

# **SOF Contributions to Strengthening Weak or Failing States**

**A Monograph  
by  
Major Robert L. Wilson  
U.S. Army**



**School of Advanced Military Studies  
United States Army Command and General Staff College  
Fort Leavenworth, Kansas**

**AY 04-05**

# REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE

Form Approved  
OMB No. 074-0188

Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing this collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden to Washington Headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports, 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington, VA 22202-4302, and to the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reduction Project (0704-0188), Washington, DC 20503

<b>1. AGENCY USE ONLY (Leave blank)</b>		<b>2. REPORT DATE</b> 052605	<b>3. REPORT TYPE AND DATES COVERED</b> Monograph	
<b>4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE</b> SOF Contributions to Strengthening Weak or Failing States			<b>5. FUNDING NUMBERS</b>	
<b>6. AUTHOR(S)</b> Major Robert Wilson				
<b>7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)</b> US Army Command and General Staff College School of Advanced Military Studies 250 Gibbon Ave. Fort Leavenworth, KS 66027			<b>8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER</b>	
<b>9. SPONSORING / MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)</b> U.S. Army Command and General Staff College Fort Leavenworth, KS 66027			<b>10. SPONSORING / MONITORING AGENCY REPORT NUMBER</b>	
<b>11. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES</b>				
<b>12a. DISTRIBUTION / AVAILABILITY STATEMENT</b> Approved for public release; distribution is unlimited.			<b>12b. DISTRIBUTION CODE</b> A	
<b>13. ABSTRACT (Maximum 200 Words)</b> This monograph addresses the use of Special operations forces (SOF) to strengthen and stabilize weak or failing states. The paper's central research thesis is that proper SOF employment in stability operations can minimize or even preclude the requirement of large-scale conventional force interventions. The monograph uses criteria derived from current doctrine and strategic guidance to examine stability operations in Colombia and Afghanistan. U.S. military efforts in both of those countries rely heavily upon special operations forces to achieve strategic and operational effects. Based on examination of these two operations, the monograph makes recommendations to further enhance the United States' capabilities to effectively conduct stability operations in the immediate future. The recommendations in this study reinforce SOF's capacity to produce positive outcomes in stability operations. Strengthening weak or failing states enhances the security of the United States and supports the achievement of many U.S. foreign policy objectives as well. Special operations forces provide a unique tool for achieving decisive effects in these types of environments. Further refinements of SOF organizations, and a thorough understanding of SOF employment, will ensure the United States is prepared for the problems of tomorrow and beyond.				
<b>14. SUBJECT TERMS</b> Special Operations Forces			<b>15. NUMBER OF PAGES</b> 53	
			<b>16. PRICE CODE</b>	
<b>17. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF REPORT</b> U	<b>18. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF THIS PAGE</b> U	<b>19. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF ABSTRACT</b> U	<b>20. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT</b> none	

**SCHOOL OF ADVANCED MILITARY STUDIES**  
**MONOGRAPH APPROVAL**  
**Major Robert L. Wilson**

Title of Monograph: SOF Contributions to Strengthening Weak or Failing States

Approved by:

\_\_\_\_\_  
William J. Reeder, Ph.D.

Monograph Director

\_\_\_\_\_  
Kevin C.M. Benson, COL, AR

Director,  
School of Advanced  
Military Studies

\_\_\_\_\_  
Robert K. Baumann, Ph.D.

Director,  
Graduate Degree  
Programs

## Abstract

SOF Contributions to Strengthening Weak or Failing States by MAJOR Robert L. Wilson, U.S. Army, 53 pages.

Deteriorating nation states are a significant threat to U.S. and Western interests. Ineffective nation states frequently generate economic, social and humanitarian crises for their ungoverned populations, imperil the security of neighboring countries, and provide havens for terrorists and trans-global criminal organizations. These internal problems spill over borders and inflame regions, and, as demonstrated by the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, can directly threaten lives and property in the United States. The U.S. must therefore enhance current capabilities and develop new tools to mitigate the threats generated by weak and failing states.

This monograph addresses the use of Special operations forces (SOF) to strengthen and stabilize weak or failing states. The paper's central research thesis is that proper SOF employment in stability operations can minimize or even preclude the requirement of large-scale conventional force interventions. The monograph uses criteria derived from current doctrine and strategic guidance to examine stability operations in Colombia and Afghanistan. U.S. military efforts in both of those countries rely heavily upon special operations forces to achieve strategic and operational effects. Based on examination of these two operations, the monograph makes recommendations to further enhance the United States' capabilities to effectively conduct stability operations in the immediate future.

The monograph concluded the military must make changes to the doctrine, organization and employment methods of special operations forces to achieve significant positive results in stability operations. Specifically, the U.S. must employ SOF to achieve strategic and operational effects across the range of military operations. The monograph also recommends that the current rank structure within special operations forces be adjusted so it is commensurate with the effects SOF achieves in the battle space. The study further recommends adjusting the personnel structure of units to reflect the growing importance of inter-agency operations in the contemporary environment. Finally, the monograph recommends incorporating all of these new ideas about doctrine, organization and employment into a special operations joint operating concept.

The recommendations in this study reinforce SOF's capacity to produce positive outcomes in stability operations. Strengthening weak or failing states enhances the security of the United States and supports the achievement of many U.S. foreign policy objectives as well. Special operations forces provide a unique tool for achieving decisive effects in these types of environments. Further refinements of SOF organizations, and a thorough understanding of SOF employment, will ensure the United States is prepared for the problems of tomorrow and beyond.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION.....	2
COMPARISON METHODOLOGY.....	8
Doctrinal Criteria.....	9
Strategic Guidance Criteria.....	16
Summary of Comparison Methodology.....	18
SOF CASE STUDIES.....	21
Colombia.....	21
Evaluation of Colombia Mission.....	24
Traditional Islamic State of Afghanistan.....	27
Evaluation of SOF in Afghanistan.....	30
Case Study Conclusions.....	33
RECOMMENDATIONS.....	34
Develop a SOF Joint Operating Concept.....	34
Employ SOF towards Strategic and Operational Objectives.....	37
Provide Sufficient C2 capability for SOF Elements.....	39
Enhance SOF Cultural Capabilities and Regional Expertise.....	43
Recommendations Summary.....	45
CONCLUSION.....	47
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	51
Secondary Sources.....	51
Primary Sources.....	52

## INTRODUCTION

Deteriorating nation states are a significant threat to U.S. and Western interests.<sup>1</sup> Numerous current events attest to the dangers emanating from these areas. Al Qaeda, a transnational terrorist organization, planned, resourced, and executed a horrific attack on American soil from the refuge of Afghanistan. Cocaine and other illicit drugs from lawless areas of Colombia blight nearly every large American city, and the narcotic trade helps finance further acts of terror as well. Failed states provide refuge for markets in drugs, flesh, and arms, even materials that can be harnessed into weapons of mass destruction. It is therefore imperative that the United States refines every tool within its arsenal to deal effectively with this threat.

The threat emanates from governments unwilling or unable to control territory and oversee their populations. Such governments afflict nearly every corner of the world. The phenomenon of globalization further exacerbates the process of deterioration of some states. Information technologies advance rapidly, and heighten the awareness of relative deprivation and differences in culture.<sup>2</sup> Citizens in nations wracked by poverty and lacking hope of any reasonable future often become the foot soldiers of terrorist organizations, criminal enterprises, or anarchy itself.

Weak, failing states are ripe for insurgency, and often become net exporters of terror, drugs, and weapons. These internal problems spill over borders and inflame regions, and, as demonstrated by the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, can directly threaten lives and

---

<sup>1</sup> *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America*, Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, September 2002, page v.

<sup>2</sup> Thomas L. Friedman, *The Lexus and the Olive Tree*, Anchor Books, New York NY, 2000, pp 327-347.

property in the United States. The U.S. must therefore enhance current capabilities and develop new tools to mitigate the threats generated by weak and failing states.

This monograph addresses the use of special operations forces (SOF) to strengthen and stabilize weak or failing states. SOF have been used frequently in stability operations over the last several decades, in places like Haiti, the Balkans, Latin America, the Philippines, et al. Based on different methods of employment, the stability operations in these places achieved different results. This monograph argues that proper SOF employment in Stability Operations can minimize or even preclude the requirement of large-scale conventional force interventions. It then suggests changes to the doctrine, organization, and employment of SOF forces to enhance the United States' ability to help strengthen and stabilize weak or failing states.

Weak and failing nation-states possess many common traits. Many developing countries are incapable of governing all of the territory within their sovereign borders. Colombia, a nation that at one point actually ceded a portion of its territory to insurgents, is a categorical example of these types of countries. Other nations, beset by a combination of economic problems and religious or ethnic strife, continue to spiral downward into chaos. Haiti, devoid of any natural resources or viable national institutions, exemplifies this second class of failing nations.

States like Iraq and Afghanistan, whose regimes have been overthrown or deposed by Western nations and territory occupied by foreign security forces, form another category. These states often lack the sociopolitical infrastructure required for true sovereignty. Finally, there are states that are entirely lawless, devoid of any coherent governing structure whatsoever. Somalia in the early 1990s, beset by warlords, famine and anarchy, is a classic example of the completely defunct nation-state. Many countries in the developing world fit somewhere into these categories; those third world countries that do not are either coping with the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century world or are on the precipice of becoming a weak and failing state.

This monograph's focus is on weak or failing nations that still possess a functioning government. States that have collapsed entirely or regions lacking any kind of governmental structure present conditions mandating considerable troop presence, in order to reestablish security and the rule of law, organize government and national institutions, et al. The central premise of the argument for proper use of SOF is that it can prevent states from falling into chaos, and can strengthen friendly regional actors to isolate belligerent states, thus limiting or precluding altogether the deployment of a large conventional force.

The security threats emanating from the developing world are not expected to abate in the next fifteen to twenty years, and the U.S. will likely be involved in stability operations to protect its interests.<sup>3</sup> The ability of many countries to provide basic security to their populations, create a secure environment, and compete in a global economy are proving to be daunting tasks, ones that grow further out of reach as time passes on. Crime, terrorism and anarchy fill the vacuum left by unresponsive, ineffective governance. The threats of transnational terrorists, criminal enterprises, illicit arms, and the like will inevitably raise the likelihood of American military intervention, especially when other elements of national power have little to no situational impact.

US forces are currently deployed in numerous stability operations. They are operating in disparate regions, in nearly every theater of operation and across the spectrum of conflict. The current operational tempo requires a substantial call up of reserve and national guard forces, as well as policies such as "stop loss" to maintain the force level required to conduct these operations. Operations in Iraq and Afghanistan alone have required budget supplementals of over one hundred fifty billion dollars thus far.<sup>4</sup> Also, extended deployments, high costs of operations, and wartime casualties tend to erode the American public's support of military endeavors.

---

<sup>3</sup> *Stability Operations Joint Operating Concept*, Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, September 2004 (Final Draft), page 4.

Therefore, identifying ways and means to conduct stability operations more efficiently and effectively can help to mitigate the military, economic and political price the U.S. pays to strengthen weak or failing states.

The current *Stability Operations Joint Operating Concept* identifies four basic scenarios, or cases, for employing military forces to conduct stability operations: case 1, at the request of a friendly state to assist it in its fight against subversion and lawlessness; case 2, following Major Combat Operations (MCO) to reestablish the rule of law; case 3, intervening in a region or state that has collapsed into lawless anarchy; and case 4, unilateral or combined operations against non-state, transnational threats.<sup>5</sup> Iraq and Afghanistan represent the case 2 scenario, as do several of the decade-long stability operations within the Balkan states. Many of these operations have proven to be overly large, costly, long-term commitments with a mixed record of effectiveness.

U.S. interests are better served by strengthening weak states and threatened regions as early as possible. Empowering allied states to defeat internal subversion and deter or repel foreign aggression can preclude the requirement to deploy U.S. large troop formations. Strategic-minded theater security cooperation plans can empower U.S.-aligned developing nations to isolate or marginalize the threat from a belligerent regional actor as well, once again minimizing the need to project U.S. military power to that particular place. Special operations forces (SOF) are the military element best suited to this type of environment. Proper focus, resourcing and employment of SOF can significantly enhance the capabilities of the United States to strengthen weak or failing states, stabilize vital regions in order to protect strategic national interests, and preclude or minimize the requirement for general purpose forces in costly stability operations.

---

<sup>4</sup> Hanna K, Strange, "Report: The 'Real' Costs of the Iraq War", *Washington Times*, July 4, 2004; available from <http://washingtontimes.com/upi-breaking/20040701-024236-4063r.htm>; Internet.

<sup>5</sup> *Stability Operations Joint Operating Concept*, pp 1-2.

Special operations forces provide the President, Secretary of Defense, and regional combatant commanders a multifaceted tool that can achieve decisive results across the spectrum of conflict. SOF can operate unilaterally, as part of large joint/combined task forces, and in conjunction with the interagency process. These specialized forces conduct several key operations particularly suited to stabilizing weak and failing states. Operations like foreign internal defense (FID), which are undertaken on behalf of a host nation's effort to combat insurgency and lawlessness, remain the core competencies of many SOF units.<sup>6</sup> A high level of competence in conducting FID, along with the other SOF operational capabilities, makes the force an extremely capable asset in stability operations.

Two decades of intense training and varied missions have enabled United States Special Operations Command (USSOCOM) to develop a highly capable force that has played a significant role in most of the recent U.S. military operations.<sup>7</sup> Recent funding increases and a heightened profile, as lead agent in the Global War on Terror, ensure that its importance will continue to grow over the next two decades. The role of SOF in the initial stages of Operation Enduring Freedom has also endeared the force to high-level planners and policy makers within the Department of Defense as well.<sup>8</sup>

Special operations forces, however, are a finite resource. Like their conventional brethren, special operators are currently deployed across the globe in missions that run the gamut

---

<sup>6</sup> Army Field Manual 3-05.20, *Special Forces Operations*, Headquarters, Department of the Army, Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 30 March 2001, pp 2-11, 2-12. The regional expertise and language and cultural training of Army Special Forces soldiers enable them to conduct training and advisory missions in developing nations very effectively.

<sup>7</sup> *United States Special Operations Forces Posture Statement, 2003-2004*, Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 2004, pp 9-10.

<sup>8</sup> Jennifer D., Kibbe "Rise of the Shadow Warriors", *Foreign Affairs*, March/April 2004, page 102. Kibbe argues that SOF forces represent the ideal of a leaner, more flexible military that Secretary Rumsfeld's transformation efforts are directed at creating; she also argues that SOF are not constrained by the same bureaucratic and legal restrictions that other agencies face when conducting covert or clandestine operations.

from counter-drug operations to combating terrorism.<sup>9</sup> The majority of the existing force is almost completely engaged in current operations, and many soldiers comprising SOF forces have been placed on “stop loss” indefinitely to maintain unit operational readiness.<sup>10</sup> Civil Affairs and Psychological Operations capabilities are largely comprised of reservists who have endured multiple activations to support operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. The two reserve Special Forces Groups have also been tapped multiple times to support the force’s high operational tempo.

The United States is thus faced with a direct threat to its national security interests in the form of weak or failing states. Conversely, it has a highly competent but finite means available to deal with the threat in the form of special operations forces. This monograph argues that SOF should primarily be employed in order to preclude or reduce the requirement of deploying conventional forces in large-scale stability operations. It discusses ways to employ SOF to achieve strategic and operational effects. Likewise, it recommends changes to SOF doctrine and organization to make its units more effective in the post Cold War environment.

Chapter two of this monograph examines and identifies criteria to evaluate SOF employment methods, using national level guidance, doctrine, and joint operating concepts. Once evaluation criteria are identified, chapter three compares SOF employment in two different operations using the criteria developed in Chapter two. Chapter four provides recommendations for future SOF doctrine, organization, and employment based on the evaluation of past SOF operations, and the monograph concludes in chapter five.

---

<sup>9</sup> *United States Special Operations Forces Posture Statement*, page 39.

<sup>10</sup> See Army Press Release, “Army Announces Selective Stop Loss”, Army Public Affairs Website; available from [http://www4.army.mil/ocpa/read.php?story\\_id\\_key=1412](http://www4.army.mil/ocpa/read.php?story_id_key=1412); Internet; December 4, 2001.

## COMPARISON METHODOLOGY

The US requires flexible capabilities so it can not only respond to large-scale conventional threats, but also respond to future crises in weak or failing states. Special operations forces (SOF) encompass a broad array of skill sets that can be useful in these environments, but they are a finite resource. Moreover, considerable debate exists within the Department of Defense and the services themselves over the employment of SOF.<sup>11</sup> An evaluation of past SOF deployments can inform our consideration of optimal future employment methods, and suggest doctrinal and organizational changes to make the force more effective. Before these employments can be meaningfully analyzed, however, a framework must be developed to ensure the study is appropriately structured to reach definitive conclusions. Suitable criteria are thus required to discriminate between the different methods of SOF employment.

The criteria selected in this chapter will allow the uniform evaluation of numerous types of SOF deployments. These criteria emanate from two separate resources: existing military doctrine and current joint operating concepts; and from national level policy documents. The study of guidance and doctrine will help identify and define criteria. Following the establishment of a criteria list, past SOF employments will be compared in order to determine the best means of using SOF in stability operations in chapter three.

Current doctrine provides a foundation for evaluating employment of forces in stability operations. Joint doctrine and joint operating concepts have been updated to reflect the exigencies of the current operational environment. The terms and concepts used in joint doctrine are

---

<sup>11</sup> Gregory L. Vistica, "Military Split on How to Use Special Forces in Terror War", *Washington Post*, January 5, 2004, page 1. Vistica details the philosophical debate often raged between two schools of thought in SOF: those who advocate a focus upon commando-units that can perform lightning raids and surgical strikes; and adherents to the belief that units that can use cultural and language proficiency to wage unconventional warfare are a more valuable commodity.

therefore highly relevant and more universally understood than most other possible sources of evaluation criteria. Joint doctrine supersedes individual service doctrines and exists to “make U.S. policy and strategy effective in the application of military power”.<sup>12</sup> This study will therefore use joint doctrine to develop the bulk of the evaluation criteria for comparing SOF employments.

Strategic guidance also provides descriptive criteria for evaluating the best ways SOF can be employed to help strengthen weak or failing states. National level guidance can be found in documents such as the *National Security Strategy*, *National Military Strategy*, and the *National Strategy for Combating Terror*, among others. Guidance from either the Secretary of Defense or President directly translates into numerous requirements for the military. Determining which employment options best meet requirements found in these documents is thus another effective evaluation criteria.

Finally, this monograph considers the views of subject matter experts that include individuals who have directly participated in stability operations in the role of planner or executive authority. The insight provided by senior officials who have crafted policies to strengthen failing states and executed the policies in stability operations can provide insight not necessarily captured in the aforementioned documents. Their experiences and observations helped inform the selection of evaluation criteria from both doctrine as well as the national level guidance documents.

## **Doctrinal Criteria**

Joint doctrine is a broad field, offering the researcher an enormous quantity of material to examine in order to identify suitable evaluation criteria for evaluating SOF employment. This monograph focused on key elements of Joint Publication 3.0, *Operations*, and the *Stability*

---

<sup>12</sup> Joint Publication 1, *Joint Warfare of the Armed Forces of the United States*, Washington, D.C:

*Operations Joint Operating Concept* to determine the best way to evaluate optimal SOF employment methods.<sup>13</sup> *Operations* lays out what former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Hugh Shelton describes as “the very core of our war fighting doctrine”, and provides relevant principles to help differentiate force employment methods.<sup>14</sup> The principles of war, operations other than war, and elements of operational design provided effective criteria to compare one form of SOF employment to another.

In addition to joint doctrine, the military also uses joint operating concepts to guide organization and employment. Joint operating concepts serve to “describe the conduct of future joint operations”.<sup>15</sup> The current joint operating concepts describe the operational environment and lay out the capabilities required to achieve strategic aims within those environments. Within this hierarchy of documents, *The Stability Operations Joint Operating Concept* is the concept that most closely relates to the environment found in the developing world.<sup>16</sup> However, this joint operating concept focuses largely on reconstruction following a large-scale major combat operation, somewhat anathema to what this monograph is attempting to prove. Based on the principles contained within the concept, this author extrapolated a new concept, avoidance, to use as an evaluation of SOF employment. It is described below, along with the other more traditional doctrinal criteria.

Joint doctrine applies principles of war and other concepts to achieve success in military operations. These principles of war, first espoused by the Army following World War I, are

---

Government Printing Office, 14 November 2000, pp I-8 – I-9.

<sup>13</sup> Joint Publication 3-0, *Operations*, Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 10 September 10, 2001, and *Stability Operations Joint Operating Concept*, Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, September 2004.

<sup>14</sup> Joint Publication 3-0, *Operations*, foreword.

<sup>15</sup> *Joint Operating Concepts*, Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, November 2003, page 1.

<sup>16</sup> *Stability Operations Joint Operating Concept*, page 4.

augmented in contemporary doctrine by principles for operations other than war.<sup>17</sup> Together these principles provide a framework for joint forces to plan, execute and analyze military operations across the spectrum of conflict. This monograph focuses on the optimal employment of military force to achieve national objectives in stability operations. Therefore, the most discriminatory criteria gained from both sets of principles are objective and economy of force.

*Objective* relates to goals and end state, and binds the application of military force to an attainable purpose.<sup>18</sup> In stability operations, the ability to apply force may be constrained due to political considerations or perceived legitimacy. It is crucial to identify the optimal force to achieve national policy objectives in these types of operations. The principle of objective is therefore valuable to a study attempting to identify the best way to apply military force to stabilize weak or failing states. Whether or not the application of force achieves operational goals is also an excellent means to evaluate the operation's overall effectiveness.<sup>19</sup>

*Economy of force* relates to optimal employment and use of forces to achieve purposes in an operation. This principle is a valuable tool for contrasting force employment and capabilities. While the United States is often referred to as the world's sole remaining superpower, deep divisions exist within the government about when to apply military force and at what risk. Along with the political implications, operational constraints often limit the amount and types of forces

---

<sup>17</sup> Joint Publication 3-0, *Operations*, pp II-1, V-2. The nine principles of war are objective, mass, offensive, surprise, security, economy of force, maneuver, unity of command, and simplicity. They are derivations of concepts identified earlier by theorists such as Jomini and Clausewitz.. Contemporary doctrine further identifies six principles specific to military operations other than war: objective; restraint; security; unity of effort; perseverance; and legitimacy.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid, page V-2.

<sup>19</sup> Ambassador David Passage, who served as the Deputy Chief of Mission in El Salvador during the U.S. – supported counterinsurgency efforts there, states: “One obvious test is whether the US succeeds in its objectives, or fails”, and helped the author identify objective as an evaluation criteria.

that can be employed in stability operations as well.<sup>20</sup> Economy of force is therefore an effective criterion for evaluating the best way to strengthen weak or failing states.

The other principles of war and military operations other than war are applicable in stability operations, and relevant to military planners and commanders. However, they do not assist a study attempting to discriminate optimal means of achieving national foreign policy objectives through the military power, especially with special operations forces. Objective and economy of force, on the other hand, clearly delineate the most advantageous force employments. Therefore, they will be used as criteria in evaluating ways and means of strengthening failing states in this study.

Joint doctrine also discusses application of thirteen facets of the operational art. The facets of operational art provide an outline for developing military campaigns and operations.<sup>21</sup> They cover the major aspects of military operations and the application of force required to achieve them. Figure one provides a graphic illustration the interrelationship between these facets.

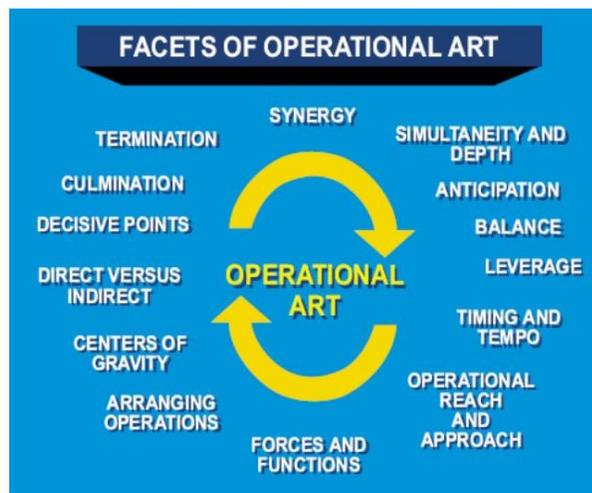


Figure 1. Facets of Operational Art

---

<sup>20</sup> For example, the executive branch adopted a force cap of fifty-five U.S. advisors deployed to El Salvador in the 1980s, and similar deployment constraints presently limit the number of military personnel supporting Colombian counterdrug efforts to eight hundred personnel.

The facets of operational art are important elements of effective operational planning. When applied to operations designed to strengthen weak or failing states, however, not all of them are relevant for evaluation of this monograph's thesis. Many of the facets of operational art apply to operations involving large formations that must overcome problems with distance and space to achieve effects in the operational environment. They are therefore relational factors. Other facets focus the military on where to apply force to the enemy, like centers of gravity and decisive points. These are conceptual devices that assist planners identify where force must be applied to achieve purpose in a military operation. These factors are relevant to nearly all operations, so they offer little value in discriminating between means to employ to achieve strategic purposes.

The concept of *leverage*, however, is extremely useful for discriminating types of force application in stability operations. Leverage is the process of gaining, maintaining, and exploiting advantages in combat power across all dimensions, and enables a force to impose its will upon designated adversaries.<sup>22</sup> While total combat power may be a factor in achieving leverage, unconventional and asymmetrical means are equally important to developing advantages in the joint operating environment.<sup>23</sup> Since the forces available to conduct stability operations may vary depending on the political environment and other external constraints, Leverage is a concept that can aid in evaluating the best methods to employ to strengthen weak and failing states.

---

<sup>21</sup> *Operations*, pp III-9 – III-25.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid*, p II-14.

<sup>23</sup> For example, Colonel Michael R. Kershner USA(R), served in Special Operations Command South when the Tupac Amaru guerrillas seized the Japanese Embassy in Lima Peru. American Special Forces units had completed joint combined exchange training with Peruvian counterterrorism forces one month prior to the start of the December 1997 hostage crisis. The Special Forces unit's recent operations in Peru with the same host nations units dealing with the crisis increased the awareness of the combatant commander and generated leverage for making decisions at the strategic level that otherwise would not have been possible.

The final draft of the *Stability Operations Joint Operating Concept* provides insight to a fourth useful criteria. This joint operating concept describes stability operations, but a significant portion of the model relates to how these operations in turn support major combat operations (MCO) before, during and after the conflict occurs.<sup>24</sup> This concept is displayed graphically in figure 2.<sup>25</sup>

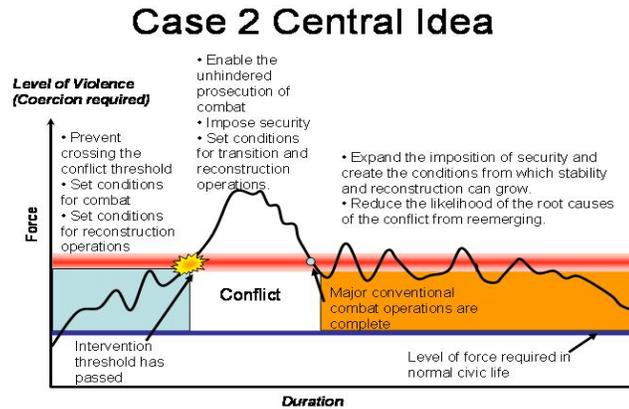


Figure 2. Case 2 Central Idea

This monograph attempts identify ways to preclude or minimize the requirement for major combat operations when strengthening weak and failing states and avoid the high economic and political deployment costs and the morass of post hostilities operations, whose end states are frequently elusive in military interventions.

Re-emphasizing the initial basis of the *Stability Operations Joint Operating Concept* in a manner that precludes or minimizes the requirement for MCO enables this study to derive a fourth evaluation criterion, *prevention*. Prevention in this case refers to the ability of a military employment to preclude or at least minimize the requirement for a large-scale deployment of

<sup>24</sup> The *Stability Operations Joint Operating Concept* devotes eighty percent (pages 4-47 of a 53 page base document) to stability operations that explicitly set the stage for MCO before conflict begins, support the execution of the combat operations, then facilitate the reconstruction efforts during post hostilities, *a la* Iraq.

<sup>25</sup> *Stability Operations Joint Operating Concept*, page 19.

forces and/or MCO. Figure three, modified from the original *Joint Operating Concept*, helps illustrate this point.<sup>26</sup>

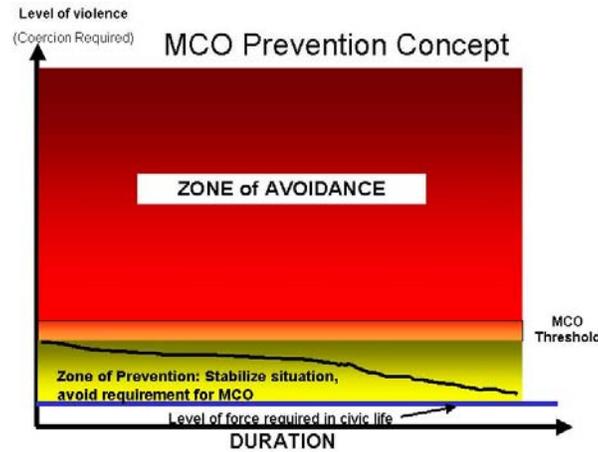


Figure 3. MCO Prevention Concept

The primary objective of this monograph is to determine the best way to organize and employ SOF in stability operations, so that the United States can reduce the potential for major combat operations in the coming decades. The operating framework suggested here intends to keep the threshold of violence within “Zone of Prevention” illustrated in figure 3 by the yellow rectangle. Conversely, MCO and post-hostilities fall in the red shaded “Zone of Avoidance”. The ability of SOF employment to achieve goals within the yellow area on the diagram is thus a suitable criterion for analysis of this monograph’s central thesis. The concept of *prevention*, the capability of SOF employment to forestall a weak or failing nation state from deteriorating to the point where troop formations or MCO is required is the criteria thus derived from the *Stability Operations Joint Operating Concept*.

<sup>26</sup> This illustration is a modification of the figure three graphic, which is found on page 19 of the *Stability Operations Joint Operating Concept*.

## Strategic Guidance Criteria.

Strategic guidance documents provide both prescriptive and conceptual guidance to military planners. They present, in broad, overarching terms, an azimuth for elements of the national power to focus their efforts in order to achieve national objectives. These documents frame the challenges to the security environment. Identifying the principles, goals and directives contained within national strategy can provide effective evaluation criteria for determining optimal SOF employment methods.

*The National Military Strategy* provides the Chairman of the Joint Chief of Staff's (CJCS) guidance to the Armed Forces.<sup>27</sup> It describes the Chairman's vision of how the military defends the United States and its interests, maintains initiative in the security environment, and maintains capabilities to fight and win in the battle space.<sup>28</sup> *The National Military Strategy* (NMS) provides enhanced detail for the military element of national power nested within the guidance found in the *National Defense* and *National Security* strategies. The 2004 NMS clearly addresses the threats to U.S. interests emanating from weak or failing states.<sup>29</sup>

The NMS identifies three strategic principles for operations. These principles provide a conceptual framework to "guide the application of military power".<sup>30</sup> The three strategic principles listed in the 2004 NMS are: agility, decisiveness, and integration.

Agility refers to the military's ability to seize and maintain the initiative.<sup>31</sup> The military sets the pace and tempo of operations through decisive action, thorough planning, and anticipation of second and third order effects. Stability operations require the forces conducting them to be flexible and possess initiative; however, this is hardly a decisive factor in these types of

---

<sup>27</sup> *The National Military Strategy of the United States of America*, Washington D.C: Government Printing Office, 2004, page iii.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid, page 5.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid, page 7.

operations (especially where the level of intensity is well below the threshold of violence depicted in figure 3). Therefore it must be ruled out as a discriminating criterion.

Decisiveness is the ability of the military to overwhelm the enemy to achieve their purposes in operations.<sup>32</sup> It bridges battlefield effects to desired results. The concept of decisiveness is relevant to stability operations; however, as a criterion, the principle of war objective already encompasses these aspects more broadly. Decisiveness will not be used, then, to evaluate employment of SOF in stability operations.

*Integration* identifies the military's capacity to develop synergy with the other elements of national power.<sup>33</sup> Integration encompasses the ability to harness joint capabilities, other government agencies (and presumably non governmental agencies as well), and the forces of foreign nations. The ability to integrate and harness the capabilities of foreign militaries and non-military entities is a key component of this monograph's core thesis. The ability to preclude large troop deployment necessitates heavy SOF involvement with actors outside the military sphere. Integration is a valid and relevant concept for special operations forces. This monograph will therefore use the principle of integration as an evaluation criterion in SOF employment. It will help determine whether or not the use of SOF in a stability operation is harnessing elements of national power to decisive effects.

*The National Security Strategy* is much broader and less prescriptive than the NMS. It is also extremely relevant as a reference for this monograph, since it states plainly, "America is now threatened less by conquering states than failing ones".<sup>34</sup> *The National Security Strategy* (NSS) identifies the goals of America's international strategy as advancing freedom and human

---

<sup>31</sup> Ibid, page 6.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid, page 7.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid, pp 6-7.

<sup>34</sup> *The National Security Strategy*, page 1

dignity.<sup>35</sup> It lists eight imperatives the U.S. will follow to achieve these goals. Most of the goals do not relate directly to the scope of operations detailed within this monograph and will not be discussed.<sup>36</sup> However, one of the imperatives, *work with others to defuse regional conflicts*, directly relates to military actions including stability operations.

The NSS imperative of working with others to defuse regional conflicts refers to empowering regional leaders to resolve crises in their areas before they reach unmanageable levels. It tempers the Wilsonian aspects of this imperative with the realistic caveat of not committing U.S. power where nations are “unwilling or unable to help themselves”.<sup>37</sup> The NSS then goes on to list several geographic regions where this imperative is currently in practice.

Since a key capability of SOF is to empower regional actors to solve their own internal and external security problems, working with others to defuse regional conflicts is a suitable evaluation criterion. It helps to identify what SOF employment technique is more suitable to strengthening troubled states or isolating belligerent actors in a manner that lessens the requirement for a major combat operation or large scale troop deployments. This concept, derived from the *National Security Strategy*, is the final evaluation criterion.

## **Summary of Comparison Methodology**

This monograph identified six evaluation criteria to support analysis of SOF employment methods. The evaluation criteria, descriptions, and their sources are listed in Figure 4.

---

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid. See page 1 for a list of the eight imperatives, pp 3-31 for a discussion of each one of them in depth.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid, page 8.

<b>Criterion</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Source</b>
<b>Objective</b>	Ability to achieve desired end state(s) across spectrum of conflict	Joint Publication 3.0, <i>Operations</i>
<b>Economy of Force</b>	Optimal employment and use of forces to achieve purposes in an operation	Joint Publication 3.0, <i>Operations</i>
<b>Leverage</b>	Gaining, maintaining, and exploiting advantages in combat power across all dimensions	Joint Publication 3.0, <i>Operations</i>
<b>Prevention</b>	Capability of SOF to forestall a weak state from deteriorating to the point where MCO is required	<i>Stability Operations Joint Operating Concept</i>
<b>Integration</b>	The military's capacity to develop synergy with the other elements of national power	<i>National Military Strategy</i>
<b>Work With others to Defuse Regional Conflicts</b>	Empower regional actors to solve their own internal and external security problems.	<i>National Security Strategy</i>

Figure 4. Evaluation Criteria

The next step in determining optimal SOF employment methods is to examine contemporary stability operations utilizing special operations forces. This monograph examines two vastly different SOF stability operations in its argument: counterdrug (and effectively, counterinsurgency) support in Colombia, and SOF employment in Afghanistan.

Colombia is a democratic South American country dealing with the effects of multiple insurgent groups and militias. The central government has lost control of large portions of

Colombian territory to belligerent forces, many of which fuel their movements through the huge illicit drug trade flourishing in the lawless areas. Colombian society is wracked by violence, with kidnappings, assassinations, and the like a part of everyday life for people living in the fringes of government controlled areas. Special Operations Forces are currently operating in Colombia in efforts to stabilize the situation. The country therefore provides an excellent case study to evaluate SOF employment.

The study of Afghanistan focuses on the period following the establishment of the Karzai government, when the primary focus of U.S. operations shifted to stabilizing the newly emerging Traditional Islamic State of Afghanistan. The interim government of Afghanistan controls only limited areas of the country, and relies heavily on coalition forces deployed there for support. Many regions of Afghanistan are under the control of warlords who nominally support the central government, if at all. Other parts of the country remain lawless, with neither government nor coalition presence. Remnants of the ousted Taliban and their supporters, and other hostile groups continually focus aggression upon the Afghan government, security forces, and supporters of the government. Once again, American SOF in Afghanistan play a key role in maintaining stability in a tenuous situation. Afghanistan, like Colombia, provides an excellent case study for evaluating SOF employment.

These two operations, occurring simultaneously in different global regions beset by a host of both common and unique internal and external security problems, help illustrate the way ahead for SOF doctrine, organization, and employment. Chapter three provides background information on each country, and then evaluates the employment methods used as well. Based on the findings from these case studies, Chapter four recommends changes to special operations doctrine and organization, and suggests optimal methods for future SOF employment.

## SOF CASE STUDIES

### Colombia

Colombia serves as an example of a weak or failing state, beset with many of the problems discussed in Chapter one of this monograph. Its government cannot effectively control all of its territory. Lawless areas within Colombia allow insurgent groups to disrupt Colombian society at will, export drugs and their attendant crime and violence to Western democracies, and destabilize the political situations of neighboring countries. United States special operations forces (SOF) are currently operating in Colombia right now as well.

Colombia is located in the Andean ridge of South America. It is a large country, with its million square miles encompassing an area the size of California and Arizona combined, and a sizeable population of over 44 million people.<sup>38</sup> It has also suffered from nearly a half century of political violence that has left thousands dead and countless more displaced by the instability and turmoil.

There are several leftist groups in Colombia, along with right wing militias fighting for control of rural areas. The most serious threat to Colombian sovereignty is the communist Revolutionary Armed Front of Colombia, or FARC. The FARC rose to prominence in the late 1980s when it assumed control of illicit narcotics production in Colombia. Colombia now produces seventy four percent of the cocaine flowing illegally into the United States, and the FARC has used billions generated from drugs to fuel its movement.<sup>39</sup>

---

<sup>38</sup> World Bank Group Website, Colombia demographic data; available from <http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/COUNTRIES/LACEXT/COLOMBIAEXTN/0,,menuPK:324965~pagePK:141159~piPK:141110~theSitePK:324946,00.html>; Internet.

<sup>39</sup> The Drug Trade in Colombia: A Threat Assessment, Drug Enforcement Agency Online Report, March 2002, available from <http://www.usdoj.gov/dea/pubs/intel/02006/#2a>; Internet.

Numerous Colombian administrations tried in vain to negotiate with the FARC and the other insurgent groups, but the violence continued. Beyond the increased flow of drugs and internal displacement of population from afflicted areas, criminal violence grew rampant. Colombia became the world's leader in kidnappings, with over half of the world's abductions occurring there in 2002.<sup>40</sup> Former Colombian president Andres Pastrana exacerbated the situation in the mid 1990s when he effectively ceded a Switzerland-sized portion of the country to the FARC in efforts to broker a peace deal.<sup>41</sup> The demilitarized zone, or *despeje*, became a sanctuary for the FARC, where they could recruit and train forces, launch attacks with impunity, then retreat back into their safe haven during the rare times the government launched a major offensive. Meanwhile, the populations in the *despeje* found themselves at the mercy of the FARC, who became the law of the land. Hundreds of thousands of Colombians fled their homes and to this day remain internally displaced or in refugee conditions in neighboring countries.<sup>42</sup>

The U.S. backed a major initiative in the late 1990s for foreign support of Colombia's stalled fight for stability. Plan Colombia began in 1999 as a multi-billion dollar aid package to reduce the violence from narcotics trade in the country. Initially, the support for plan Colombia was widespread in the international community; however, many industrialized nations reneged on financial guarantees due to what they perceived as the dominance of military support that came with the package.<sup>43</sup>

---

<sup>40</sup> *United States Special Operations Forces Posture Statement*, page 53.

<sup>41</sup> David Passage, *The United States and Colombia: Untying the Gordian Knot*, Strategic Studies Institute, Carlisle, PA, March, 2000, page 10.

<sup>42</sup> Richard L. Millett, *Colombia's Conflicts: The Spillover Effects of a Wider War*, Strategic Studies Institute, Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania, 2002, page 9.

<sup>43</sup> Luz Nagl, *Plan Colombia: Reality of the Colombian Crisis and Implications for Hemispheric Security*, Strategic Studies Institute, Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania, 2002, page 3.

Military aid from the United States is a substantial part of the overall package. The United States has provided UH-60A Blackhawk and Bell Superhuey helicopters to the country.<sup>44</sup> The plan also included advisory support for Colombia's efforts to form a new brigade to conduct counterdrug operations. The provision of military aid came with one major caveat, however: military aid could only be used for counterdrug operations, not in the fight against insurgent groups.<sup>45</sup> Since the primary insurgent group, the FARC, is inextricably tied to coca production, this restriction immediately made prospects for success in Colombia dubious at best.

The military advisors were primarily soldiers from 7<sup>th</sup> Special Forces Group, based in Fort Bragg, North Carolina. Over a three-year period the United States deployed Special Forces at company strength to train the new Colombian unit at bases in Tres Esquinas, then primarily Larandia. The advisors trained the Colombians on individual skills and tactics from squad to the battalion level.<sup>46</sup> They also familiarized the Colombians with helicopter operations so the brigade could take advantage of their newly acquired airmobile capabilities as well.

Following the events of September 11, President Bush issued National Security Presidential Directive 18, which recognized the connection between narcotrafficking and the Colombian insurgent groups, and restrictions against use of aid and material for counterinsurgency eased.<sup>47</sup> The United States began a second training initiative, this time in the northeastern province of Arauca.<sup>48</sup> This operation provided direct training support to units engaging FARC and ELN insurgent groups. The Colombian units trained in Arauca were

---

<sup>44</sup> Marc Cooper, "Plan Colombia", *The Nation*, March 1, 2001, available from <http://www.thenation.com/doc.mhtml?i=20010319&s=cooper&c=1>; Internet.

<sup>45</sup> Passage, pp 9-10.

<sup>46</sup> The Colombian Army, like the militaries in other developing countries, does not have an effective soldier training program of its own to instill basic skills in its enlisted troops, the author observed during deployments to the country in 1998 and 2000. The Colombian army often lacks the resources to train squads and platoons on common tasks, and limited availability of ammunition limits the amount of weapons training the units can do prior to combat operations.

defenders of the Caño Limón oil pipeline, a key piece of economic infrastructure in the region frequently targeted by insurgents.<sup>49</sup> This commitment of forces significantly increased the pressure placed upon belligerent groups within the country, and helped to prevent insurgents from damaging the Colombian economy.

### **Evaluation of Colombia Mission**

The employment of SOF in Colombia must be evaluated using criteria developed in Chapter two of this monograph. The six evaluation criteria provide feedback on how effective this means of employment has been thus far. More importantly, however, this evaluation of Colombia will provide a meaningful tool to determine ways to organize and employ SOF in future stability operations.

Special operations forces in Colombia, limited by political expediency and aversion to risk, fail to satisfy the criterion of *objective*. The units deployed to Colombia generate effects around the periphery of the actual problem. Most of the military aid and advisory support provided to host nation security forces has been directed at enhancing Colombia's ability to inhibit narcotics production and protect its own infrastructure. This reactive approach leaves the initiative in the hands of insurgents, who can simply shift change their patterns of operation and shift methods of resource procurement. The use of SOF in Colombia is thus failing to address the root strengths of the insurgency, making it difficult for the Colombians as well as the U.S. to achieve decisive results in this conflict.

---

<sup>47</sup> Linda Robinson, "Warrior Class, Why Special Forces Are America's Tool Of Choice In Colombia And Around The Globe", *U.S. News and World Report*, February 10, 2003, page 35.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid*, pp 35-37.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid*

Restrictive rules of engagement (ROE) limit U.S. soldiers to isolated bases and forbid them from accompanying Colombians during operations.<sup>50</sup> This mitigates the risk of American casualties in an operation with limited public support in this country, but the Special Forces advisors have no way to observe whether their training is effective or needs to be modified. This further hampers U.S. and Colombian forces from achieving operational and strategic goals in the conflict.

Colombia does, however, demonstrate near optimal *economy of force* SOF employment. A battalion-sized American unit is achieving remarkable effects in a country of over forty-four million people. The few hundred advisors in Colombia at any given time are able to accomplish assigned objectives in a manner so low key that most Americans are scarcely aware of U.S. involvement in this conflict. The cost of the SOF support is an infinitesimal amount of what a general purpose force with inherent support structures would require as well.<sup>51</sup>

Use of SOF in Colombia does not generate the *leverage* that provides significant advantages over adversaries. Limitations on rules of engagement and force protection restrictions inhibit the ability of SOF in theater to develop intelligence and employ organic assets that could significantly tip the scale in favor of the Colombian government. Also, the limited scope of the SOF mission prevents forces from developing synergy. SOF, deployed and isolated on small Colombian military bases, work on disparate missions relatively unrelated to one another, and fail to achieve for either themselves or the Colombians any type of decisive advantage.

The initial restrictions on use of military aid further reduced the leverage that could be brought to bear against adversaries. Until President Bush issued National Security Presidential

---

<sup>50</sup> Robinson, page 37.

<sup>51</sup> While Plan Colombia's cost in the intermediate term runs into billions of dollars, the majority of the military support expenditures are for large items like helicopters and the required maintenance, etc to keep them flying. Special Forces units deploy to Colombia with limited amounts of equipment and are able to use much of the Colombian military's infrastructure for support.

Directive 18, none of the Colombian military's new capabilities could be applied directly against insurgent forces. The drug trade, while partially responsible for the escalation of violence in Colombia, was by no means a major center of gravity for any one belligerent group in that country. FARC already controlled sizeable parts of the country, and the counterdrug-specific aid could not truly effect the organization while they possessed safe havens. Also, while the Colombians made some efforts in eradicating coca fields and disrupting trafficking, there was no significant decrease in the flow of drugs to the U.S. after Plan Colombia's implementation.<sup>52</sup> Thus the FARC were able to continue operations largely unimpeded despite the increase in aid, and neither the U.S. nor the Colombians gained leverage against their respective adversaries.

The SOF mission in Colombia does, however, contribute to the *prevention* of a wider conflict. The mission thus far has trained an additional brigade sized unit and enhanced existing units' capabilities to protect critical economic infrastructure. The current strategy arguably does not solve the stability problems Colombia is facing, but it has increased the capability of the Colombian government to maintain sovereignty over territory it currently controls. More importantly, it has completely precluded the necessity to even consider deploying conventional US troops to this region in an attempt to resolve the conflict.

The SOF mission fails to generate synergy through *integration* with other elements of national power, however. Again, the isolated nature and limited scope of the SOF mission prevents it from integrating with other capabilities that can further degrade the insurgencies. There is no tie-in between the military support and any civic action or economic programs underway in the countryside; even in terms of SOF, the overwhelming majority of support to Colombia has been limited to Special Forces units training Army counterparts.

---

<sup>52</sup> Peter Clark, "Failed Plan in Colombia", *The Nation*, March 31, 2003; available from <http://www.thenation.com/doc.mhtml?i=20030818&s=clark>; Internet.

Finally, another serious weakness in the evaluation is failure of SOF support to *work with others to defuse regional conflicts*. Plan Colombia supports Colombia alone; the problem of the FARC, however, has become a regional issue. In anticipation of increased pressure, FARC pushed their operations into the Darien region of southern Panama, an area with virtually no government presence from which the FARC could operate with impunity.<sup>53</sup> Ecuador's frontier with Colombia also became a safe haven for Colombian insurgents.<sup>54</sup> Thus, while the U.S. has empowered Colombia, its neighbors have suffered in efforts to defuse this conflict.

### **Traditional Islamic State of Afghanistan**

Afghanistan provides another example of a weak or failing state. The country's fledgling government, established after the rout of the Taliban in 2002, relies heavily upon the coalition forces for security as well as humanitarian support. Large portions of the country remain lawless, and disputes between regional warlords often result in violent clashes of militia forces. Remnants of the Taliban and other belligerents continue to attack the government, its supporters amongst the general populace, and coalition forces. Decades of war have left the country devastated, with no real economy or the economic infrastructure upon which to base one. The cultivation of poppies, a heroin precursor, is alarmingly on the rise as well.<sup>55</sup>

After the fall of the Taliban, the United States supported the establishment of a democratic regime in the war-torn country. Hamid Karzai, a leader in the U.S. backed Northern Alliance, became the interim President of the country and established his seat of government in the traditional capital city of Kabul. U.S. and multinational forces established bases throughout

---

<sup>53</sup> Linda, Robinson, "Where Angels Fear to Tread", *World Policy Review*, Winter 1999-2000, page 68.

<sup>54</sup> Millett, pp 5-23.

<sup>55</sup> Poppy cultivation nearly doubled between 2002 and 2003. See press release, Office of National Drug Control Policy, "Estimated Poppy Cultivation in Afghanistan", November 28, 2003; available from

the country to support stability operations and to continue the search for Al Qaeda terrorists. The stability operations themselves have proven to be a daunting task, especially for the Special operations forces involved

U.S. forces established a Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force (CJSOTF), based at Karshi Khanabad airbase in Uzbekistan at the start of the war. Following the rout of the Taliban the CJSOTF relocated itself in Afghanistan, at an airfield in Bagram.<sup>56</sup> The majority of the military infrastructure supporting Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan rapidly grew around this airfield. By the summer of 2002 the majority of U.S. Forces in Afghanistan were under the control of Combined Joint Task Force (CJTF) 180, a headquarters formed around XVIII Airborne Corps.<sup>57</sup> A brigade task force from the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne division and robust enablers from the U.S. Air Force and allied countries rounded out the capabilities of the force.

While capturing Al Qaeda and its enablers remained a significant mission for SOF forces, the overall mission in the JSOTF rapidly shifted to stability operations. SOF units assisted in recruiting and training the Afghan national Army; psychological operations forces assisted the Afghan government in reaching people through print media and radio broadcasts.<sup>58</sup> Special operations units developed valuable intelligence and helped to capture or kill remnants of the Taliban and other belligerent groups throughout the country as well.<sup>59</sup>

The CJSOTF pursued a multi-point strategy while establishing the Afghan National Army: first, they developed a plan to recruit soldiers from different ethnic groups and regions of

---

<http://usgovinfo.about.com/gi/dynamic/offsite.htm?zi=1/XJ&sdn=usgovinfo&zu=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.whitehousedrugpolicy.gov%2F>; Internet.

<sup>56</sup> Charles H. Briscoe, Richard L. Kiper, James A. Schroder, Kalev I Sepp, *Weapon of Choice*, Combat Studies Institute, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, 2003, pp 344-345.

<sup>57</sup> See GlobalSecurity.org, "Joint Task Force 180"; available from <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/agency/dod/jtf-180.htm>; Internet.

<sup>58</sup> Schroder, James A. Schroder, "Observations: ARSOF in Afghanistan", *Special Warfare*, September 2002; available from [http://www.findarticles.com/p/articles/mi\\_m0HZY/is\\_3\\_15/ai\\_96442222](http://www.findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m0HZY/is_3_15/ai_96442222); Internet.

the country, to ensure an equitable distribution of ethnic groups within the Afghan government apparatus.<sup>60</sup> Following recruitment, the soldiers were trained in the newly established Kabul Military Training Center. Once Afghan units were fully trained, the forces deployed to different region of the country in operations of low to mid level difficulty. This enabled the military to gain proficiency and helped demonstrate the legitimacy of the new Afghan government. During employment, Special Forces units accompanied their Afghan counterparts and continued to provide advice, mentorship and feedback.<sup>61</sup>

Meanwhile, other Special Forces detachments were deployed in remote base camps throughout the country. These detachments developed rapport with local populations, developed intelligence, and conducted raids to capture or kill insurgents and their cached equipment.<sup>62</sup> The Special Forces detachments enhanced their firepower and capabilities with paid militia forces; these indigenous troops often enabled a twelve-man detachment to effectively wield the combat power of one or two rifle companies during the course of their operations.<sup>63</sup>

Special operations forces also supported many reconstruction and humanitarian projects within Afghanistan. Despite the daily combat operations, SOF facilitated the drilling of wells, construction of schools and economic projects, and helped bring medical support to some of the most isolated parts of the country.<sup>64</sup> Psychological Operations (PSYOP) forces transmitted JTF and government messages through a variety of means, from the traditional broadcast to specially

---

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> Kathleen T. Rhen, "American Soldiers Training Afghan National Army", *DefenseLink News* May 21, 2002; available from [http://www.defenselink.mil/news/May2002/n05212002\\_200205217.html](http://www.defenselink.mil/news/May2002/n05212002_200205217.html); Internet.

<sup>61</sup> Thomas, Kielbasa "Special Forces Recount Afghanistan Mission", *GlobalSpecops.com*, June 29, 2004; available from <http://globalspecops.com/sfafghanmission.html>; Internet.

<sup>62</sup> See online report, "U.S. Special Forces Soldier killed in Afghanistan", *CNN.com*, October 31, 2003; available from <http://www.cnn.com/2003/WORLD/asiapcf/central/10/30/afghanistan.death/>; Internet.

<sup>63</sup> Ann Scott Tyson "Do Special Forces Need Special Funding?", *Christian Science Monitor*, May 24, 2004; available from <http://www.csmonitor.com/2004/0524/p02s01-usmi.html>; Internet

produced children's toys with writing or symbols on them.<sup>65</sup> These activities contributed to the overall legitimacy of Operation Enduring Freedom in the eyes of the Afghans, as well as the populations of the U.S. and other coalition partners.

Special operations forces in Afghanistan comprise a relatively small part of the coalition force structure in Operation Enduring Freedom, but the force's contributions were immense. Reminiscent of the oft described "Three Block War", CJSOTF Afghanistan operated across the spectrum of conflict during this period, and any given day found its units engaged in reconnaissance missions, raids, construction projects, and humanitarian and civic action programs.<sup>66</sup> All of these operations were tied in to the objective of increasing the support and legitimacy of the Traditional Islamic State of Afghanistan.

### **Evaluation of SOF in Afghanistan**

Special operations forces in Afghanistan do satisfy the criterion of *objective*. They continue to be instrumental to the neutralization of Taliban and belligerent groups in the country, enhance the security and legitimacy of the Afghan government through development of the Afghan National Army, and tie in their various humanitarian activities to achieve effects relating to operational and strategic purposes. Coalition forces in Operation Enduring Freedom operate within considerable operational and political constraints due to the nature and scope of the

---

<sup>64</sup> Gerry J. Gilmore, "Rumsfeld Praises Civil Affairs' Work in Afghanistan", *American Forces Information Service*, August 20, 2002; available from [http://www.defense.gov/news/Aug2002/n08202002\\_200208202.html](http://www.defense.gov/news/Aug2002/n08202002_200208202.html); Internet.

<sup>65</sup> Herbert A. Friedman, "Psychological Operations in Afghanistan", *Perspectives, the Journal of the Psychological Operations Association*, Volume 14, Number 4, 2002. PSYOP forces also demonstrated their capabilities in Operation Enduring Freedom by distributing thousands of special radios, equipped with hand generators, which operated on the coalition and Afghan government frequencies. This enabled the Coalition and interim government to broadcast their themes to diverse populations throughout the country.

<sup>66</sup> General Charles C. Krulak, "The Strategic Corporal: Leadership in the Three Block War", *Marines Magazine*, January 1999; available from <http://www.usmc.mil/cmcarticles.nsf/0/2d9790f3fe41087d8525670f0059b50d?OpenDocument>; Internet.

mission. Despite these limitations, the CJSOTF has proven capable of achieving decisive results in this environment.

Relative to the rest of the JTF in Afghanistan, the CJSOTF truly achieves *economy of force* in its operations. It attains desired results within Afghanistan by employing small units across the battle space, and generates multiple effects in a myriad of operational conditions. Additionally, SOF actually generated additional capabilities over time through the training and employment of the Afghan National Army and regional militia forces. A twelve-man Special Forces detachment could deploy to Afghanistan with all of its equipment contained on a handful of Air force 463L pallets<sup>67</sup>; within a short period of time, these detachments were able to recruit and employ militia forces at company strength and above.<sup>68</sup>

One drawback to economy of force in Operation Enduring Freedom, however, is logistics. SOF relies heavily on conventional forces for logistical support, especially resupply of its scattered operating bases. Conventional forces augment CJSOTF units to provide security at larger sites as well. Support from other services in key areas like medical evacuation, maintenance, reception, and other areas also significantly enhance the capabilities of the CJSOTF to support units deployed throughout the country.<sup>69</sup>

CJSOTF Afghanistan achieved *leverage* in its Afghanistan operations as well. SOF conducted multiple types of operations, employing unique capabilities to overwhelm the threat even as it empowered the nascent Afghan security forces. These diverse operations were often conducted simultaneously and across the entire country. Effective command and control enabled the CJSOTF commander to design and employ forces to achieve precise effects in operations.

---

<sup>67</sup> A 463L cargo pallet can support up to ten thousand pounds of equipment, and can accommodate loads up to ninety-six inches high with a system of nets and straps; source: Major Brian Newberry, USAF.

<sup>68</sup> Ann Scott, Tyson "Do Special Forces Need Special Funding?", *Christian Science Monitor*, May 24, 2004; available from <http://www.csmonitor.com/2004/0524/p02s01-usmi.html>; Internet.

SOF forces fail to meet the criteria of *prevention* in Afghanistan. True, SOF forces were and continue to be a key component of the survival of the emerging democratic government in Afghanistan. However, there already is a significant conventional troop deployment in Afghanistan and the CJSOTF relies on it heavily for support and security. Without the conventional enablers, the capabilities and scope of SOF operations in Afghanistan would have to be curtailed dramatically in order to sustain operational tempo as well as security.

On the other hand, Special operations forces in Afghanistan achieve tremendous synergy through *integration*, the fifth evaluation criteria. Special operations forces are fully combined and joint in Afghanistan; the close coordination and relationships with both the host nation as well as conventional forces further increases SOF capability in this operation as well. SOF in Afghanistan fully engage the populace of Afghanistan, and the forces' support of local Afghan communities on issues like security and economic welfare provides a direct link to that population, as well as perceived effectiveness of the government. SOF are fully integrated with key U.S. government agencies in Afghanistan as well. SOF forces' collaboration with government agencies enhances the overall effectiveness of the JTF and provides the military a direct link to capabilities of the U.S. government not traditionally available to the military.<sup>70</sup>

Finally, the CJSOTF does not effectively *work with others to defuse regional conflicts*, the sixth and final evaluation criteria. Afghanistan's problems extend well beyond its borders, with many hostile actors seeking refuge or obtaining support beyond its borders. Special Operations Forces worked with some of Afghanistan's neighbors, like Uzbekistan, to further

---

<sup>69</sup> As the CJSOTF Joint Operation Center chief in Afghanistan from November 2002 until March 2003, the author facilitated logistics support between conventional and special operations forces.

<sup>70</sup> Ann Scott Tyson, "Do Special Forces Need Special Funding?", *Christian Science Monitor*, May 24, 2004; available from <http://www.csmonitor.com/2004/0524/p02s01-usmi.html>; Internet.

isolate regional terrorist and insurgent threats.<sup>71</sup> However, the CJSOTF did not truly address the issue of Afghanistan's border with Pakistan, particularly in the semiautonomous Waziristan region. As a result, many attacks on coalition and Afghan forces emanate from here, and many pursuits end at the Afghanistan/Pakistani demarcation line.<sup>72</sup> Until a solid working relationship is established with Pakistan or the entire border is secure (an unlikely event), belligerents will continue to find safety and support in these lawless regions.

### **Case Study Conclusions**

These two examples of SOF employment represent very different types of operations. The missions involve different geographical and sociopolitical environments, stark contrasts in terms of operational constraints, and are being accomplished by widely varying force structures. However, the underlying objectives in each case are largely the same: strengthen a weak or failing state and enhance regional security in the process. Since they are both striving towards similar goals, their analysis is valuable to developing recommendations for future SOF employment. The use of SOF to achieve effects in these two case studies helps illuminate possible future uses of SOF more effectively when attempting to stabilize weak or failing states. Chapter four will use the analysis of the previous two operations to identify recommendations to enhance the capabilities of Special operations forces in future stability operations.

---

<sup>71</sup> Council on Foreign Relations, "Terrorism: Questions and Answers", 2004; available from <http://www.cfrterrorism.org/coalition/uzbekistan.html>; Internet.

<sup>72</sup> Associated Press, "US Helicopters, Afghans Battle Taliban", Fox News, March 20, 2004; available from <http://www.foxnews.com/story/0,2933,114731,00.html>; Internet.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

This monograph argues that proper SOF employment in stability operations can minimize or even preclude the requirement of large-scale conventional force interventions. It attempts to answer the question “What is the optimal method to employ Special operations forces (SOF) to strengthen and stabilize weak or failing states?” Based on the examination of SOF employment in support of governments fighting the chaos of subversion and lawlessness, four recommendations are offered to enhance effectiveness in these types of missions. These recommendations encompass several broad aspects: theoretical considerations, pertaining to doctrinal and philosophical issues concerning SOF employment; organizational suggestions, which pertain to the funding and equipping of SOF programs and units; and transformational command architecture proposals, which address some specific issues related to command and control of SOF units. Together, these recommendations help to define a blueprint for future SOF employment during stability operations.

### Develop a SOF Joint Operating Concept

The Department of Defense is currently using the process of Joint Operating Concepts to guide planning and development of joint capabilities and forces. A Joint Operating Concept is defined as “a description of how a future force commander will plan, prepare, employ, and sustain a joint force”, and serves as an intellectual tool to further refine and develop the military’s capabilities.<sup>73</sup> There are currently four joint operating concepts: *Major Combat Operations*,

---

<sup>73</sup> *Joint Operations Concepts*, Department of Defense, Washington, D.C. Government Printing Office, November 2003, page 17.

*Stability Operations, Homeland Security, and Strategic Deterrence.*<sup>74</sup> A Joint Operating Concept for SOF in Stability Operations will help to guide capabilities, doctrine, and the resourcing of SOF organizations, to ensure they are effective in the key role they frequently play in this type of environment.

The issue of weak or failing states has already been described in numerous other national level documents as a key security threat and major challenge, and defense planners assume this will continue to be the case for at least the next two decades.<sup>75</sup> SOF have proven to be a frequently called upon tool to respond and shape the security environment for weak and failing states. Therefore, a Joint Operating Concept for SOF in stability operations will facilitate continued and effective intellectual discourse on the most effective means of employing SOF in stability operations

The current *Stability Operations Joint Operating Concept* effectively describes the environment of weak, failing, and collapsed nation states. However, it devotes the majority of its conceptual discussion to what is referred to as “Case 2” situations, which refers to environments where US and/or allied coalitions are likely to conduct major combat operations and must support the transitional time period after the conclusion of combat.<sup>76</sup> This narrow focus therefore necessitates planners to assume that most stability operations are reliant upon conventional intervention at some point. This shortsighted hypothesis limits the intellectual creativity of

---

<sup>74</sup> Keith J. Costa, “Rumsfeld Approves Blueprint for Future Joint Military Operations”, *Inside the Pentagon*, December 4, 2003; available from [http://www.tradoc.army.mil/pao/Web\\_specials/FocusAreas/jopsc.htm](http://www.tradoc.army.mil/pao/Web_specials/FocusAreas/jopsc.htm).

<sup>75</sup> See *National Security Strategy, National Military Strategy, Joint Operating Environment*, et al.

<sup>76</sup> *Stability Operations Joint Operating Concept*, Department of Defense, Washington, D.C. Government Printing Office, September 2004, page 3. As identified earlier in this monograph, the scope of this joint operating concept was limited to stability operations prior to, during, or following conventional operations.

military planners, and effectively curtails a broad array of responses available to the U.S. government at the same time.

A SOF Stability Operations Joint Operating Concept could address SOF employment in what the current *Stability Operations Joint Operating Concept* refers to as “Case 1” scenarios; case 1 scenarios refer to situations where U.S. aligned nations request military assistance to protect themselves from “subversion, lawlessness, or insurgency”<sup>77</sup>. Neither the *Stability Operations* nor the *Strategic Deterrence* joint operating concepts effectively address U.S. military actions in this type of environment. Thus, there is no concept that currently addresses “historical analysis, operational lessons learned, and past experimental findings” that can guide the formation of future capability development in this area.<sup>78</sup> It could focus planners in the Regional Combatant Commands and other government agencies to strengthen friendly states in a region to isolate rogue states or other belligerent actors as well. This joint operating concept would thus enhance the ability of military forces to achieve major operational and strategic objectives.

Special operations forces have proven in the past two decades to be an important, highly effective tool in stability operations. A Joint Operating Concept relating to their employment early within stability operations, in a manner to preclude or reduce the requirement for conventional forces, therefore fulfills two requirements. First of all, it describes the employment of a key strategic tool in a manner that is narrow enough to focus intellectual debate and guide doctrinal development. Secondly, it elevates the discourse to a high enough and wide enough audience to ensure that the intellectual discourse can be addressed throughout the entire defense community.<sup>79</sup> If the DOD’s key civilian and uniformed leadership are tracking the development

---

<sup>77</sup> Ibid, page 1.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid, page 1.

<sup>79</sup> There is a tendency to classify and or compartmentalize many issues relating to SOF units and employment. The author believes the most effective way to develop doctrine for SOF in stability operations

and utility of this issue as a joint operating concept, it will receive the resources and attention it requires to be relevant over the next two decades.

### **Employ SOF towards Strategic and Operational Objectives.**

Another recommendation to ensure maximum benefit of SOF employment is to commit Special Operations Forces specifically to achieve effects required at operational and strategic levels. Use of SOF to achieve objectives at the operational or strategic level of war has the effect of vectoring unit training, organization, equipping, and command and control. It focuses SOF elements on a path of quality and effectiveness, and leads to units more capable of achieving purposes within the battle space. Conversely, failure to keep SOF focused at the operational level commits scarce resources against missions that other forces can do, constrains the ability of SOF to consistently employ forces against operational and strategic missions occurring simultaneously, and can lead to a worn down force with less capability over the long term.

According to joint doctrine, the requirement for highly trained Special Operation Forces emanates from “the ability to attack or engage strategic or operational targets”; special operations themselves are conducted “to enhance the likelihood of success of the overall theater campaign”.<sup>80</sup> The current doctrinal framework thus identifies SOF as a critical military capability that can achieve decisive effects at the operational or strategic level of war. However, more often than not, special operations forces are committed to missions that do not achieve effects at these levels. The force’s inherent attributes of ubiquitous access and regional expertise often work against them when regional combatant commands are deciding upon a course of action to support

---

described throughout this monograph is to open the discourse throughout DOD and the various academic and intellectual enterprises that track defense-related issues.

<sup>80</sup> Joint Publication 3-05, *Doctrine for Joint Special Operations*, Department of Defense, Washington, D.C: Government Printing Office, 17 December 2003, pp viii, 1-1.

theater security cooperation plans.<sup>81</sup> Thus, SOF are often assigned missions, some of which are long-term commitments, simply because of their ease of deployment and experience in a particular region.<sup>82</sup>

Commanders and staffs can ensure proper employment of SOF by asking three simple questions. First, are special operations forces performing missions within the scope of their nine doctrinal core tasks?<sup>83</sup> Second, are the Special Operations Forces' assigned missions intended to generate operational or strategic level effects? Finally, can the mission SOF are being considered for be accomplished by conventional units? These three questions can help decision makers vector in to the most optimal employment of limited SOF assets. Focus on this level of effects relates to the concepts of *objective*, *leverage*, and *economy of force* used as evaluation criteria in Chapter three of this monograph.

Theater security cooperation plans should identify key objectives for SOF employment, and should direct SOF consider the strategic or operational effects they can achieve within the theater. Current Defense Department guidance requires theater security cooperation plans to influence strategic direction and work to settle regional disputes between two or more parties.<sup>84</sup> SOF employment in theater should directly correlate to objectives nested within the framework

---

<sup>81</sup> *United States Special Operations Forces Posture Statement*, page 67.

<sup>82</sup> The author, as a Special Forces Detachment Commander, conducted a three month long humanitarian de-mining operation (HDO) in Central America in 1998. HDO was a continuous commitment during this time period, and a new detachment and command and control element would deploy approximately every ninety days to replace the unit whose mission was nearing completion. This mission committed a significant amount of United States Southern Command's allotted special operations forces to a task that arguably achieved little to no strategic level effects. HDO occurred in other regional commands during this time period as well. While the units involved enhanced their regional expertise, the six-month period dedicated to training, mission execution, and recovery in a task that does not generate strategic or operational level effects runs counter to current special operations doctrine.

<sup>83</sup> Joint Publication 3-05, *Doctrine for Joint Special Operations*, page viii. SOF's nine core tasks are: direct action, special reconnaissance, foreign internal defense, unconventional warfare, counterterrorism, psychological operations, civil affairs operations, counter proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, and information operations.

provided by this guidance. Special operations deployments focused on achieving effects within this framework can halt the spread of violence within a region, and reduce the requirements for further military support.

Focusing on missions that achieve decisive effects at the strategic and operational levels of war helps to ensure special operations forces will be prepared when called upon to execute missions essential to a theater campaign plan's success. It will ensure that proper resources are committed to SOF, and that the relevance of special operations doctrine, organization, and equipment are always considered at the highest levels of the Department of Defense, and amongst foreign policy specialists in academia as well. Use of SOF to reinforce combatant commanders efforts to influence and stabilize their regions is another key aspect of SOF employment. Finally, limiting the scope of Special Operations Forces ensures that commanders responsible for campaigns and theater security cooperation plans will have highly trained and capable forces available to commit towards strategic and operational level objectives.

### **Provide Sufficient C2 capability for SOF Elements**

Another way to ensure that Special Operations Forces are employed optimally is to ensure that their capabilities are represented by officers commensurate with the effects SOF are designed to achieve in the battle space. Currently, this is rarely the case. A colonel in charge of a joint special operations task force (JSOTF) has to be able to represent the capabilities and effects potential of his forces at a table occupied by admirals and general officers, and ambassador level state department and government agency personnel. A force that is designed to achieve strategic

---

<sup>84</sup> Mark Dean and Frida Lodge, *Defense Security Cooperation Agency – Strength Through Cooperation*, prepared by the Defense Security Cooperation Agency, [PDF], September, 2004, Washington D.C., page 4.

and operational level effects should be represented by a flag officer to ensure that its units are employed and resourced correctly. This is not currently the case, and can lead to improper usage of SOF, as well as lost opportunities when a SOF commander's viewpoint does not carry the same *gravitas* in an opinion, as a higher-ranking officer from an adjacent unit.<sup>85</sup>

The very nature of military culture inherently values the position and viewpoint of a senior ranking officer above that of an officer of lesser rank. Couple that with inter-service rivalries, parochialism, etc., and the effects SOF can generate on the battlefield get lost in the cacophony of disparate voices at staff and interagency coordination meetings. Organizing special operations forces so that an operation's Joint Task Force Commander, a general officer, speaks to a JSOTF commanded by a general officer on matters of SOF employment is a certain remedy for this situation.

Beyond assigning flag officers to command JSOTFs, USSOCOM should revisit how each of its Theater Special Operations Commands (SOCs) is organized as well. The SOCs exist to ensure Special Operations forces are employed within a combatant commander's area of responsibility and to support the combatant's planning and execution of special operations missions.<sup>86</sup> However, while most subordinate commands in each of the regional combatant command are at the two and three star level, brigadier generals or rear admirals lower half command the SOCs. Again, the system of rank inculcated within military culture provides a diminished voice to a commander of lesser rank. A remedy to this is to ensure that SOCs are commanded by major or lieutenant generals, or service equivalents.

---

<sup>85</sup> For example, in the time period discussed for Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan, the Joint Task Force Commander was a lieutenant general, and his land component commander was a major general; the commander of the Joint Special Operations Task Force was a Colonel.

<sup>86</sup> *United States Special Operations Forces Posture Statement*, page 40.

The rank structure reorganization suggested above is neither parochial nor unprecedented in the annals of military history.<sup>87</sup> Officers of flag rank provide special operations forces a voice commensurate with the effects they achieve in the battle space. Failure to speak at the level of other service commanders in a joint task force can effectively limit the contributions SOF can make in the fight. Since the United States is currently in the process of transformation and realigning its forces, this is an ideal time for the department of the defense to reorganize its general officer billets as well.<sup>88</sup>

Assigning United States State Department personnel billets in joint Special operations units is another way SOF can enhance their command and control effectiveness in stability operations. Military operations alone are only one line of operation when attempting to strengthen weak or failing states. The unique attributes and enablers of other government agencies – Central Intelligence Agency, Defense Intelligence Agencies, State Department, et al – are another key pillar in keeping foreign nations from falling into lawlessness and subversion.<sup>89</sup> Foreign and international organizations often play dominant roles as well. Foreign service officers assigned to joint SOF billets in prominent roles could effectively harness the interagency efforts inherent in stability operations, provide greater unity of effort, and nest all of the resources committed and activities conducted within a stability operation on solving the problem.

---

<sup>87</sup> The rank of General of the Army, for example, was codified during the 79<sup>th</sup> Congress during World War II to ensure that American general officers were of the same grade and stature as their allied equivalents. Explained at wikipedia.com; available from [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/General\\_of\\_the\\_Army](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/General_of_the_Army); Internet.

<sup>88</sup> Mike Allen, and Ricks, Thomas Ricks, “US to Cut Forces in Europe, Asia”, *Washington Post*, August 14, 2004, page A1. Many of the flag officer billets in both of these commands are relics of the cold war, so a major shift in general officer assignments could conceivably made in the next three to five years that benefits SOF’s structure without increasing the number of general officers within the military.

<sup>89</sup> Current Army counterinsurgency doctrine, for example, identifies coordination with U.S. and foreign government agencies as one of five imperatives to successful operations. See Army Field Manual 3-07.22 *Counterinsurgency Operations*, Final Approved Draft, Headquarters, Department of the Army, Washington, D.C: Government Printing Office, September 2004, page 2-1.

An experienced state department deputy commander at the theater special operations commands, or within a JSOTF, could serve as the conduit to bind the capabilities of interagency actors to the military operational level of war. Placing the Foreign Service officer directly within the chain of command provides the requisite authority to speak on behalf of the military command, provide direction and guidance to military units, and to represent the legitimate and actual authority of the SOF commander when sitting in councils of non military actors.

Embedding civilian government officials within military commands is not without precedent in past United States military operations.<sup>90</sup> Divergent, sometimes opposing efforts between military units and government agencies have been identified as a major weakness in past and current stability operations. The inability of the Coalition Provision Authority in Iraq, for example, to tie civilian agency actions to military operations and achieve decisive effects is one of the best arguments for a command arrangement such as this.<sup>91</sup>

Current and future stability operations require seamless integration of military and interagency efforts. The inability to achieve unity of effort through the use of all elements of national power imperils the success of the stability operation itself. USSOCOM's lead in harnessing the full capabilities and efforts of all major players in stability operations would ensure robust capabilities and effectiveness in strengthening weak or failing states, and would further enhance the relevance of SOF. These two recommendations would serve to address all of

---

<sup>90</sup> In 1967, the Civil Operations and Revolutionary Support (CORDS) program, a civilian run agency in Vietnam, became a sub-component of Military Assistance Command, Vietnam. A Foreign Service officer served as the head of CORDS, and with the rank of ambassador, had powers commensurate with the members of General Westmoreland's key staff. At lower levels, civilian cord directors served as deputies to Army Corps commanders. See, Andrew Krepinevich Jr., *The Army and Vietnam*, The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989, pp 216-218.

<sup>91</sup> See Peter Maas "Professor Nagl's War", New York Times Magazine, January 11, 2004, for a discussion of coordination problems between the Coalition Provisional Authority and the military; available from [http://www.psychanalystsopposewar.org/resources\\_files/Professor\\_Nagls\\_War.html](http://www.psychanalystsopposewar.org/resources_files/Professor_Nagls_War.html); Internet.

the criteria used to evaluate Colombia and Afghanistan operations, except work with others to defuse regional concepts.

### **Enhance SOF Cultural Capabilities and Regional Expertise**

The SOF attribute of regional expertise is a force multiplier that enhances the effectiveness of all the other SOF attributes.<sup>92</sup> The ability of SOF units to interact with other cultures is the foundation of SOF effectiveness in the battle space. SOF cultural skills can be increased through targeted recruitment of immigrants from areas where regional expertise is essential to the success of United States military endeavors. An emphasis on the recruiting process will ensure future SOF forces truly have the ubiquitous access and the regional expertise and influence to achieve decisive effects in the stability operations.

Many Special Operations personnel currently go through language training as part of their accession training into the force; the four to six month program provides a rudimentary language capability, which is theoretically enhanced through specialized training at the unit level.<sup>93</sup> While this training is adequate for some, particular the common romance languages that many Americans have a background in through secondary schooling, units deploying to Asian countries or the Middle East rely heavily upon interpreters during operations. Enhanced language training would require more funding and enhanced facilities beyond what is currently available; however, any additional time allotted to language training would slow down the twelve to twenty-four month “pipeline” individuals travel through on their journey from ordinary soldier to special operator.

---

<sup>92</sup> *United States Special Operations Forces Posture Statement*, pp 66-68.

<sup>93</sup> All Army Special Forces soldiers, and some Civil Affairs, and Psychological Operations soldiers attend language school at Fort Bragg, North Carolina as part of their branch training; soldiers already possessing language skills of a certain level can “test out” of this training.

While enhanced language training is resource-prohibitive, an alternative solution is to locate and obtain personnel with desired ethnic backgrounds via targeted recruiting. First or second generation immigrants, fluent in their native languages, often possess a unique understanding of their region of origin that no amount of cultural training can replicate. A newly-recruited soldier with these innate skills can enhance the capabilities of SOF units more rapidly and cost effectively than any training program available. Specialized SF recruiters could recruit in American regions with dense populations of targeted ethnic and cultural groups, particularly those of Asian or Middle Eastern descent. Increased targeting of these populations for the direct accession program would have the synergistic effect of providing the raw material for the proverbial pipeline mentioned previously, as well as providing a base of cultural knowledge for units immediately upon completion of training.

Two practical obstacles currently impede the implementation of this recommendation: issues with security clearances, as well as the ability to identify suitable personnel during recruitment. Many of the personnel who could provide immediate cultural and regional expertise to SOF would have difficulty obtaining security clearances required by SOF units. USSOCOM would have to be willing to waive some of these requirements in order to recruit, select and train these personnel.

The second practicality that would have to be addressed is finding enough suitable personnel with the cultural background who could also complete the rigorous special operations training requirements. A person fluent in a language who grew up in a certain part of the world is a terrific asset, but only if he or she can be trained in the requisite skills of a special operator. Maturity and intelligence are also required as well.

Both of these obstacles can be overcome through efforts on the part of leadership within special operations. Risk in terms of security clearances can be mitigated through select, temporary waivers, and enough resources and emphasis in recruiting can ensure we are filling the

pipeline with soldiers who already possess cultural and language expertise. Recruiting recent immigrants with their inherent skills and experience is neither unprecedented nor as ambitious as some programs of the past have been.<sup>94</sup> However, the force multipliers obtained by mature, competent personnel with cultural and regional expertise warrant the proper attention within USSOCOM and the Department of Defense. Regional expertise enhances the capability of special operations forces to meet the criterion of *work with others to defuse regional conflicts*, and enhances the force's capability to achieve leverage and integration as well.

### **Recommendations Summary**

The preceding recommendations follow two lines of reason. First, they identify adjustments to special operations forces' doctrine and organization. Doctrinal and organizational recommendations address actions that can enhance the capabilities and competence of SOF units. Second, the recommendations address the manner in which SOF should be employed. This line of thought provides cognitive tension for planners and commanders, so that their units achieve required effects in operations.<sup>95</sup>

This mindset, focusing SOF efforts to achieve operational and strategic level effects, is crucial to proper SOF employment. Commanders and planners at the strategic and operational level must identify effects in operations, and then employ their SOF assets in order to achieve these effects against complex systems. This applies across the range of military operations, especially in theater security cooperation plans. Regional combatant commanders must employ

---

<sup>94</sup> The Lodge Act, for example, passed in 1950, was intended to allow the United States to recruit Non US citizens into the U.S. Army during the Cold War with the intent of fighting as guerrillas if and when hostilities broke out between East and West. See also Charles, K. Dagleish, *A New Lodge Act for the Army-A Strategic Tool for the Global War on Terrorism*, National Defense University, National War College, 2004, page 1.

<sup>95</sup> Shimon Naveh, *In Pursuit of Military Excellence*, Frank Cass Publishers, Portland Oregon, 1997, pp 42, 65, 301, 309. The author uses the term cognitive tension in the same manner that Naveh does,

SOF to understand as well as shape the environment. Understanding the environment enables commanders to design effects that achieve results, attacking at the roots of problems and shaping the theater dynamics in a manner that reduces the probability of large-scale troop interventions.

Special operations forces are no panacea, and there are many situations where SOF lacks the access and capacity to shape the environment to preclude major combat operations.

Conventional forces are and will continue to be required in a myriad of situations across the spectrum of military operations. However, past and current employments validate the effectiveness of SOF in stability operations. The recommendations provided in this chapter further enhance the capability and effectiveness of special operations forces in this environment.

---

to denote “universal dynamism” in a thought process that ties different elements of a complex system together in a functioning theoretical framework.

## CONCLUSION

Weak and failing states are a major security threat to the United States of America, and are likely to remain so for the next several decades. Terrorists with global reach will continue to use these areas as safe havens and to recruit and train militants in their war against civilization. Criminal organizations perpetually take advantage of the lack of security in these states to establish markets of illicit drugs, arms and flesh, the fruits of which toll heavily on Western democracies. Finally, the societal decay in failing states sets conditions for populations of resentful, unemployed people, devoid of hope, who see their only recourse in violence. More often than not, the propensity for dispossessed people to commit violence is harnessed by movements and organizations and directed towards the west, with deadly results.<sup>96</sup> The United States must therefore enhance its capabilities to achieve effects in dealing with this type of threat.

Special operations forces (SOF) provide the US with unique capabilities to strengthen weak or failing states. The ubiquitous access and cultural expertise of SOF enable its soldiers, sailors and airmen to achieve effects where other forces or government agencies' capabilities are extremely rudimentary or entirely non-existent. In certain situations, proper employment of SOF in stability operations can limit the scope of large-scale military interventions in stability operations, or preclude the requirement for deploying large formations of troops altogether. However, special operations forces are a finite resource, and improper use diminishes the force's ability to achieve results. Proper employment of SOF, as well as some enhancements to current unit organizations and capabilities, can dramatically enhance U.S. capabilities to achieve major foreign policy objectives in dealing with weak or failing states.

SOF forces need to be employed to achieve effects at the operational or strategic level of war. Failure to use special operations assets against a threat's major lines of operation or centers of gravity consumes finite resources. The exigencies of military requirements have often made SOF a first choice for certain types of missions, especially engagement-type operations at the behest of regional combatant commanders. However, ease of employment and regional expertise should be ruled out as screening criteria for determining the most appropriate forces to accomplish a certain objective. SOF employment in support of theater security cooperation plans should also be focused upon shaping the operational environment, and reducing the requirement for long term commitment of forces. Regardless of the environment, if a task is not intended to achieve strategic or operational level effects, or can be accomplished as effectively by some other type of unit, SOF should not be employed for that particular mission.

SOF units need command and control architecture commensurate with the effects they achieve in the battle space. A SOF commander must possess the same *gravitas* as other leaders within an organization to ensure appropriate consideration of unit capabilities and employment. Rank is an essential element of military culture, and the insignia on one's collar more often than not reflects the weight of an opinion one holds in war counsels. Currently, SOF commanders in special operation task forces and theater special operation commands argue their positions in environments populated by commanders of greater rank and a preponderance of assets. SOF commanders of flag rank would have more capacity to ensure their forces are used to achieve decisive effects on the battlefield. The current redeployment of forces from archaic cold war positions presents an opportune time to reorganize general and admiral billets and make this a reality.

---

<sup>96</sup>For an overview of some of the socioeconomic factors involved in the recruitment of terrorist operatives, see Libby Copeland, "Female Suicide Bombers: The New Factor in Mideast's Deadly Equation", *Washington Post*, April 27, 2002, page C1.

Special operations units need to fully harness the capabilities U.S. and foreign government agencies to achieve decisive effects in stability operations. The potential of military force and non-military actors must be combined to achieve synergistic effects in the battle space. Experienced foreign service officers, serving within the chain of command, can enable SOF units to focus the activities of the other elements of national power and achieve true unity of effort. A union of military and interagency elements such as this would be truly transformational; it would represent an effects-based organization far beyond the scope of the largely technology-centric transformation currently touted by various branches of the military.<sup>97</sup>

The special operations community must devote sufficient resources for targeted recruitment of people with cultural expertise and awareness. Capable operators, fluent in the language and possessing the cultural expertise of regions the U.S. is inextricably focused on, are true force multipliers. No language training or immersion program can replicate the lifelong experience these people bring to the force. Such operators, over time, enhance not only regional expertise, but can help enhance the military's information operation capabilities and human intelligence gathering capabilities as well. These operators will serve well in the fight to keep large regions of the world from lapsing into chaos in the coming years.

Finally, all of the above recommendations need to be addressed via a joint operating concept for SOF stability operations. A joint operating concept enables key personnel within the uniformed military, DOD, United States Government, and academia to continually refine and develop the force's capabilities and organization. Such a document would vector both intellectual focus, as well as priority of effort, on building SOF capabilities to achieve decisive effects at the operational and strategic levels. It would also assist the U.S. in developing a force to deal with

---

<sup>97</sup> See the U.S. Army website on transformation to gauge the level of focus placed on technology in the branch's current efforts to prepare for operations it expects to conduct in the coming decades; available from <http://www.lewis.army.mil/transformation/index.asp>; Internet.

weak and failing states, identified in numerous government documents as one of the major threats to United States security, one that is not effectively addressed in existing Joint Operating Concepts.<sup>98</sup>

Special operations forces have the capability to produce decisive effects in stability operations. Strengthening weak or failing states enhances the security of the United States and supports the achievement of many U.S. foreign policy objectives as well. SOF provide a unique tool for achieving decisive effects in these types of environments. Further refinements of SOF organizations, and a thorough understanding of SOF employment, will ensure the United States is prepared for the problems of tomorrow and beyond.

---

<sup>98</sup> See *National Security Strategy*, *National Military Strategy*, et al.

# BIBLIOGRAPHY

## Secondary Sources

- Army Field Manual 3.0, *Operations*, Headquarters, Department of the Army, Washington, D.C: Government Printing Office: 20 February 2003.
- Army Field Manual 3-05.20, *Special Forces Operations*, Headquarters, Department of the Army, Washington, D.C: Government Printing Office, 30 March 2001.
- Army Field Manual 3-07 *Stability operations and Support Operations*, Headquarters, Department of the Army, Washington, D.C: Government Printing Office: 20 February 2003.
- Army Field Manual 3-07.22 *Counterinsurgency Operations*, Final Approved Draft, Headquarters, Department of the Army, Washington, D.C: Government Printing Office, September 2004.
- Army Field Manual 31-20-03, *Foreign Internal Defense*, Headquarters, Department of the Army, Washington, D.C: Government Printing Office, 20 September 1994.
- Crane, Conrad, *Landpower and Crises: Army Roles and Missions in Smaller-Scale Contingencies During the 1990s*, U.S. Army Strategic Studies Institute, Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania, January 2001, 55 pages.
- Friedman, Thomas L., *The Lexus and the Olive Tree: Understanding Globalization*, Anchor Books/Doubleday, New York, NY, 2000, 490 pages.
- Joint Operating Concept-Stability Operations*, Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, September 2004 (Final Draft), 65 pages.
- The Joint Operational Environment – Into the Future*, Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, March 5 2004 (Coordinating Draft), 193 pages.
- Joint Publication 3-07, *Joint Doctrine for Military Operations Other Than War*, Department of Defense, Washington, D.C: Government Printing Office, 16 June 1995.
- Joint Publication 3-07.1, *Joint Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures for Foreign Internal Defense (FID)*, Department of Defense, Washington, D.C: Government Printing Office, 30 April 2004, 165 pages.
- Kaplan, Robert D., *The Coming Anarchy: Shattering the Dreams of the Post Cold War*, Vintage Books, USA, New York, New York, 2001, 224 pages.
- Kaplan, Robert D., *Warrior Politics: Why Leadership Requires a Pagan Ethos*, Vintage Books, USA, New York, New York, 2003, 224 pages..
- Kershner, Colonel Michael R, “Unconventional Warfare: The Most Misunderstood Form of Military Operations”, *Special Warfare*, winter 2001, pp 2-7.
- Lawrence, T.E., *Seven Pillars of Wisdom*, Anchor Books, New York, New York, 1926, 672 pages.
- Manwaring, Max G., *Internal wars: Rethinking problem and response (Studies in asymmetry)*, Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania, 2001, 41 pages.

- Manwaring, Max G., and Joes, Anthony J., *Beyond Declaring Victory and Coming Home : The Challenges of Peace and Stability Operations*, Praeger Publishers, 2000 280 pages.
- Millett, Richard L., *Colombia's Conflicts: The Spillover Effects of a Wider War*, Strategic Studies Institute, Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania, 2002, 39 pages.
- Nagl, Luz, *Plan Colombia: Reality of the Colombian Crisis and Implications for Hemispheric Security*, Strategic Studies Institute, Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania, 2002, 68 pages.
- Nagl, John A., *Counterinsurgency Lessons from Malaya and Vietnam: Learning to Eat Soup with a Knife*, Praeger Publishers, Westport, CT, 2002, 272 pages.
- The National Military Strategy of the United States of America*, Washington D.C: Government Printing Office, 2004, 24 pages.
- The National Security Strategy of the United States of America*, Washington D.C: Government Printing Office, September 2002, 31 pages.
- O'Neill, Bard E., *Insurgency and Terrorism*, Brassey's (US), Dulles, Virginia, 1990, 171 pages. \
- Passage, David, *The United States and Colombia: Untying the Gordian Knot*, Strategic Studies Institute, Carlisle, PA, March, 2000, 30 pages.
- Robinson, Linda, "Warrior Class, Why Special Forces Are America's Tool Of Choice In Colombia And Around The Globe", *U.S. News and World Report*, February 10, 2003, pp 34-40.
- Robinson, Linda, "Where Angels Fear to Tread", *World Policy Review*, Winter 1999-2000, page 63-71.
- Turabian, Kate L. *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*. 6<sup>th</sup> ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996, 308 pages.
- United States Special Operations Forces Posture Statement, 2003-2004*, Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 2004, 118 pages.

## Primary Sources

- Briefing Report to the Chairman, Caucus on International Narcotics Control*, U.S. Senate, 2000, 41 pages.
- Interview, correspondence with Ambassador (Ret) David Passage.
- Interview, correspondence with Colonel Michael R. Kershner, USA(R).
- Joint Task Force Provide Comfort Videotape*, by General (RET) John M. Shalikashvili (Recorded in 1992)
- Operation Uphold Democracy [CD-ROM]: slide presentation and After Action Report.*: 10th Mountain Division : operations in Haiti, August 1994 thru January 1995 / edited by LTC David T. Stahl.

*United States Forces, Somalia, After Action Report: and, Historical overview: the United States Army in Somalia, 1992-1994*, Center for Military History, Washington D.C. 2003.