https://www.armytimes.com/news/2008/12/army.sofsurge.122008w/> (accessed January 27, 2009).

also been fully engaged in global presence missions through FID every step of the way. Since the end of the Cold War, the world has proven to be a complex and dangerous place and the demand for special operations forces continue to grow each year. The GWOT has drastically increased the danger to US national interests and demands action against these threats before terrorists can once again strike the United States.

ORGANIZATION

USSOCOM is one of ten combatant commands responsible to the President and Secretary of Defense. Over the years, critical aspects of its mission, organization, and responsibilities evolved as the geopolitical environment changed. This chapter examines the evolution of USSOCOM, its key special operations capabilities, and its fundamental underpinnings to gain an understanding of the SOF culture. It will cover the growth of SOF as authorized by the 2006 QDR. It will then provide a brief description of selected SOF components, how they are organized, and how these components provide unique capabilities that are necessary to execute USSOCOM's mission.

When USSOCOM consolidated the individual SOF service components from the Army, Navy, and Air Force in 1987, it also took responsibility to plan for and conduct all assigned special operation missions. The original USSOCOM mission statement consisted of the following responsibilities:

- Develop SOF doctrine, tactics, techniques, and procedures.
- Conduct specialized courses of instruction for all SOF.
- Train assigned forces and ensure interoperability of equipment and forces.
- Monitor the preparedness of SOF assigned to other unified commands.
- Monitor the promotions, assignments, retention, training, and professional development of all SOF personnel.
- Consolidate and submit program and budget proposals for Major Force Program 11 (MFP-11).
- Develop and acquire special operations-peculiar equipment, material, supplies, and services.²⁴

SOCOM's principle foundations have changed very little through the years. The key to SOF has been and continues to be its people; the experienced, well-trained, well-

²⁴ *USSOCOM History 1987 to 2007*, 12.

equipped warrior diplomats. In 1993, recognizing that SOF and its people must be protected, USSOCOM Commander, General Downing defined the four SOF Truths. First, humans are more important than hardware. Second, quality is better than quantity. Third, special operations forces cannot be mass-produced. Fourth, competent special operations forces cannot be created after emergencies occur.²⁵

At its inception, USSOCOM established nine core capabilities, which all special operations forces were organized, trained, and equipped to accomplish. The nine original capabilities included; Direct Action, Counterterrorism, Foreign Internal Defense, Unconventional Warfare, Special Reconnaissance, Information Operations, Psychological Operations, Civil Affairs Operations, and Counter proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction. The global war on terrorism caused USSOCOM to re-evaluate these core capabilities to address the changing strategic environment. In 2005, USSOCOM consolidated Information Operations and Psychological Operations and added Synchronizing DoD Global War on Terrorism to the list of nine. At the end of 2008, Admiral Olson added three additional core capabilities; Security Force Assistance, Counter Insurgency Operations, and Activities Specified by the President or Secretary of Defense.²⁶ Now with 12 core capabilities, USSOCOM is ready to develop these activities across the force, including active and reserve components.

Due to the irregular nature and global expanse of the terrorist threat, DoD officially designated USSOCOM as the global synchronizer for the Department's

²⁵ United States Special Operations Command, *USSOCOM Posture Statement 2007*, http://www.socom.mil/Docs/USSOCOM_Posture_Statement_2007.pdf, (accessed September 4, 2008), 1.

²⁶ United States Special Operations Command, *USSOCOM Fact Book*, <http://www.socom.mil/Docs/factbook-2009.pdf>, (accessed February 25, 2009), 6.

execution of the GWOT in the 2004 Unified Command Plan (UCP).²⁷ Along with this tasking, came the requirement for additional resources to accomplish this new mission. The 2006 Quadrennial Defense Review allocated these additional resources to SOCOM and addressed special operations requirements as an equal, for the first time, to the four services regarding budget issues. In recognizing the significant role and utility of the SOF community and its unique capabilities to counter today's threats, the Secretary of Defense authorized dramatic personnel increases of about 15 percent for USSOCOM.²⁸ The 2006 QDR stated to achieve the future force characteristics for SOF and to build on progress to date, the Department will:

- Further increase SOF capability and capacity to conduct low-visibility, persistent presence missions and a global unconventional warfare campaign.
- Increase active duty Special Forces Battalions by one-third.
- Expand Psychological Operations and Civil Affairs units by 3,700 personnel (33% increase) to provide increased support for SOF and the Army's modular forces.
- Establish a Marine Corps Special Operations Command (MARSOC) composed of 2,600 Marines and Navy personnel to train foreign military units and conduct direct action and special reconnaissance.
- Increase SEAL Team force levels to conduct direct action missions.
- Establish a SOF unmanned aerial vehicle squadron to provide organic capabilities to locate and target enemy capabilities in denied or contested areas.
- Enhance capabilities to support SOF insertion and extraction into denied areas from strategic distances.²⁹

²⁷ ADM Eric Olson, *Statement to the Senate Armed Services Committee on the Posture of Special Operations Forces*, March 4, 2008, http://www.socom.mil/Docs/2008_Posture_Statement.doc, (accessed January 22, 2009), 9.

²⁸ Office of the Secretary of Defense, *Quadrennial Defense Review Report*, (Washington, D.C. Government Printing Office), 6 February 2006, 5.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 44-45.

Further clarification of the QDR SOF increases translated into five additional SF battalions, four additional Ranger companies, 300 additional SEALs, 2,500 additional MARSOC personnel, and additional Special Operations aviators. USSOCOM's total end strength rose to 55,890 billets, comprised of 43,745 active duty military, 4,310 National Guard, 2,560 reserve, and 5,275 government civilians.³⁰ These QDR additional billets represent active duty increases, yet designate no reserve increases. At the time the QDR was published, General Philip Kensinger Jr., commander USASOC, stated that the ratio of active to reserve forces was under review.³¹ This review was necessary to determine what an appropriate increase in the SOF reserve component should be to combat the ever-growing GWOT. On March 18, 2009, the USSOCOM Reserve Operational Support Office confirmed there have been no changes in SOF reserve manpower requirements and no proposal to increase the size of the reserve special operations forces.³²

USSOCOM's budget also increased significantly due to the changing strategic environment and its designation as the lead Combatant Command for the planning, synchronizing, and executing GWOT operations for DoD. The FY 2009 Presidential Budget request included \$5.727 billion for USSOCOM's MFP-11 to continue to develop SOF capabilities and effectiveness. This almost doubles the SOF budget before September 11, 2001.³³ Besides their fiscal year budgets, USSOCOM executed \$5.5

³⁰ CRS Report for Congress, "U.S. Special Operations Forces (SOF): Background and Issues for Congress," January 16, 2009, 4-5.

³¹ COL John E. Smith, "ARNG Special Forces Units: The Standard and the Future," Master's thesis, (U.S. Army War College, Carlisle Barracks, Carlisle, PA), 2006, 9.

³² Mr. Stephan Burris, Deputy Operational Support Officer, USSOCOM, e-mail message to author, March 19, 2009.

³³ Olson Statement to Congress, 15.

billion in war supplemental funding between FY 2002 and FY 2006 to improve dedicated SOF intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR), organic human intelligence and technical capabilities.³⁴ Budget increases and wartime supplemental funding have greatly increased the SOF capacity to ensure the warfighter is the best-equipped and trained force multiplier on the battlefield.

The personnel and budget increases authorized by the 2006 QDR benefit all four SOF component commands within USSOCOM. These commands are United States Army Special Operations Command (USASOC), Naval Special Warfare Command (NSWC), Air Force Special Operations Command (AFSOC), and Marine Corps Special Operations Command (MARSOC). Each of these components brings their own unique capabilities to the fight. For the scope of this paper, focus will be on the elements within each service component that provide a FID capability, rather than addressing the entire command.

United States Army Special Operations Command (USASOC) is the largest of the four service components. It includes approximately 25,000 soldiers from the Active Army, National Guard, and Army Reserve.³⁵ USASOC is a three-star command that provides Special Forces (SF), Ranger, Special Operations Aviation, Psychological Operations, and Civil Affairs forces to USSOCOM.

The US Army Special Forces Command (USASFC) is the subordinate command to USASOC with the mission to train, educate, validate, and prepare Special Forces units to deploy and execute operational requirements for the geographic combatant

³⁴ 2006 QDR, 44.

³⁵ USSOCOM Posture Statement 2007, 12.

commanders.³⁶ The SF soldiers, or Green Berets as they are commonly referred to, are experienced soldiers who are carefully selected and trained in various skill sets, to include foreign language, with the ability to operate in independent small units throughout the world. Doctrinally, SF trains to execute five missions: Unconventional Warfare (UW), Foreign Internal Defense (FID), Special Reconnaissance (SR), Direct Action (DA), and Counterterrorism (CT).³⁷

USASFC exercises command and control of five active component groups and two National Guard groups. Each Special Forces Group (SFG) is regionally oriented to support that particular Geographic Combatant Command. This organization is necessary to allow the commands to attain the language capability and cultural awareness to maximize the SOF effectiveness in the region.

Five Active Duty SFGs and Areas of Responsibility (AOR) are:

- 1st SFG - US Pacific Command
- 3rd SFG - US European Command/US Africa Command
- 5th SFG - US Central Command
- 7th SFG - US Southern Command
- 10th SFG - US European Command

Two National Guard SFGs with AORs are:

- 19th SFG – US Pacific Command / US Central Command
- 20th SFG – US Southern Command

The basic element of the Special Forces is the Operational Detachment-Alpha (ODA). ODAs are the 12 man units that commonly deploy to conduct the core combat and non-combat mission sets assigned to the SFG. As an example, an ODA would deploy to Colombia to conduct a FID mission to train and advise a Colombian military unit in

³⁶ Joint Special Operations University, *Special Operations Forces Reference Manual*. Second Edition, (Hurlburt Field, FL: Joint Special Operations University), August 2008, 3-10.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 3-10.

counter-narcotic missions for a period of 30 days. Each SFG has 54 ODAs who train in the core SOF capabilities.

The 19th SFG, headquartered at Camp Williams, Utah, and the 20th SFG, headquartered at Birmingham, Alabama are the reserve components of Army SOF. Prior to the stand-up of USSOCOM, these National Guard units reported directly to the state Adjutant Generals. The reserve SFGs also had different assessment and training standards developed in the Reserve Component Special Forces Qualification Course. Answering to different commanders and non-standard training requirements caused friction between the active and reserve SFGs.

To alleviate the disparities between active and reserve SFGs, USSOCOM and USASFC established standardized certification and validation criteria for all of SF. The RC Special Forces Qualification Course (SF Q-Course) was phased out with the creation of the USASFC in 1990. This resulted in a single training pipeline that assessed and trained every soldier who donned the coveted green beret.³⁸ Due to the shared training experience, the working relationship between active and reserve SF personnel was better than ever. Reserve SFGs now deploy side-by-side with their active duty counterparts in all aspects of combat and non-combat missions, which include multiple deployments to Iraq and Afghanistan.

The Navy SOF component is Naval Special Warfare Command (NSWC) based out of Coronado, California. NSWC is a two star flag level command organized around five Naval Special Warfare Groups (NSWG) commanding eight SEAL Teams, one SEAL Delivery Vehicle Team, three Special Boat Teams, and two reserve SEAL Teams. Within

³⁸ Col. Joseph K. Dietrick, "Ensuring Readiness for Active and Reserve-Component SF Units," *Special Warfare*, 5, no. 1, March 1992, 25.

each SEAL Team, six platoons of 16 SEALs form the operational elements that deploy to conduct both combat and non-combat missions. NSW forces focus on seven core SOF capabilities to include; Unconventional Warfare, Direct Action, Special Reconnaissance, Foreign Internal Defense, Counterterrorism, Information Operations, and Counter Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction.

Unlike the Army SFGs, NSW forces are not regionally focused. NSWG-1 and NSWG-2 exercise command and control over the SEAL Teams. NSWG-1 based in Coronado, CA, provides forces to USCENTCOM and USPACOM. NSWG-2 based in Little Creek, VA provides SEALs to USEUCOM and USSOUTHCOM. NSWG-3, also in Coronado, exercises control of all Subsurface NSW assets. NSWG-4, in Little Creek, has control of all the Special Boat Teams. NSWG-3 and NSWG-4 are responsible for worldwide deployment of their respective NSW forces.

Before 2003, NSW reserve forces organized into reserve SEAL Teams scattered across the country. These NSW reserve units were assigned to the local Navy Reserve Activity (NRA) that controlled administrative, training, and readiness standards. There was very little linkage between the active duty SEAL Teams and the NSW reserves. The active duty NSWGs managed the reserves by staff liaison officers who would comb through reserve unit rosters and coordinate with the numerous NRAs to find the available reservist to fill a NSW requirement. This resulted in a slow, inefficient process that produced limited success. It was not until 2002 when ADM Olson, Commander of Naval Special Warfare Command (WARCOM), faced with a war and increasing demands for NSW capability, focused on reorganizing the NSW community to meet the emerging needs of the country. Naval Special Warfare-21 (NSW-21) completely changed the way

the SEAL Teams organized and deployed. The goal of NSW 21 was to produce a “leaner, more capable, tailorable, and focused fighting force.” ADM Olson’s perspective was, “I need every available asset at my disposal to fight the War on Terrorism and that includes my reserve component.”³⁹

The NSW reserves underwent an 18 month restructuring that culminated in the establishment of the Operational Support Group (OSG) and two subordinate commands, Operations Support Team ONE (OST-1) and Operations Support Team TWO (OST-2). The individual NSW reservists reorganized into Operational Support Units within the OSTs based on 17 core capabilities that supported NSW active duty requirements. These capabilities called for reserve augmentation to support the training of active duty units and the maintenance of their equipment.⁴⁰ Primarily, the reserve support was required for support for pre-deployment training work-up. The exception was the reserve Battle Staff Augmentation unit that provided a cadre of reservists trained in joint doctrine and capable of augmenting deployable NSW Battle Staffs in support of OPLANs, CONPLANs, along with CONUS and OCONUS exercises.

On October 1, 2003, the OSG assumed responsibility for all management, training, and readiness oversight of the NSW reserves. The OSG improved the responsiveness and support the reserves provided to NSW in prosecuting the GWOT by cutting out NRA

³⁹ MC2 Christopher Menzie, “From OSG to Group 11,” *Ethos*, no. 3, 20-21.

⁴⁰ The 17 core capabilities of the NSW reserves included: Battle Staff Augmentation, Combat Service Support, NSW Intelligence Support, NSW Staff Augmentation, Communication Equipment Operation and Maintenance Support, Nuclear Chemical Biological Radiological-Defense (NCBR-D) Capability, MSC Battle Watch and Technical Support, Training and Operations Support of Costal Combatant Craft Detachments, Maintenance Support of SEAL Delivery Vehicle Team (SDVT) Assets, NSW Training Detachment (TRADET) Support, SDVT Operations and Training Support, CESE Operations and Maintenance Support, Maintenance Support of Costal Combatant Craft, Training and Operational Support of Riverine Combatant Craft Detachments, Maintenance Support of Riverine Combatant Craft, Logistical Support and Logistical Support (LOGSU) Dive Maintenance Support.

control of NSW reserve personnel. However, the organization was still limited to reserve support to active duty requests through Individual Augmentation (IA). The ability to fill a critical vacant billet with a trained reserve IA is a huge benefit that NSW reserves provide the active component. The drawback to this construct is the “body pool” mentality that limits other aspects of the organization. Unit cohesion and training programs suffered most in the body pool. This mentality routinely pulled key leaders, or other personnel, out of the Operational Support Units (OSU) to fill critical shortfalls within the active duty NSW units. These actions filled immediate requirements, but resulted in inefficiencies and underutilization of the NSW reserve force as a whole.⁴¹

Issues that resulted from the OSG “body pool” and recognizing the benefits of an operational reserve, NSW quickly began initiatives to restructure and reorganize its reserves to build a more effective, efficient, and capable force. On August 1, 2008, NSWG-11 replaced the existing administrative NSW OSG reserve structure with the mission to train, organize, and equip deployable NSW reserve units. This transition included renaming and restructuring the OSTs into reserve SEAL Teams 17 and 18. The NSW reserves were organized into SEAL platoons, boat detachments, and combat service support teams capable of unit deployments to conduct unilateral or active duty support missions.⁴²

Air Force Special Operations command (AFSOC) is the Air Force SOF component to USSOCOM. Based out of Hurlbert Field, FL, this three star level command consists of two active-duty wings, a numbered air force, one reserve wing, one National Guard wing,

⁴¹ This “body pool” observation is based on the author’s nine years of personal experience as a drilling NSW reservist and a NSW reserve administrator.

⁴² NSWG-11 Command Brief, September 15, 2008.

two active-duty overseas groups, one special tactics group, and several direct reporting units. AFSOC operates a wide range of fixed wing and rotary-wing aircraft to conduct special operations worldwide. For the purpose of this paper, the 6th Special Operations Squadron (SOS) will be the only AFSOC unit discussed.

The 6th SOS is AFSOC's only aviation combat advisory squadron. Its principal mission is to conduct foreign internal defense, providing US military expertise to allied and partner nations' governments.⁴³ The 6th SOS was recently expanded to 230 authorized active duty billets by the 2006 QDR. This increased squadron size doubled its capacity to meet increased FID requirements around the world.⁴⁴ The squadron executes its mission through theater-oriented Operational Aviation Detachments "A" and "B." (OAD-A/B). This 13-man team is comprised of pilots, maintenance personnel, aircrew, logistics personnel and others who conduct FID to assist host nation aviation units perform their missions safely and effectively.⁴⁵

USSOCOM's newest component is the US Marine Corps Special Operations Command (MARSOC). Established February 24, 2006, MARSOC is a two star level command that trains, organizes, and equips the Marine Special Operations Advisor Group (MSOAG), along with two Marine Special Operations Battalions and other support elements. Currently, MARSOC focuses its effort on three SOF core capabilities: Foreign Internal Defense, Direct Action, and Special Reconnaissance. In the short time MARSOC has been operational, it has already completed multiple deployments to conduct combat

⁴³ Special Operations Forces Reference Manual, August 2008, 5-5.

⁴⁴ Congressional Hearing, House Armed Services Subcommittee on Terrorism, Unconventional Threats, and Capabilities Holds Hearing on Special Operations Forces, March 3, 2009.

⁴⁵ Special Operations Forces Reference Manual, August 2008, 5-49.

operations in Iraq as well as worldwide deployments in support of USSOCOM's global presence missions.

USSOCOM has come a long way in 22 years. It has grown not only in size, but with respect to its responsibility as a unified command, becoming DoD's synchronizer for the Global War on Terrorism. USSOCOM is a true joint command focused on maximizing utilization of each component's unique capabilities. It ensures top-notch training in the most advanced tactics and provides the most advanced specialized equipment for its experienced operators. These elements combine to create a flexible and responsive force capable of successful direct and indirect missions. With all the new tools provided in the 2006 QDR, SOCOM is in a better position to execute the GWOT while addressing the SOF requirements throughout the world. Even with these improvements, challenges still exist.

CHALLENGES

USSOCOM readily accepted its role as the GWOT synchronizer and the responsibilities that this mission entails. USSOCOM's forces have been on the ground fighting the GWOT since the night of October 19, 2001 when ODA 595 inserted in the vicinity of Mazar-e Sharif in northern Afghanistan. Since September 11, 2001, there has been no sign of an end to the GWOT and USSOCOM's mission requirements continue to expand. The 2006 QDR expansion greatly enhanced USSOCOM's ability to keep pace with ongoing operations; however, the SOF community still faces many significant challenges. Operational tempo, balancing global requirements, training, recruiting, and retention present a constant struggle for USSOCOM. These challenges represent obstacles that the active and reserve forces have to overcome in the successful execution of its mission.

The consistent increases in demand for SOF are a result of its capability, flexibility, and hard earned successes in difficult situations. Since SOF is often looked at as the "force of choice," its operational tempo remains the highest among any component in DoD. The average deployment cycle for the Army Special Forces is seven months deployed to 5 months at home station.⁴⁶ There are no excess SF ODAs, SEAL platoons, or MARSOC companies seeking meaningful employment. Looking at the worldwide distribution of the 288 active-duty SF ODA teams, there is no doubt that their OPTEMPO is tremendous. As of January 2009, USASFC has committed to maintaining constant

⁴⁶ Eric Peltzer, *Using Foreign Internal Defense and Unconventional Warfare to Conduct Global Counterinsurgency*, School of Advanced Military Studies, United States Army Command and General Staff College, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, AY 06-07, 25.

presence in standing Combined Joint Special Operations Task Forces (CJSOTF) in support of the GWOT. The following requirements reflect these commitments: 36 SF ODAs assigned to CJSOTF-Afghanistan, 44 to CJSOTF-Arabian Peninsula in Iraq, 10 to CJSOTF-Philippines, 10 to CJSOTF-Trans Sahara in North Africa and 10 ODAs in Colombia and Central America.⁴⁷ This alone accounts for approximately 110 ODAs forward deployed. When accounting for a seven-month in-theater / five-month at home station rotation plan to maintain constant presence, the number jumps to a minimum of 220 ODAs on an annual basis. There are additional requirements to support US embassies and FID missions in other theaters across the globe to also consider. In addition, standard training work-ups and cycles must be factored in to dwell times between deployments. This training often takes them away from home for weeks and months at a time. All these factors combine to reduce the number of SOF units available for global shaping and emergent requirements.

The reserve special operations forces' OPTEMPO is also high. In a 2005 interview, General Brown, USSOCOM Commander, credited the 19th and 20th SFGs (ARNG) with substantial support to Operation Enduring Freedom, accumulating more than 60 months of deployment time in Afghanistan. According to the General, these Guardsmen enabled SOF to remain engaged in many Theater Security Cooperation Program (TSCP) and FID events that would not be achievable without reserve support.⁴⁸ Another significant reserve asset is the NSW reserve component, comprising of almost 20

⁴⁷ Sean D. Naylor, "Special Ops 'Surge' Sparks Debate," *Army Times*, December 23, 2008, <https://www.armytimes.com/news/2008/12/army.sofsurge.122008w/> (accessed January 27, 2009).

⁴⁸ COL John E. Smith, "ARNG Special Forces Units: The Standard and the Future." Master's thesis, U.S. Army War College, Carlisle Barracks, Carlisle, PA, 2006, 9.

percent of the total NSW force. CDR J.J. Gracio, CSO, NSWG-11, stated, “Without the continual support of Navy reservists, NSW’s active-duty force would be pushing the limit of its operational capacity.”⁴⁹ The reserves have earned the reputation among their active counterparts as critical components within the total force.

The GWOT has also created challenges in balancing the SOF global requirements. As stated earlier, 80 percent of SOF overseas deployments are into CENTCOM to conduct operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. This has caused a dramatic reduction in the ability of SOF to deploy throughout the rest of the world to conduct other required missions, such as Foreign Internal Defense operations. The most common FID activity that special operations forces conduct is the Joint Combined Exchange Training (JCET) exercise. Between FY 2000 and FY 2005, the number of scheduled and completed JCETs decreased by about 50 percent. Specifically, JCET events conducted in EUCCOM decreased by 75 percent, and events conducted in SOUTHCOM and PACOM also decreased significantly during this time.⁵⁰ Many factors contribute to this reduction of SOF deployments in support of global presence FID missions. The availability of funding for training, host nation requests for US military training, and the availability of US special operations forces all contributed to the decrease in completed JCETs. Due to the increased SOF requirements in CENTCOM, JCET cancellations increased from zero percent to 60 percent for this period.⁵¹

⁴⁹ MC2 Christopher Menzie, “From OSG to Group 11.” *Ethos*, no.3, 21.

⁵⁰ GAO: Special Operations Forces: Human Capital Challenges, 33.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 35.

While special operations forces continue to focus on Iraq and Afghanistan, its capabilities and influence across the other regions has suffered from neglect due to a lack of resources. These FID missions are more important now as United States continues to engage an enemy that has the potential to exploit weak governments and ungoverned areas. Global presence and security cooperation missions are essential to building partner nation capacity to deny our enemies the opportunity to take root. Reflecting on Secretary Gates' balance strategy, SOF is vigorously prosecuting the current fight in Iraq and Afghanistan with the majority of its forces; however, the need to prepare for the future through FID and other shaping activities is essential to reduce the potential for direct conflict in other areas.⁵²

These JCETs are not only valuable tools to train partner nations in internal security to promote stability, but they also provide a critical training opportunity for the SOF personnel. JCETs are excellent opportunities for SOF to utilize foreign facilities, live-fire ranges, and gain exposure to environmental conditions that might not be available to them at their home station. As an example, while conducting a JCET in Thailand, US special operations forces can train in thick, triple-canopy jungle that is not available anywhere in the United States or in the CENTCOM AOR. The other benefit to US SOF is the opportunity to practice their language skills and the cultural exchange with the host nation military forces involved in the training. US personnel gain local knowledge, build personal relationships, and foster "kinship" with their partner nation host units. Finally, the act of developing the course of instruction and training to the host nation is essential for exercising skills in the FID and UW core SOF capabilities. These are just a few of the

⁵² Robert M. Gates, "A Balanced Strategy."

training benefits US forces receive by conducting FID missions; however, they cannot be adequately practiced while the majority of SOF tactical units continue to conduct missions in CENTCOM.

The next challenge that faces USSOCOM is maintaining the necessary personnel levels in the special operations community. Simply increasing authorized billets or funding cannot fix this complex problem. The issue is twofold: First, how can the services increase the quantity of special operation forces without compromising quality: Second, how can SOF retain the experienced personnel already in the community?

Recruiting the right people has long been an issue across the force. Looking back at the SOF Truths, USSOCOM knows that its warfighters cannot be mass-produced and quality is better than quantity. The 2006 QDR called for an extensive expansion of the SOF community, but this is not as simple as growing the conventional force. It takes considerable time to populate these newly authorized billets. For example, it takes on average close to two years of intense screening and training to become a deployable Navy SEAL. Understanding these challenges, all of the SOF components are taking multiple approaches to meet the increased billet end strength by the end of FY 2011. Careful consideration has gone into each process to increase the SOF community without lowering the strict standards for SOF accession.

The schools and training pipelines have adjusted to accommodate increased capacity and throughput of SOF candidates. The instructor cadre is a critical limiting factor. To address this problem the Army hired 45 additional civilian instructors in FY

2004, with plans to increase that number to more than 300 through FY 2011. Similarly, the Navy added 145 military and civilian instructors to its schoolhouse through FY 2008.⁵³

The Army greatly increased the frequency of its SF Q-Course to expand capacity. To meet the increase in available billets at the Q-Course, the Army stepped up its “in-service” recruiting efforts among conventional army units. Experience Army officers or Non Commissioned Officers (NCO) are the preferred candidates for the SF Q-Course. In 2001, the Army instituted the 18X program to admit initial-entry soldiers into the SF Q-Course.⁵⁴ These 18Xs are non-prior experienced soldiers who have completed basic training, infantry advanced individual training, and a pre-Special Forces Assessment and Selection program before entering the SF Q-Course. In FY 2005, Special Forces recruited 1,500 18Xs, in FY 2006 it brought the number down to 1,000, and in FY 2007 the number was only 900. The reduction in numbers reflects the success of in-service recruiting to fill schoolhouse seats.⁵⁵

The NSW Center, the training command for Navy SOF, pursued several options to increase the number of qualified SEALs it produces each year. Recognizing the higher attrition rate of Basic Underwater Demolition/SEAL (BUD/S) students in the winter months, NSW eliminated the winter class. The Center redistributed those billets across the remaining classes in the hopes to increase the number of graduates without sacrificing the integrity of the training. Additionally, NSW has attempted to minimize training attrition by identifying the right SEAL candidate. Historically, the BUD/S has only

⁵³ Ibid., 19.

⁵⁴ Janice Burton, “18Xs Make Mark,” *Special Warfare* 19, no. 4, July-August 2006, 29.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

graduated about 26 percent of its candidates.⁵⁶ In 2006, the NSW community began targeting extreme sports athletes, tri-athletes, and marathoners. They plan and execute athletic events such as the Navy SEAL Fitness Challenge, an event that allows the public to test themselves against SEAL fitness standards.⁵⁷ In addition, the Navy Recruit Training Command, in collaboration with NSW, created the BUD/S preparatory school following Navy Boot Camp. This is a 6-8 week course aimed at preparing potential BUD/S students for the mental and physical challenges of SEAL training.⁵⁸

The services have greatly increased their SOF recruiting goals to meet the QDR authorization to expand USSOCOM's overall endstrength. The Army set a targeted goal of producing 750 enlisted Green Beret graduates per year starting in FY 2006. Due to numerous measures taken to improve training throughput and attract new candidates, the Army surpassed this goal a year early in FY 2005 with 790 new graduates donning the green beret upon completion of the SF Qualification Course (Q-Course).⁵⁹ The Navy set the mark at 250 new enlisted SEALs needed annually to grow the force to meet QDR growth.⁶⁰ In 2006, the Chief of Naval Operations made SEAL recruitment a top navy priority, resulting in increased visibility of the SEAL community and increased incentives for Navy recruiters to push the program. FY 2007 saw a dramatic increase in the in the

⁵⁶ Gidget Fuentes, "Navy Steps Up Search for New SEALs." *Navy Times*, April 9, 2007, http://www.thomasgroup.com/getdoc/80356cf4-54db-4254-bdcb-da98670c338b/Navy-steps-up-search-for-new-SEAL_Navy-Times_0409.aspx (accessed November 10, 2008).

⁵⁷ Mandy McCammon and MC2 Michelle Kapica, "Front & Center." *Ethos*, no 3, 11.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹ CRS Report for Congress, "U.S. Special Operations Forces (SOF): Background and Issues for Congress" by Andrew Feickert, Congressional Research Service, (April 17, 2006), 6.

⁶⁰GAO: Special Operations Forces: Human Capital Challenges, 24.

number of enlisted candidates beginning initial training in BUD/S. In the first quarter of FY 2007, the Navy recruited 1075 of the 1400 goal for the year. When compared to FY 2006, which only accessed 859 of the 1400 goal, it is easy to see the progress.⁶¹ The improvements to the schoolhouse, targeted recruiting, and increased initial assessment resulted in a 6 percent graduation rate increase in FY 2006 over previous years.⁶² These steps are making an impact by growing the SEAL force; however, progress is slow.

Another approach to increase recruits was to offer enlistment bonuses to encourage volunteers into the SOF occupational specialties. As early as 2003, the service components were offering up to \$20,000 per soldier, sailor, airman, and marine to join the SOF community. The Army met or exceeded its recruiting goals for active duty SF soldiers in 5 out of 6 years between 2000 and 2005. The Air Force increased the number of enlisted airman recruits for the combat controller and para-rescue occupational specialties by about 400 percent and 60 percent, respectively.⁶³ SOF recruiting is on the right track. USSOCOM has managed to maintain training standards, while meeting its goals for growing the force with the next generation of special operators.

While it is essential to grow the force by attracting new recruits, it is just as important to retain those combat veterans with multiple deployments. One of the key factors to SOF successes in difficult and sensitive missions is the maturity and experience of the special operator. This maturity and experience are two of the distinguishing

⁶¹ RADM Joseph Maguire, *Statement to the House Armed Services Committee: Subcommittee on Terrorism, Unconventional Threats and Capabilities on Current Manning, Equipping, and Readiness Challenges Facing Special Operations Forces*. January 31, 2007. <http://armedservices.house.gov/pdfs/TUTC013107/Maguire%20testimony013107.pdf> (accessed October 17, 2008), 4.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 9.

⁶³ GAO: Special Operations Forces: Human Capital Challenges, 18.

characteristics essential for an effective special operator; however, they also present a significant drawback. A full one third of SOF soldiers are eligible to retire.⁶⁴ DoD has taken action to retain these experienced SOF personnel to balance the growth in the force by providing financial incentives. DoD offered significantly increased special duty pays for enlisted SOF personnel and reenlistment bonuses of up to \$150,000 for targeted specialties with 19 or more years of service who reenlist for 6 years. The military spent more than \$41 million in FY 2005 to retain 688 SOF service members with reenlistment bonuses.⁶⁵

Generally, retention rates are very good within the SOF community, despite the high operational tempo. Green Berets and SEALs are warriors who run to the sound of the guns, but factors outside military service affect everyone. Family, civilian career aspirations, and higher education can all cause a special operator to leave active duty in pursuit of a lifestyle change. The reserves provide that individual the opportunity to remain affiliated with the SOF community, yet achieve their goals apart from the military. By capturing those experienced operators, reserves can continue to grow and expand the total force. The NSW reserve community has focused significant attention to capturing SEALs leaving active duty. A \$20,000 reserve affiliation bonus, along with reserve benefits classes at the active NSW commands, have improved reserve recruiting in the last two years.⁶⁶

⁶⁴ CRS Report for Congress, "U.S. Special Operations Forces (SOF): Background and Issues for Congress," January 16, 2009, 4-5.

⁶⁵ GAO: Special Operations Forces: Human Capital Challenges, 19.

⁶⁶ RDML Garry J. Bonelli, "Admiral's View," *The Navy Reservist*, 33, no. 10, (October 2007), 2.

The NSW reserve community can only capture those SEALs who leave active duty and volunteer to join the Selected Reserves. This severely limits NSW's ability to grow its reserve component. Despite increased support by WARCOM, NSW reserve manning remains at 71 percent for SEAL officers and 61 percent for SEAL enlisted.⁶⁷ The NSW reserves are growing at a slow and steady pace, but emerging requirements as an operational force will soon outpace this growth.

Unlike the SEAL community, ARNG has multiple pipelines to create ARSOF soldiers. The ARNG has the ability to send Guard soldiers with no prior SF experience to the SF Q-Course to become Green Berets. The ARNG can also capture, or retain, SF soldiers who leave active military service and join the National Guard. This ability to recruit new SF soldiers and capture those leaving active service reflects positively in National Guard SFG manning. In 2006, the manning levels for ARNG enlisted SF soldiers was at 125 percent. There are critical shortages among the Captain and Warrant Officer rates in the ARNG SF community, but the overall health of the force is very good.⁶⁸

This high endstrength hides the relatively low military skill qualification rate of 74 percent among non-prior SF experienced Guardsmen who have not completed all required training courses to be fully mission capable.⁶⁹ Until these SF soldiers are fully qualified, they are of limited use and cannot deploy to execute JCETs or other required missions

⁶⁷ NSWG ELEVEN staff. "NSW Reenergized." Discussion document presented to WARCOM, Coronado, CA, August 2008.

⁶⁸ LTG Robert Wagner, *Statement to the House Armed Services Committee: Subcommittee on Terrorism, Unconventional Threats and Capabilities on Current Manning, Equipping, and Readiness Challenges Facing Special Operations Forces*, January 31, 2007, <http://armed.services.house.gov/pdfs/TUTC013107/Wagner%20testimony013107.pdf> (accessed October 17, 2008), 7.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

abroad. Due to the limited annual training days for ARNG soldiers, it takes much longer for the SF soldier to attend all required schools.

The nature of the global terrorist threat and USSOCOM's role in this fight has caused stress on the force. These increased requirements created challenges the special operations forces must overcome. The 2006 QDR has expanded SOF active duty capacity to meet these additional requirements, but until USSOCOM fills these new billets, it will struggle to increase its global presence in support of US national interests.

RESERVES AS A FORCE MULTIPLIER

There is no doubt that SOF reserves have earned the reputation as a viable member of the total force. USSOCOM's extensive combat participation in the GWOT over the past seven years has resulted in the SOF active component relying on the reserves more than ever before. Yet, the part-time nature of the reserve force has its advantages and disadvantages. Reservists cost the military less money and they bring a unique skill set to the fight. Along with the numerous benefits reservists can bring, there are an equal number of challenges associated with reserve forces. USSOCOM recognizes the SOF reserves are an important and necessary addition of its total force. Now the special operations community must consider how to best utilize them to their fullest potential.

One of the most compelling aspects of a reserve force in organized militaries around the world is their cost savings. As part-time military personnel, reservists simply spend less time in uniform, thus costing less money. They do not receive extensive health benefits unless they are in an active or drilling status, again saving a considerable amount of money. In times of peace, the cost benefit of reservists is at its highest. The active duty service member receives 365 days of basic pay per year, where as the reservist receives on average about 63 days of basic pay per year; broken down to two weekend days per month at double pay and 15 days for annual training.⁷⁰ Using these numbers, reservists cost about one-sixth the amount of their active duty counterpart. The cost of training, equipment, and base infrastructure are part of the equation when determining the cost of

⁷⁰ Jacob Klerman, *Rethinking the Reserve*, Prepared by the RAND National Defense Research Institute, Santa Monica, CA, 2008, 14.

the reserves. Due to the intensive equipment requirements of the SOF mission, along with the extensive training necessary to maintain proficiency, ARNG SF soldiers and reserve Navy SEALs are among the most expensive reservists in the military. Taking this into consideration, the one-sixth ratio tends to be too generous. Regardless, the cost of the SOF reserve unit remains much less expensive than its active duty counterpart.

War reduces the cost benefit ratio of reserves since reservists spend more time on active duty. The current policy for reserve mobilizations is that a reservist can be involuntarily mobilized one year out of five to support Operation Enduring Freedom or Operation Iraqi Freedom. The Army National Guard SF soldiers are on a one to four mobilization cycle.⁷¹ Other elements of the SOF reserve components are meeting, and often exceeding, this policy on a regular basis as USSOCOM struggles to maintain its “boots on the ground” presence in Iraq and Afghanistan. The need for military forces varies dramatically over time and the reserves are an attractive way to maintain an available surge force by paying them full-time salaries only when necessary. This monetary advantage of the reserves has been and will continue to be a critical factor for maintaining reserve forces.

Another added benefit of the reserves is the “citizen soldier” element. As a result of their civilian occupations, many reserve SOF members possess skills not found in active component SOF units. This has proved to be a fantastic advantage to commanders when one considers that all SOF reserves must also meet the same physical standards while remaining proficient in the same Mission Essential Task Lists as their active duty counterparts. In any ARNG SF ODA or reserve SEAL platoon, the commander may find

⁷¹ NSW Senior Leadership Conference Brief, September 28, 2008.

he has doctors, lawyers, firemen, police officers, and computer engineers among any number of other skill sets that could greatly enhance his capabilities. NSW Squadrons (NSWRON) in Iraq are capitalizing on these citizen soldiers. They are using reserve SEALs who are police officers in their civilian occupation to secure mission sites as they would a crime scene. When they arrive at their target location, these reservists collect and package evidence to present to Iraqi courts in trials of suspected terrorists.⁷² This skill is not organic or inherent in active duty SEAL training or deployment work-ups. Since this practice was put into place, NSW operations have enjoyed increased conviction rates of its High Value Targets.⁷³ This leveraging of civilian skills in military application greatly increases the capabilities of the total force to work more effectively.

Other skill advantages that reserves bring to the table are their maturity, cohesiveness as a team, and extensive experience. The reserve service member is typically a little older than his active counterpart and having more time to pursue education goals, their education level is often higher.⁷⁴ Reservists also provide a sense of stability in the SOF organization. Due to their civilian occupation and ties to their local community, the SOF reservists tend to affiliate with the closest SOF operational unit and remain with that unit for extended periods. Unit cohesion is also created and maintained as SOF reservists develop professional relationships through these extended tours within the same units. Although promotion and opportunity occur outside their SOF reserve unit, they often stay affiliated with their special operations unit. Since the reserves are not their

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Capt Michael A. O'Brien, "The Reserve Component Special Forces Soldier, An Asset with Special Capabilities", *Special Warfare*, (March 1992), 5 No. 1, 37.

primary source of income, many reserve SOF members choose to do something they enjoy instead of taking a career-enhancing job. Finally, a unique advantage that SOF reserves offer more often than their conventional reserve counterparts is extensive experience. While conventional reserve units consist of many personnel with no or limited prior active duty experience, the preponderance of the National Guard SF soldiers and all of the SEAL reservists have prior active duty experience in the SOF community. All of these advantages combined with the cost savings involved with reserve forces make it an ideal addition as a force multiplier.

Unfortunately, where there are advantages, there are often equal disadvantages. This is also the case when dealing with special operation reserve forces. The most limiting factor with reservists is time, more specifically a lack of time. This time limitation affects training, proficiency, and deployment availability. With an average of only 39 training days a year, it is impossible for a Navy SEAL reservist to be as proficient as his fulltime active duty counterpart, unless they are called-up into a full time mobilized status. Active duty SEAL platoons train up for 18 months as a team prior to departing for their 6-month deployment. With this in mind, a realistic approach to training and the expectation management of the reserve force is necessary to maximize all the advantages and minimize the disadvantages associated with SOF reserve forces.

Taking into account the limited training days they have available, the SOF reserve community has tried to target training to those core skills required to meet the units Mission Essential Task List (METL) and select only those training evolutions that maximize reserve exposure to SOF core capabilities. This paper contends that the Foreign

Internal Defense missions, specifically the JCET, are key to maximizing SOF reserve as a force multiplier.

JCET missions readily lend themselves to the SOF reserve capability. They maximize the benefits SOF reserves bring to the fight, while downplaying their weaknesses. The JCET events are typically short, lasting between one to four weeks. Reserve SOF can easily execute these exercises in the course of a reserve Annual Training (AT) period. The Department of State and the host nation involved coordinate these missions well in advance of the events taking place. This advanced planning not only allows the reserve SOF element time to coordinate targeted training in preparation for the specific skill sets required, it also gives the individual reservist the time and a predictable schedule to provide ample notification to their civilian employer of the upcoming military commitment.

The reserve contribution by the ARNG 19th and 20th SFGs has a long history of success in supporting FID events in the form of JCETs. Dating back to the mid-1990s, these Guard units routinely conducted JCETs as their reserve two-week AT requirement. In 1998, the 20th Group conducted seven JCETs throughout South America. The active-duty 7th SFG provided training evaluators and certification standards to ensure the reservists were achieving acceptable levels of performance in light infantry tactics, small unit tactics, combat lifesaving, marksmanship, grenade training, and patrolling.⁷⁵ Today, the 19th and 20th SFGs are conducting similar FID missions throughout the world.

⁷⁵ U.S. Government Accountability Office, *Military Training-Management and Oversight of Joint Combined Exchange Training*, Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, (July 1999), 31.

The NSW reserves, now under NSWG-11, have reorganized to form reserve SEAL platoons capable of conducting various active duty support roles, as well as the potential to conduct FID missions. While establishing criteria for NSWG-11's operational tasking, the NSW reserves developed a pilot program in USSOUTHCOM to conduct JCET and Counter-Narcotic (CN) missions in support of the Theater Security Cooperation Program (TSCP). In the course of this two-year pilot program, SEAL reservists successfully completed 15 JCET and CN missions.⁷⁶ Despite the favourable results of this program, there is still debate on what operational role the NSW reservists will play. Currently, NSWG-11 has TSCP/FID ranked third of its eight command priorities⁷⁷ while NSW Squadron Combat Capacity Augmentation is its first priority.⁷⁸

NSW is fully aware of the successes the 19th and 20th SFGs have achieved in deploying their assets as units rather than individuals, and they understand the potential this operational construct gives their reserve force. However, they are working against a long history of IA support. Understanding the limitations and benefits of the reserve force is essential to determining the appropriate mission it can execute. The National Guard has tested, practiced, and set the example for other reserve components to follow. When

⁷⁶CDR Ken Wright, Commanding Officer, SEAL Team 18, interviewed by author, March 4, 2009.

⁷⁷ NSWG-11 Support Priorities as set forth in the September 15, 2008 Command Brief:

1. DEPOD NSW Squadron combat capacity augmentation requirements
2. DEPOD NSW Squadron combat support/combat service support augmentation requirements.
3. DEPOD Theater Security Cooperation Program (TSCP) requirements
4. DEPOD Joint Individual Augmentation requirements.
5. DEPOD NSWG JSOTF requirements.
6. Request For Forces (RFF) Joint Individual Augmentation requirements.
7. NSW Echelon III operational Individual Augmentation requirements.
8. NSW Echelon III non-operational Individual Augmentation requirements.

⁷⁸ NSWG-11 Command Brief, September 15, 2008.

considering the reserve special operations forces, the FID mission provides the best match for maximizing their strengths.

CASE STUDIES

Providing continual support through the years, the SOF reserves have contributed to all aspects of USSOCOM's mission. To understand what the SOF reserves are capable of, it is important to first look at what they have accomplished in the past. Between the Army and Navy reserve SOF communities, the utilization has been significantly different. The Army National Guard SFGs have been operational since USSOCOM was established. The reserve SEALs provided support through the 1990s, but it was not until after the September 11th attack when the NSW community recognized the potential of its reserves. This chapter highlights a few examples that demonstrate reserve capability to conduct SOF global presence missions.

The first SOF reserve mobilization occurred on January 31, 1991 when the 20th Special Forces Group received the call to activate in support of Operation Desert Storm. This 1,400-man unit, spread out over Alabama, Mississippi, Florida, and Maryland, quickly assembled at Ft Bragg, NC on February 23, 1991 to begin an intense train-up period of certification and validation.⁷⁹ Lt. Col. Travis Guthrie, 20th SFG deputy commander, had this to say about the mobilization:

When we look at the training process, we've certified every element in 20th Group – three FOBs, nine B-teams, and 42 A-teams. We did this in an intensified training cycle, validating three battalions in about a 45-day cycle, where as the active (SF) components certify one battalion in 90 days. I think that speaks for itself. I think prior to our coming here there were some doubts as to whether we could take our group and transform it

⁷⁹ SGT Scott Hallford, "Federalization: 20th SF Group becomes first RC SF unit to be activated." *Special Warfare*, 5, no. 1, (March 1992), 29.

into a viable force. I think that everyone at SF Command was surprised by our professionalism and the spirit with which we performed.⁸⁰

Unfortunately for the Guardsmen, Operation Desert Storm ended before they could deploy into theater. Most of the National Guard soldiers demobilized on May 23 and returned to their civilian jobs. The 20th Group was not able to deploy downrange to test its combat prowess or to demonstrate just how capable its SF soldiers had become. However, the activation was a positive experience that presented many valuable lessons learned for both active and reserve Army SOF. The reserves proved they could quickly mobilize and complete validation training to the same standard as any active Special Forces Group. When the 20th SFG mobilized again in 2002 for Operation Enduring Freedom, the process was even more organized, thanks in part to the lessons from Desert Storm.

An excellent example of the unique benefits SOF reserve forces can bring to the overall mission was Flintlock 2001. It was a combined active duty and reserve FID exercise in Mali. The exercise began with a five-month train up period that preceded this 35-day FID deployment by ODA 2031 out of the 20th SFG. This mission included elements from the 3rd and 20th SFGs to conduct unilateral training for the Guardsmen, as well as train with 120 Malian soldiers in light-infantry skills. From June 9, 2001 to July 12, 2001, the mission of Flintlock 2001 was to increase the FID skills of the detachment, strengthen the organic capability and efficiency of the Malian Army, and promote stability in the region. The ARNG ODA team, ODA 2031, conducted three iterations of light-infantry skills to 40 man platoons before turning over the host nation soldiers to the active

⁸⁰ Ibid.

Green Berets from 3rd Group, who completed the exercise after the Guardsmen redeployed.⁸¹

The close working relationship between the active and reserve ODA proved beneficial during this exercise with each element providing critical skills that ensured mission success. Due to aircraft issues, active duty technical support personnel arrived late to the exercise. However, ODA 2031 had two reservists who were licensed electricians among the team. These two Green Berets quickly installed all required wiring and generator hook-ups to provide essential electrical power needed to continue the mission. The reserve ODA also had an emergency-room nurse who provided an additional capability not organic to active duty ODAs. On the other hand, the ODA from 3rd Group provided subject matter expertise on new equipment that was unfamiliar to the Guardsmen.⁸² This combined effort of reserve and active SF soldiers proved to be extremely successful and an excellent model for future integration.

The reserve component has also proven itself through combat tours in Iraq and Afghanistan. As the new government came into power and the Afghanistan SOF campaign shifted from Unconventional Warfare to FID, 19th Group SF soldiers were there. In the fall of 2002, the 5th Battalion, 19th SFG deployed to Afghanistan with the primary mission of training the new Afghan National Army (ANA).⁸³ Over the course of six months, the Guardsmen provided an entire range of training, from individual soldier skills to confidence missions. The concept used a phased approach to ease the ANA battalions

⁸¹ “The 20th SF Group in Flintlock 2001,” *Special Warfare*, 15, no. 2, (June 2002), 60.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 61.

⁸³ Robert Redding, “19th SF Group Utilizes MCA to Train Afghan National Army Battalions,” *Special Warfare*, 17 no. 3 (February 2005).

into combat. The instruction began with basic soldier skills and then progressed into capabilities for supporting future disaster-relief and humanitarian-relief efforts. These Military Civil Action (MCA) operations built confidence among the soldiers and with the Afghan people. Following the initial 10-week basic instruction phase, the ODAs took the ANA battalions through a series of increasingly complex and dangerous missions. Demonstrating patience, commitment, and professionalism, 19th Group Guardsmen advised and led this new Afghan Army unit from a basic level to becoming combat ready.⁸⁴

The first serious recommendation to operationalize the NSW reserves occurred in September 2000 after Naval Special Warfare Unit FOUR (NSWU-4) conducted the Tradewinds 2000 exercise with reserve personnel. Critically short of active duty SEAL platoons to engage in FID operations in South America and the Caribbean, CDR Tom Brown, commanding officer of NSWU-4 in Puerto Rico, turned to the reserves to provide a capable force. Responsible for NSW operations in USSOUTHCOM, Unit-4 tasked 33 NSW reservists to train 383 personnel from the Regional Security System Caribbean Community Battalion. The successful execution of this FID exercise resulted in CDR Brown's recommendation to establish an operational reserve organization specifically for FID. The "Naval Reserve NSW Task Element Caribbean" would focus its personnel deployments and training to conduct up to three Counter Narcotic and JCET events a year in South America.⁸⁵ CDR Brown sited the following benefits of such an organization:

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Tom Brown, CDR, USN, Commander Naval Special Warfare Unit FOUR, "Proposal for Reserve Force Employment," (Memorandum from NSWU-4 to COMNAVSPECWARCOM, 5401, SER N3, September 2000).

This proposal would accomplish engagement in support of CINC goals that would otherwise not take place. It will also allow NSWU-4 and the active duty force providers to more fully concentrate on the Source Zone. Other advantages include the increased specialization in those specific target countries that the reserve force could achieve with annual or repeat deployments by NSW units to the same location. Collateral benefits of this proposal would be improved long term relationships between NSW and host nation personnel, a streamlined process for incorporation of lessons learned from past deployments, and ease of planning and execution.⁸⁶

Tradewinds 2000 proved to the NSW community that its reserve force was capable of much more than just providing Individual Augmentation to fill vacant staff billets at an administrative NSW or training command. All reserve SEALs serve in active duty SEAL Teams for a minimum of four years before leaving the service to pursue civilian careers. Tapping into this underutilized experience, which accounts for 20 percent of its total force, NSW can extend its global reach in FID missions.

Describing just a few of the past successes the reserve special operations forces have enjoyed over the years, it is easy to see the value these seasoned operators bring to the fight. In today's environment, the SOF community is tasked more than ever. Growth of the force has helped to meet the challenge, but the appetite for SOF seems to be insatiable.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Admiral Eric Olson took command of USSOCOM on July 9, 2007. In his 2008 Congressional testimony, he stated, “although most special operation forces deployed from the United States since the attacks of 9/11 have served in and around Iraq and Afghanistan, we clearly understand the enduring value of a global presence.”⁸⁷ ADM Olson’s guidance to the Special Operations Force is one of balance between the direct and indirect approach to USSOCOM’s mission. Yet, SOF is stretched to their breaking point and there is an imbalance of forces supporting direct missions in Iraq and Afghanistan while, leaving gaps in the indirect global presence mission requirements. This leaves just one question. Where can USSOCOM find the assets necessary to strike this balance? The following recommendations can help answer this question.

Recommendation #1:

Make FID the priority operational mission of the reserve SEAL platoons

Prior to August 2008, the Operational Support Group (OSG) provided support to the active NSW community primarily through Individual Augmentation (IA). While successful, it presented significant limitations to both the active and reserve overall missions. It also did not maximize the training, experience, or investment the Navy has in NSW reserve SEAL personnel.

⁸⁷ Admiral Olson Statement to Congress, March 4, 2008.

Mainly through IA, the Navy reserves have provided, on average, 80,000 man-days a year of active duty support to NSW in the prosecution of the GWOT.⁸⁸ The roles and responsibilities of the IAs have ranged from a NSW Task Unit Commander to a vehicle mechanic. There is no doubt that these reservists have earned their money and contributed significantly to the fight. The reserves have also gained a great deal of trust and respect while working with their active component. Among reserve SEAL officers, 90 percent of those eligible for mobilization have completed at least one year of active-duty mobilization, and many have completed multiple tours. Individually, the NSW reservists have answered the call to service and performed all tasks assigned.

Individual augmentation by NSW reserves is working. It is providing support and meeting the taskings from the active components; however, it is an inefficient system. The excessive use of reservists as IAs is detrimental to the overall NSW reserve force capability. It reduces the ability of a NSW reserve unit to function as a cohesive team. NSW reserve units are not able to conduct a comprehensive training program since many of their key players, at any given time, are away filling IA requirements. They are not able to train properly as a unit, which leaves them ineffective. They often become a pool of bodies used to fill taskings. Using NSW reserves in an IA capacity is a death spiral that keeps units at less than full strength or maximum readiness.

Recognizing the limitations caused by IA, WARCOT tasked the NSW reserves to reorganize to an operational model. Under this new model, WARCOT renamed OSG to Naval Special Warfare Group-ELEVEN (NSWG-11), signifying its new operational status. In August 2008, NSWG-11 officially took operational command of the NSW

⁸⁸ Mike Bottoms and Jim Moser, "NSW Reserves Major contributor to Fighting GWOT," *Tip of the Spear*, (November 2006), 18.

reserves with the mission statement to “Organize, Train, Equip, and Deploy Naval Special Warfare Reserve Component (RC) SEAL platoons, RC Special Boat Detachments, and RC Combat Service Support Teams (CSS) in support of NSW and Joint Special Operational Commanders worldwide.”⁸⁹ The main objectives of reorganizing the NSW reserves were to establish the SEAL reserve platoon and to create a headquarters element capable of deploying in support of a JSOTF. For the first time, NSW reserves gained the mission to deploy trained units. This is an important step to break the IA mentality that has dominated the NSW approach to its reserves.

The reorganization created a structure that recognized the first reserve SEAL platoons. In platoons, SEAL reservists would now be capable of conducting, FID, DA, and other NSW core capabilities. These reserve SEAL platoons were given two taskings: first, increase combat power to deployed NSW squadrons (i.e. fill IA requirements) and second, to conduct Theater Security Cooperation Programs (TSCP) / FID missions when tasked.

WARCOM was also looking for a deployable headquarters support element that can augment a JSOTF. As a new requirement, the Activity Manning Document (AMD) for the NSWGs does not account for a deployable JSOTF capability. The active NSWGs do not have an adequate staff to deploy forward in an operational role while maintaining the “man, train, and equip” responsibilities for their SEAL teams. Specifically trained and organized for JSOTF operations, NSW reservists fill the gap by providing the core manning requirements for the deployed JSOTF.

⁸⁹ NSWG-11 Command Brief, 15 Sept 2008.

Although WARCOM is moving in the right direction by operationalizing NSW reserves, there are further steps it can take to use its forces most effectively. Under the new model, NSWG-11 identified eight support priorities. Their first priority is to “provide NSW Squadron combat capacity augmentation”⁹⁰ which in effect provides IAs to the squadron as needed. It is not until the third priority that they address the TSCP/FID requirement. This paper documented successful FID missions conducted by the ARNG and NSW reserves. The FID mission is well suited to the reserves, yet the current priority set by NSWG-11 remains focused on IA.

The number one NSWG-11 priority, “to provide combat capacity augmentation” is a difficult proposition. The SEAL reservists are quite capable of conducting combat operations; they just require a significant amount of time for certification and training. It demands a tremendous amount of post-mobilization, pre-deployment time. The time spent post-mobilization, limits the amount of time spent on the actual deployment. The result is less “boots on the ground” time; therefore, making IA missions a less effective use of their time.

Making FID the priority operational mission of the reserve SEAL platoons is the best use of the NSW reserve forces. The fluid nature of individual reservists moving in and out of billets and filling last minute emergent priority requirements does not create a notable impact on relieving the overburdened active duty SEAL teams. For example, 16 NSW reservists deployed in the IA role will not reduce the deployment cycle of an active duty SEAL platoon, but 16 deployed NSW reservists who execute a JCET most certainly will. Not only does this operational use of the NSW reserves benefit the active duty

⁹⁰ Ibid.

SEALs, it also benefits the reservists. In the IA role, the individual reservist is not trained and utilized to his optimum potential. Preparing for and executing the JCET event is a much more effective use of their greatest limitation--time. The reservist is now able to plan this time off with his civilian employer far in advance, rather than in support of short notice emergent requirements that cause friction between employer and reservist. They are able to prepare properly for the upcoming mission by planning their drill periods with targeted training and tasks that need to be accomplished prior to their mission. Reserve SEAL units can now go through a full training cycle with a clear objective, allowing them to target their training and develop a schedule that maximizes their limited training days. Completing a FID mission not only protects unit cohesion, it creates and enhances cohesion. As mentioned previously, the FID mission provides valuable training that the SEAL reservist cannot obtain in any other environment.

NSW reserve support through Individual Augmentation is still beneficial to the overall NSW mission. It expands the total capability of NSW by filling gaps left vacant by a limited number of active duty personnel. It also brings vital civilian skills not found organically in active duty teams into the fight. IA support is necessary and will continue to be part of the reserve mission, but by shifting the focus to reserve SEAL platoons on conducting TSCP/FID missions, everyone benefits. This shift frees up entire active duty SEAL teams to focus on higher priority missions and decreases their OPTEMPO. It is also the most effective use of a NSW SEAL reservists' time, and more importantly, it gives USSOCOM an additional asset to expand its global presence capability.

Recommendation #2:Expand the SOF reserve force

The second recommendation is to expand the SOF reserve force. Increase the authorized manning for the operational reserve elements within the Army, grow the Navy Special Warfare community to fill its current authorized billets, and create reserve components for MARSOC and AFSOC's 6th SOS. The 2006 QDR expanded active SOF manning by 15 percent to meet the emergent requirements of the GWOT, yet there was no increase in the SOF reserve component outlined in the QDR. Since there was no specific mention of increasing the SOF reserves, it still needs to be addressed.

The Army National Guard and Navy SOF reserves have provided exceptional support to USSOCOM's mission since the beginning of the GWOT. Moreover, the SOF community understands that reserve support is essential to the overall ability of its total force. Reserve requirements have continued to grow year after year and show no sign of slowing. The current reserve mobilization policy standard for "mobilization to dwell time" is at a "one in five" goal; meaning for one year mobilized, the reservists will have five years before they may be involuntarily mobilized again. The Army National Guard SFGs are currently on a "one in four" mobilization rotation.⁹¹ This deviation from the policy standard reflects the increased operational tempo of the National Guard SF soldiers.

The QDR increased the size of the active duty Special Forces by adding one battalion to each SFG. By not increasing the size of the National Guard 19th and 20th SFGs to mirror the active duty, the capabilities between the two components no longer match. Interoperability between the active and reserve SFGs have long been a goal, but

⁹¹ NSW Senior Leadership Conference Brief, September 28, 2008.

now this delicate balance is in jeopardy. Currently, the National Guard SF community has excess personnel compared to its authorized billets. They are at about 125 percent of its allocated end strength.⁹² With this surplus of SF soldiers, the Guard can quickly reorganize and begin to fill a fourth battalion in each ARNG SFG. Creating these two additional battalions would return the active and reserve SFGs to their previously successful balance of forces and provide more ARNG SOF personnel for deployment.

Expansion of the NSW reserves presents an entirely different and more difficult problem. The NSW reserve community cannot fill its existing authorized billets. With current end strength at 71 percent for reserve SEAL officers and 61 percent for enlisted reserve SEALs, manning is an issue.⁹³ Therefore, while additional SEAL reserve billets would be useful in expanding NSW's capability, it would not be practical at this time. Growing the reserve community is a priority for WARCUM and positive steps have been taken toward accomplishing this goal. There are bonuses for reserve SEAL affiliation and a two-year involuntary mobilization deferment in place.⁹⁴ However, growth for the NSW reserves remains a slow process simply due to the limited pipeline of possible candidates.

There is only one-way to obtain a SEAL reservist to fill an open billet. It is to affiliate them once they have left active duty. There are incentives for SEALs who decide

⁹² LT Gen Wagner Statement to Congress, January 31, 2007, 7.

⁹³ NSWG-11 "NSW Reenergized" Program Brief, August 2008.

⁹⁴ RDML Gary Bonelli, "Admiral's View," *The Navy Reservist*, 33, no. 10 (October 2007), 2. The Navy reserve offers a \$10,000 affiliation bonus to NSW officers and a \$20,000 affiliation bonus to enlisted SEALs who affiliate with the Navy reserves within six months of detaching from active duty. The NSW community also offers a two-year mobilization deferment to NSW service members who affiliate with the reserves within six months of detaching from active duty service. This benefit is designed to allow the new NSW reservists time to establish their civilian career or attend a higher education program before they are eligible for an involuntary mobilization to active duty.

to join the reserves after leaving active duty, but these incentives are not doing enough. On average, only about 7.5 percent of the SEALs leaving active duty over the last three years affiliated with the reserves.⁹⁵ Efforts to increase reserve recruiting must be addressed to increase this small percentage and fill the vacancies in the NSW Reserve units.

Options to expand the number of SEALs affiliating into the reserves include: increasing the current \$20,000 affiliation bonus, extending the two-year deferment further and designing a better outreach program to capture SEALs transitioning out of active duty. This outreach program would target the remaining 92.5 percent of detaching SEALs within approximately 12 months after they leave active duty. This allows them time to recharge and acclimate themselves to the civilian world after years of constant deployments. Since the average Navy SEAL is not normally content sitting behind a desk or working a typical 9-5 job, he maybe more interested in affiliating as a SEAL reservist at that time than they were immediately after leaving active duty. Although this scenario does not necessarily increase additional NSW reserve authorized billets, it does expand the current NSW reserve force – a necessary first step.

The final recommendation in expanding the SOF reserve force involves the creation of reserve elements to complement the existing FID capabilities in MARSOC and AFSOC. There is currently no MARSOC reserve force and no AFSOC 6th Special Operations Squadron (SOS) reserve element. Through active duty requirements, these service components already demonstrate the capacity and capability to conduct FID. Adding a reserve component can greatly enhance each service's performance by capturing

⁹⁵ LT Patrick Berry, Naval Special Warfare Group ELEVEN Reserve Recruiting Action Officer, interviewed by author, March 4, 2009.

experienced operators who plan to leave the service. They will provide continuity through extended tours while also providing a surge capability.

MARSOC is the newest and smallest SOF service component in USSOCOM with 2,500 marines. It has only had an operational FID capability since February 2006, with the first four Marine Special Operations Teams deploying in August 2006.⁹⁶ One team, a Spanish language team, deployed to South America. Three additional teams deployed to North Africa. These teams prepared by studying the language and culture of their host nation, along with training in small unit tactics, weapons handling, land navigation, and other techniques necessary for FID missions.⁹⁷ Since those first successful missions, the Marines have joined the Army SF soldiers and Navy SEALs in the FID business with a constant rotation of forces.

AFSOC maintains its FID capabilities in the 6th SOS. With its primary mission to provide US military expertise to allied and partner nations' governments, it has had a long history of success. Over the years, the 6th SOS grew from a twenty-person detachment to a squadron of 105 personnel.⁹⁸ In December 2004, Gen. Doug Brown, USSOCOM commander, ordered the squadron to increase in size again to 230 authorized personnel.⁹⁹ With this increase in size, the squadron became more capable of conducting additional FID events throughout the world. Along with its primary mission, the squadron also has the ability to train conventional US Air Force personnel to function as aviation advisors.

⁹⁶ Cpl. Ken Melton, "First Teams from FMTU Deploy," *Tip of the Spear*, (November 2006), 31.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

⁹⁸ Global Security.org, "6th Special Operations Squadron, 6th SOS," Global Security, <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/agency/usaf/6sos.html> (accessed Nov 2, 2008).

⁹⁹ Jamie Haig, "6th SOS: Small Unit, Global Impact," *Tip of the Spear*, (November 2006), 25.

In November 2006, approximately 100 US Air Forces officers and Airmen were trained by the 6th SOS at the USAF Special Operations School to deploy as embedded advisors with the Iraqi Air Force.¹⁰⁰ The capabilities of the 6th SOS to conduct indirect operations are tremendous, yet even with the size increase to 230 authorized advisors, some officials consider the expansion insufficient.¹⁰¹ By creating a 6th SOS reserve component, USSOCOM's indirect reach could expand even further, helping to provide stability across the globe.

SOF reserve growth within these four service components would have long lasting benefits to USSOCOM. First, the reserves provide an avenue to capture those experienced FID operators who leave the active service. Becoming a fully qualified SOF warrior is a long, expensive process and every effort must be made to retain these individuals in these uncertain times. The reserves are the avenue that allows the individual to pursue other interests, yet continue to serve the nation when necessary. Second, the reserves provide a level of continuity for the command. Reservists tend to stay in the same unit for extended tours. This results in experienced personnel who become subject matter experts in the specific mission sets that their commands are responsible for completing. Potentially, a SOF reserve element could schedule the same JCET mission for multiple years and build rapport with the same host nation unit. An active duty SOF unit due to its unit and personnel rotation requirements could not duplicate this type of continuous rapport. Finally, the reserves provide a surge capability for contingencies or emerging

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 23.

¹⁰¹ Congressional Hearings, House Armed Services Subcommittee on Terrorism, Unconventional Threats, and Capabilities Holds Hearing on Special Operations Forces, March 3, 2009.

requirements. This can result in a greater immediate SOF capacity and a lower active duty operational tempo due to reserve rotation.

CONCLUSION

The US military has extended its forces to meet the demands of the GWOT, but the combat element that has felt the burden the most is Special Operation Forces. SOF has been engaged in the GWOT with no sign of relief. USSOCOM is struggling to maintain the balanced approach to today's strategic environment. SOF is required to meet the increasing requirements in the USCENTCOM Area of Responsibility, yet it must also keep its eyes on the rest of the world. Persistent engagement throughout all regions is vital to deter the potential threats that loom at every corner. The US is leading the world in denying terrorists access to ungoverned areas and in helping prevent weak nation-states from falling into terrorists' hands. USSOCOM's ability to affect these areas through global presence is suffering while it plays a significant role in combat missions in support of the GWOT. To help combat this problem, USSOCOM must employ their total force, both active and reserve components effectively.

USSOCOM can better balance their growing requirements by reprioritizing the SOF reserve forces to focus on Foreign Internal Defense (FID) missions and by expanding the current SOF reserve component. SOF reserves are currently underutilized and demonstrated the potential to help USSOCOM maintain a balance in the GWOT. A more effective use of SOF reserves will lift some of the burden from the active duty forces. These trained reservists have proven through their past success that they can perform to the same level as their active duty counterparts and there is evidence of many successful reserve led missions. Specifically, there is a need for SOF reserve support in FID operations. Eighty percent of the active duty SOF are conducting missions in Iraq and

Afghanistan, leaving only 20 percent of the active duty force to conduct necessary FID missions in all other areas of the world.

Although there are challenges in utilizing the reserves, there are numerous opportunities as well. The biggest challenge when using reserves forces are their lack of time. This time limitation affects all aspects of their ability to train and deploy. By focusing on the FID mission, it makes the most of this limitation, and is an effective use of the SOF reserve force. The benefits of using reserve forces are tremendous. They are less expensive than their active duty counterparts, they bring civilian skills that are not organic to active duty units, they provide an avenue to capture those experienced special operation forces leaving active duty, and they bring a level continuity that is not possible in active duty units.

By reprioritizing reserve SEAL platoons, increasing SOF reserve size, and creating reserve FID capabilities within AFSOC and MARSOC, USSOCOM will be able to utilize all of its available assets. This effective use of force will help USSOCOM achieve balance in its direct and indirect requirements and extend America's global reach to deter and defeat terrorists around the world.

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