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ARSOF: A Fix for Conventional Force Readiness in Today's International Peace Operations Environment

By

Kurt L. Sonntag
Major, US Army

A paper submitted to the faculty of the Naval War College in partial satisfaction of the requirements of the Department of Joint Military Operations.

The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the Naval War College or the Departments of the Navy or the Army.

Signature:

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Robert Townsend
COL, US Army

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15. Abstract:

The United States Army has seen a dramatic increase in deployments over the last ten years. As result, the ability to maintain a readiness level capable of addressing the two major theater of war strategy has steadily eroded. Now, as the international community commits its military forces to assist in establishing and maintaining peace in the world's trouble spots, the Army must be given the opportunity to address its readiness issues. Because the warfighting Commander in Chiefs must maintain a peacetime engagement strategy in their Areas of Responsibility they need to utilize a force with a capability to achieve the desired results in peace operations.

The force best suited to fulfill the role in a combined peacekeeping environment is Army Special Operations. Particularly well suited to meet these requirements are the Special Forces, Psychological Operations, and Civil Affairs units that maintain the necessary skill-sets to be successful in this type of environment.

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ARSOF: A Fix for Conventional Readiness in Today's International Peace Operations Environment

"The US military is suffering readiness, modernization and budget shortfalls, which are seriously degrading its ability to meet the national military strategy - to be prepared to fight and win two major theater wars nearly simultaneously." (Senator James M. Inhofe)

The ability to respond to a two major theater of war scenario has steadily eroded over the past ten years. With a renewed interest by the international community to resource, train and equip its forces to conduct peace operations, the United States is now in a position to reconstitute its forces and train to meet the two Major Theater War (MTW) strategy. Because conventional military readiness is declining the Joint Force Commanders (JFC) must look to other force packages for Peacekeeping Operations in order to take advantage of the fact that the United States lacks, at least in the near term, a peer competitor.* Army Special Operations Forces (ARSOF) provides the JFC with the force that is best suited for operating in a multi-national peace operations environment. ARSOF offers Unified Commanders mature, language capable and culturally sensitive units that are trained to work independently, within a coalition framework, or in support of other operations.

The United States is committed to preserving a stable global environment that

* Peacekeeping operations are military operations undertaken with the consent of all major parties in a dispute, designed to monitor and facilitate implementation of an agreement and support diplomatic efforts to reach a long-term political settlement. This is not to be confused with Peace Enforcement, which is the application of military force, or the threat of its us, normally pursuant to international authorization, to compel compliance with UN resolutions or sanctions designed to maintain or restore peace and order. (U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Doctrine for Military Operations Other Than War, Joint Publication 3-07*, p. III-12, 13.)

strengthens democracy and allows for free market trading. To accomplish these tasks the United States uses all of its collective power and agencies to shape world affairs. The military in particular has become a principle instrument in peacetime engagement and has deployed forces increasingly over the last ten years to meet the changing global environment. Recently two Army divisions, the 10th Mountain and the 1st Infantry, reported a readiness rating of C-4, the lowest possible rating. According to Army Chief of Staff General Eric Shinseki the low readiness ratings reported by the divisions are "due to their commitments to ongoing peacekeeping operations in Bosnia and Kosovo."[1] General Shinseki also stated that the ability for the Army to meet its responsibility towards the two MTW Strategy is at high risk.

The Pentagon has initiated four measures to alleviate some of the readiness problems. First, is the plan to redeploy units away from peacekeeping commitments; second, other units will be utilized for peacekeeping to protect units assigned against the MTW; third, Army National Guard units will be used more frequently in peacekeeping deployments; and fourth, readiness reporting procedures will be modified.[2] These modification hopefully will allow units to train to their war fighting tasks, but the United States must still remain committed to Peace Operations. The changes to how the United States commits assets towards Peacekeeping Operations will not be lost on the rest of the world, especially given the increasing requirements for these types of operations.

"If the United States were to withdraw from international commitments, forsake its leadership responsibilities, or relinquish military superiority, the world would become more dangerous and the threats to US interests would increase."[3] Promoting peace and stability by creating favorable conditions globally allows for quick resolution of

international problems through diplomatic measures.[4] The military organization most capable of bridging the gap between peacetime and wartime operations in a multinational environment is Army Special Operations Forces (ARSOF). ARSOF meets the requirements set by the National Security Strategy (NSS) when the nation is faced with these type of small scale operations and is a perfect fit for the National Military Strategy (NMS) of Shape, Respond, and Prepare Now. "[Peacekeeping] operations will put a premium on the ability of the U.S. military to work closely and effectively with other U.S. Government agencies, non-governmental organizations, regional and international security organizations and coalition partners."[5]

ARSOFs established forward presence, regional orientation, ability to form stable relationships with both host nation military and civilian authorities, interoperability and cultural awareness are the critical competencies necessary to operate in coalition environments.[6] ARSOF involvement allows the Army time to reorganize train and equip the Army After Next by offering the National Command Authority (NCA) an economy of force measure. It allows the Army time to adequately deal with its readiness problems and reduce the MTW risk, as the international community becomes more involved with regional security issues.

Under the guidance of the United Nations (UN), international participation in Peacekeeping Operations is increasing. No longer are regional powers going to wait for or possibly even want overt United States participation. Resurgent nationalism based on race; ethnicity and religion have seeded the world with an escalation in "fault line wars." Fault line wars develop when families, clans, tribes or religions seek to broaden their identity and appeal to others like them through force and coercion.[7] Recent events such as

Rwanda, Kosovo, and East Timor have forced international leaders to determine how to regionally address the barrage of humanitarian assistance, Peacekeeping Operations, and other collective security issues that are a direct result of the Soviet Union's disintegration and the end of the Cold War. If the United Nations and regional powers are going to take the lead in PKO, how will the United States remain engaged in these types of operations, and what will be the net benefit for the United States?

Strategic economy of force is the principle issue at stake in Peace Operations. Basically it is the balancing act of supporting operations other than war with forces that are suppose to prepare to fight and win actual wars. ARSOF is the most effective force available in conducting economy of force operations in a peace environment because they generate a strategic advantage that is disproportionate to the manpower resources ARSOF represents. All of SOF represents less than three percent of the military and are routinely deployed around the world in support of NCA peacetime engagement goals that help prevent future conflict and thereby conserving national resources. ARSOF regularly trains host-nation forces to provide for their own security, assists the United Nations in training its Peacekeeping Forces, strengthens government infrastructures, prevents local problems from developing into international security issues, and overall helps provide regional security.[8]

At the conclusion of the war in Kosovo the European Union made the decision to "establish its own rapid reaction military force."[9] This politically and economically supported military force would have the benefit of operating autonomously from the United States if America should chose not to become involved in another Kosovo-type operation. The NATO Secretary General George Robertson of Britain noting the immense

gap between American and European military capability, stated "we Europeans have finally realized that we need to do more in our self interest and to strengthen and reinvigorate the alliance."[10] By doing so, the Europeans hope to leverage American support for their operations without a significant American presence.

The continent of Africa is also emerging from under the umbrella of bipolar conflict that enveloped the continent during the cold war. As African countries try to correct the arbitrary borders forced upon them by former colonial powers there will be a continued escalation of "fault line wars" as opposing tribes within these "national borders"' fight for dominance.[11] Recognizing the inability of individual governments to stem the flow of blood and human tragedy, and of the apparent lack of concern by western powers to become involved, the African Crisis Responsive Initiative (ACRI) was introduced to African leaders. Various military units throughout the continent are undergoing training, in accordance with United Nations standards, to enhance Africa's capability to conduct peacekeeping or humanitarian operations.[12]

The recent events in East Timor, another example of a "fault line war," demonstrated the requirement for regional forces to handle the human rights and humanitarian assistance issues locally, rather than rely on the United States. The Australian Defence Force (ADF), provided the operational backbone to the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) but required logistical assistance and Coalition Support Teams (CST) from the United States to move ASEAN forces to East Timor and then sustain that force. Overall sixteen nations participated in the operation and when the UN Transitional Administration in East Timor (UNTAET) assumes responsibility in mid to late January 2000, at least 2,000 troops from the ASEAN alliance will participate.[13]

The purpose of peacetime engagement is to shape the international environment utilizing non-hostile activities. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, the former Secretary-General of the United Nations, defined peace operations as "actions to identify and support structures which will tend to strengthen and solidify peace in order to avoid a relapse into conflict."[14] Over the course of the past decade United States involvement has steadily increased in support of peace operations. Increasingly the Army has focused its training on the skill sets necessary to be successful in this type of environment. Former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Colin Powell once declared that "fighting and winning the nation's wars remains the number one job of the military," and not becoming confused as the global policeman.[15]

Unfortunately the majority of the United States military not train on the skill sets necessary to perform missions in a multidimensional and multinational peacekeeping environment. Because of this, units must undergo months of Mission Readiness training prior to conducting Peace Operations. No longer is peacekeeping a matter of ensuring compliance to an established agreement between two factions but has become a complex multi-dimensional operation. Increasingly the demands of land mine removal, disarming warring parties, humanitarian assistance, and basic nation building have required military organizations to re-look how their soldiers should be trained in non-traditional skills. Fortunately the Unites States possesses an organization well trained in the execution of these skills, Army Special Operations. The erosion of collective combat skills and readiness has finally taken its toll as demonstrated by the C-4 rating of two Army divisions representing roughly twenty percent of the Army active duty "shooters." Now, more than ever, the Army must rely on ARSOF to perform peace operations in conjunction with

other nations in order for the conventional army to be ready to fight and win two major theater wars.

So how should the Unified Commander engage his conventional ground forces and Army Special Operations? The Conventional forces should only become engaged when the mission is clearly a Peace Enforcement issue. The use of conventional units promises the use of force against hostile forces. Forcefully separating two or more belligerent forces is more closely aligned with the Mission Essential Task Lists (METL) that brigade and battalion-sized units should be training for on a daily basis. The increased possibility of combat facilitates maintaining a warrior-like attitude among soldiers and increases the potential for units to conduct maneuver warfare. These two entities require units to concentrate training time and opportunities on combat skills, both individual and collective, in order to maintain a high degree of combat readiness. Even more importantly, the use of US combat forces in a Peace Enforcement operation sends a clear political signal to all belligerents to either cease all hostilities or face the physical punishment that the US has repeatedly demonstrated to other nations in the past.

Once the belligerent parties agree to abide by valid peace accords, or if the operation involved was clearly a Peacekeeping operation to begin with, the European Corps, the ACRI or the ASEAN forces should commit its forces, dependant upon which region is involved, in conjunction with the United Nations. This places the burden of responsibility for maintaining the peace and resolving the issue back into the hands of the regional powers and the United Nations. It also allows the US a chance to pull its conventional forces out of the situation much sooner than before instead of maintaining a force presence indefinitely, such as is happening in Bosnia and Kosovo. The rapid return

of these forces back to their home stations not only preserves them for future operations but also lessens the political impact at home. The JFC can interface the handoff between forces, Allied and US, through the use of ARSOF.

The JFC can utilize ARSOF to assist the conventional forces if employed in Peace Enforcement Operations; Allied units preparing to take over Peacekeeping Operations; and during the conduct of such operations. Both the NSS and the NMS reflect a renewed interest in this type of warfare.[16] The NMS recognizes that the United States will act with others whenever it can; be part of an alliance or partnership with shared interests; and must maintain an overseas presence to enhance effective coalition operations by improving the ability to operate with other nations.[17] Coalition Support Teams (CST), which are small two to three man Special Forces elements can be attached to battalion size elements from other nations.

The CSTs can improve interaction amongst these forces and provide the JFC with an accurate evaluation of the capabilities, location and activities of coalition forces, thereby improving JFC command and control. The CST can provide the training in tactics, techniques, and procedures (TTPs); provide communications to integrate the coalition forces into the theater C4I infrastructure; and establishes liaison to facilitate logistical support. As the US conventional forces begin to stand down from the Peace Enforcement operation the CSTs would then provide the necessary interface to conduct a successful relief in place operation with in-coming Allied forces preparing to conduct Peacekeeping operations.

A recent example of how to effectively use CSTs is the Bosnia-Herzegovina operation. Liaison Coordination Elements (LCEs), a variant of the CST, were assigned to

conventional army battalion and brigade elements. They provided communications between division headquarters, through a Special Operations Command and Control Element (SOCCE), and non-NATO battalions. LCEs deconflicted unit movements and patrols amongst all of the forces and again insured instructions were complied with. Because the LCEs possessed the necessary language skills and understood the culture, they would often conduct patrols with their host units and assist in assessing local attitudes in the population and former war fighting factions, and spread information about the IFOR mission. Once the battalions or brigades had learned how to operate within their sectors, understood the peculiarities of regional leadership, language, and culture the LCEs redeployed to accomplish other missions within theater.[18] By shifting LCEs designated to support US conventional units to the additional European units expected to join the Bosnia Peacekeeping Operation the US will be able to lower its commitment by reducing its conventional unit presence. The Allies will still maintain a professional and competent US presence consisting of Special Forces Teams augmented by Civil Affairs (CA) and Psychological (PSYOP) Operations teams. This economy of force measure should probably been taken under consideration several years ago in order to help prevent readiness shortfalls.

The combination of SF teams, PSYOP, and CA teams is highly effective in providing information on how local civilians can receive various types of aid (medical, food, clothing, etc.) and can help support and develop local civil authorities goals. Peace Operations involve direct contact with foreign national civilians and military personnel. Military operations in this type of environment requires extensive coordination with governmental, non-governmental (NGO), private volunteer organizations (PVO), and

multinational organizations.[19] ARSOF provides the JFC and Allied forces the required interface with these organizations through Civil Military Operations Centers (CMOC).

CA provides a conduit, through the CMOC, for assisting NGOs and PVOs in theater to help build and strengthen infrastructure and can often accomplish this task unilaterally.[20] Constant deployments to their respective regions allow them to develop a heightened awareness of conditions in the region. ARSOF regularly makes and maintains valuable, long-lasting contacts with host nation military and civilian leaders and the population in general. The obtainment of this expertise is the result of a long-term commitment towards training in the language and culture, and routine in-country experience.

This regional orientation provides the JFC or embassy country team involved with peace operations a valuable asset. Regional familiarity allows ARSOF to deal directly with local populations and leaders and gives Psychological operations forces the capability to develop, produce, and distribute a wide variety of products that can reinforce or change the attitudes and behaviors of the local civilian and military leaders and the population. This combination of skills makes ARSOF unique amongst the rest of the military and perfect for supporting multinational peacekeeping operations.

In the last couple of years ARSOF has trained soldiers from the Caribbean and Central and South American countries on the United Nations Peacekeeping training tasks. This is a seven-module lesson plan consisting of 35 separate periods of instruction (POI) including field training exercises that are evaluated.[21] Once these units completed in-country training, they were flown to the US and integrated into Peace Operations training scenarios at the Joint Readiness Training Center (JRTC) located at Fort Polk, Louisiana.

This additional training provided valuable experience to the Peacekeeping force in a realistic environment. As other nations become more involved in Peace Operations the JFCs should make a commitment to insure these nations receive the proper training to insure their success. By increasing the ability of our Allies to receive the training benefits that facilities like JRTC can provide, our Allies will be better prepared to fulfill the roles required by the United Nations; allowing the United States to disengage from the plethora of peace operations.

Finally, only when the belligerents involved have been properly demobilized and the countryside deemed safe for civilians, will the country involved be in a position to maximize the benefits of nation building. ARSOF can establish and operate "disarmament and demobilization camps: to include camp administration and management; perimeter security; health care and sanitation; and logistical planning."[22] ARSOF has conducted, and is conducting, training in demining operations throughout the world to include nations such as Pakistan, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Bosnia, Cambodia, and Laos. Training includes conducting assessments, mine awareness training to sensitize local populations to the mine problem, and train the trainer courses that provides instruction on detection, clearance and destruction of mines.[23] ARSOF was instrumental in the demobilization of guerrilla forces in El Salvador and arms reduction in Ethiopia, Eritrea, Somalia and Bosnia.[24] Coalition Support coupled with the extensive training capabilities of ARSOF offers JFCs an economy of force measure that keeps the United States regionally engaged and provides an effective integration into the changing world peacekeeping dynamic.

Some would argue that the method, brigade and battalion-sized units, in which the United States currently engages in Peace Operations is working just fine and therefore that

method should be used in the future. That method was fine when other nations failed to commit necessary troop strength and when the US was capable of conducting short-duration operations without eroding readiness. Unfortunately when the active Army consists of roughly 480,000 soldiers and is committed more and more towards non-war fighting missions readiness begins to be affected. Senator James M. Inhofe, Chairman of the Armed Services Subcommittee on readiness and Management Support reported that "overseas contingency operations . . . and our unending build-up/build-down containment of Iraq, are having a much more significant impact on military readiness than is generally realized."[25]

Major General David L. Grange, the 1st Infantry Division Commander, reported that the increased taskings has taken precious training time away from his unit's ability to train as a combined arms team. Over the last three-year period the 1st Infantry Division had been unable to maintain or train a full brigade combat team (BCT).[26] This is a significant shortfall when considering that the BCT is the predominant maneuver package the Army employs in combat. Overall, amongst the ten active-duty divisions there are only 30 brigade-sized elements. Two brigades are committed to Korea, four in Europe, one protecting the Alaskan pipeline, and two are dedicated to Force XXI experimentation. The army also maintains certain units on an alert status for contingency operations. This reduces the available brigade population by a further one heavy brigade, one airborne, one air assault and one light infantry brigades. The constant rotation between division readiness brigade to overseas deployment is having a great effect on division readiness throughout the army.

"With the higher operational tempo," Major General Kevin Byres, Commander of the 1st Cavalry Division, told Jane's Defence Weekly, that "when you have one brigade committed [on Peacekeeping Operations], you have one preparing and one recovering on enduring operations."[27] MG Byrnes also states that combat forces are also over stretched when trying to accomplish the training exercises and other commitments in addition to the increasing amount of repeated deployments to different theaters.[28] Both MG Grange and MG Byrnes agree that small unit training at the squad, platoon, and company levels have received the benefit of increased small unit leadership, team building and situational awareness.[29] These smaller units were still able to maintain individual, crew and platoon qualifications but the problem of conducting collective company, battalion and brigade-level training exercises still remains. While in Macedonia the Task Force Able Sentry unit, a two-company battalion, was only able to conduct one battalion-level command post exercise.[30]

The administration is boasting how the US military in general is "doing more with less" but is not acknowledging the toll this has taken on the force. Readiness issues are "seriously degrading the [Army's] ability to meet the national military strategy - to be prepared to fight and win two major theater wars nearly simultaneously."[31] By reducing the number of deployments and by substituting other regional peacekeeping forces supported by or in conjunction with ARSOF, conventional brigade-sized units will be able to train for war and not peace. The additional training time will support Army Chief of Staff General Eric Shinseki's vision "to adjust the condition of the Army to better meet the requirements of the next century."[32] The US Army plans to form four to five medium-weight brigades over the next few years on a common platform that can be configured into

a variety of needs to include: infantry carrier, assault gun, reconnaissance, C4I, engineer, etc.[33] General Shinseki plans on this brigade to possess the ability to deploy any where in the world within 96 hours.[34] To accomplish this goal, two brigades at Fort Lewis, Washington will serve as the prototypes for this new brigade. This will further reduce the available number of brigades. ARSOF can help the Army's transition by allowing the Army sufficient time to train on new equipment, determine new tactics, techniques and procedures and still be capable of responding with a viable force as required by national leadership.

If theater commanders choose to utilize ARSOF to fulfil the requirements necessary to actively engage in peacekeeping operations, are there sufficient forces available, or will ARSOF readiness decline just as conventional readiness fell? While sufficient Special Forces units are available, the PSYOP and CA community is being overtaxed. Readiness is unlikely to decline because the majority of the tasks ARSOF becomes involved in are compatible to their METL. The utilization of ARSOF, like the conventional forces, has steadily increased over the past several years. In fiscal year 1994 ARSOF conducted 1142 missions using 31076 personnel. By fiscal year 1998 the number of missions had increased to 2500, and personnel deployments to 35,500.[35] Fortunately the Special Forces Groups, five active and two National Guard, are regionally aligned to specific theaters. Therefore, the Special Forces Groups can regulate and schedule deployments into the theaters based on JCS scheduled exercises or the Unified Commanders needs. 5th Special Forces Group, in particular, has maintained, on a 90 day rotational basis, at least one Special Forces Company in Kuwait since the end of the Gulf War. This rotation has not affected readiness because the Special Forces Operational

Detachments Alpha (ODA) can focus on the individual and collective skills training it requires, while the Special Forces Company Headquarters can conduct its collective training necessary for running an Advanced Operational Base. Each theater employs its allocated Special Forces in much the same way.

The potential problem in utilizing ARSOF is the lack of active duty Psychological and Civil Affairs teams. Currently only the 4th Psychological Operations Group and the 96th Civil Affairs Battalion constitute the active component, while 97 percent of their forces remain in the reserve component. In the mid-1980s the US still maintained a Soviet Union containment policy and thus regulated many of its non-combat arms units to the Reserve. In the 1980s this was appropriate, but by the 1990s and certainly in the years to come, units such as PSYOPs and CA have come to the forefront in importance. The 96th CA Bn consists of only 212 officers and enlisted personnel and are not regionally oriented but must instead react to world-wide requirements. Because peacetime operations have increased, this battalion is constantly employed around the world. Serious consideration in activating a few of the 24 Reserve CA battalions to better support peacekeeping operations should be made by the Department of the Army. The 4th Psychological Operations Group is slightly better postured than the 96th CA Bn to support its commitments. Consisting of five battalions, three active and two reserve, the 4th PSYOP Group is not as dependant on its reserve infrastructure as the 96th CA Bn.[36] The importance of PSYOPs and CA in conducting successful peacekeeping operations can not be overlooked, and in order to maintain that success consideration must be undertaken to insure the active components have the necessary force structure to continue its mission.

The United States military, the Army in particular, is at a crucial decision point in how it will continue to conduct peace operations. In today's international environment "the U.S. military is expected, if need be, to do battle with dangerous rogue states in the far corners of the world."[37] If the international community is unable to stabilize a region, CSTs will become a valuable asset to the JFC when the United States must get involved with an offensive force. ARSOFs extensive regional experience, maturity, language capabilities and cultural awareness allow them to integrate successfully with host nation personnel and also other nations involved in the operation. The CSTs will be able to provide constant intelligence updates, vital information concerning friendly and civilian forces. ARSOF will act as a conduit to deconflict doctrinal differences amongst other participating forces, thereby achieving synchronization and unity of effort on the battlefield. The proactive use of Psychological operations will help create the necessary "favorable attitudes and behavior on the part of the parties in conflict and uncommitted elements of the population."[38] Civil Affairs will continue to support diplomatic efforts through aggressive Civil Military Operations and provide the necessary interface with the growing number of Non-Governmental and Private Volunteer Organizations that are becoming involved in regional security. Through Army Special Operations the United States military can still Shape the international environment, be positioned to Respond to the full spectrum of crises, and Prepare Now for an uncertain future in pursuit of a stable global environment with open access to the world's economy.[39]

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[17] Ibid., p. 153.

[18] "United States Special Operations Command 10th Year Anniversary History," p. 53-54.

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[20] USSOCOM Pub 1, *Special Operations in Peace and War*, p. 4-15.

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[23] Ibid., 13.

[24] "United States Special Operations Command History," p. 44-56.

[25] James M. Inhofe, "Challenges of Military Readiness," in *Military Review*, Mar/Apr 1999, p.16.

[26] David L. Grange, "Maintaining Readiness," in *Military Review*, Mar/Apr 1999, 61.

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[32] Neil Baumgardner, "Shinseki lays out vision for 'major transformation' of the army," in *Defense Daily*, October 13, 1999, p. 1.

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[36] John M. Collins, "Special Operations Forces: An Assessment 1986-1993," p. 39-40.

[37] David C. Gompert, et. al., *Mind the Gap: Promoting a Transatlantic Revolution in Military Affairs*, p.4.

[38] USSOCOM Pub 1, *Special Operations in Peace and War*, p. 4-12.

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