

**REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE**

<b>1. Report Security Classification:</b> UNCLASSIFIED			
<b>2. Security Classification Authority:</b>			
<b>3. Declassification/Downgrading Schedule:</b>			
<b>4. Distribution/Availability of Report:</b> DISTRIBUTION STATEMENT A: APPROVED FOR PUBLIC RELEASE; DISTRIBUTION IS UNLIMITED.			
<b>5. Name of Performing Organization:</b> JOINT MILITARY OPERATIONS DEPARTMENT			
<b>6. Office Symbol:</b> C		<b>7. Address:</b> NAVAL WAR COLLEGE 686 CUSHING ROAD NEWPORT, RI 02841-1207	
<b>8. Title</b> Synchronizing Chaos: Command and Control of Special Operations and Conventional Forces in Shared Battlespace			
<b>9. Personal Authors:</b> Kevin A. Christie, Colonel, U.S. Army			
<b>10. Type of Report:</b>		<b>11. Date of Report:</b> 23 October 2006	
<b>12. Page Count:</b>			
<b>13. Supplementary Notation:</b> A paper submitted to the Faculty of the NWC in partial satisfaction of the requirements of the JMO Department. The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the NWC or the Department of the Navy.			
<b>14. Ten key words that relate to your paper:</b>  Special, Operations, Forces, SOF, Command, Control, Communications, Conventional, Iraq, OIF			
<b>15. Abstract:</b> Conventional Forces (CF) and Special Operations Forces (SOF) today are working on a common battlefield, with a level of integration never before seen in U.S. military history. Much progress has been made in synchronizing the effects of this integration, but doctrinal gaps and other command and control (C2) issues still detract from the effectiveness of SOF as a critical enabler. The joint force and the Services must continue to address SOF/CF command and control to achieve consistent synergistic effects, and to maximize the utility of SOF in the irregular and asymmetric environments characteristic of the Global War On Terror (GWOT). This paper will briefly illustrate the integration between SOF and CF in Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF), the current main effort of SOF and the U.S. military. The command and control problems in OIF will then be identified and analyzed in a framework derived from Joint Publication 3.05, Doctrine for Joint Special Operations, which provides guiding principles to commanders exercising command authority over SOF. Finally, the paper defines the C2 issues established in the analysis, and makes recommendations for force-wide changes in doctrine, organization, training, materiel, leadership, personnel, and facilities as appropriate.			
<b>16. Distribution / Availability of Abstract:</b>	<b>Unclassified</b>  X	<b>Same As Rpt</b>	<b>DTIC Users</b>
<b>17. Abstract Security Classification:</b> UNCLASSIFIED			
<b>18. Name of Responsible Individual:</b> CHAIRMAN, JOINT MILITARY OPERATIONS DEPARTMENT			
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**NAVAL WAR COLLEGE**  
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**SYNCHRONIZING CHAOS: COMMAND AND CONTROL OF SPECIAL  
OPERATIONS AND CONVENTIONAL FORCES IN SHARED BATTLE SPACE**

by

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Colonel, U.S. Army

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

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

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

[22] [10] [2006]

## I. Introduction

*“...the art of unconventional warfare has traditionally been shunned by the United States in favor of the direct, conventional approach. The consequence of this perception is that the Department of Defense tends to lock their unconventional warfare tools in a box until desperately needed. When deemed necessary to pull the unconventional warfare tools out of the box, the process of using them has been disjointed, haphazard, and inefficient”*

Major John W. Silkman<sup>1</sup>

The nature of the Global War On Terror (GWOT) has driven U.S. Conventional Forces (CF) and Special Operations Forces (SOF) to unprecedented levels of cooperation on the battlefield, and the historical conventional mistrust of SOF is being overwritten today by successful combined SOF/CF operations. The antecedents for the friction between SOF and CF go back as far as the American Revolutionary War. American militia forces, when operating independently similarly to today's SOF, created chaos in the British rear areas and achieved results that the American regulars could not match.<sup>2</sup> Despite their contributions, senior Continental Army officers regularly disparaged the irregulars' reliability, discipline, and submission to orders. This disdain for SOF and irregular operations in general would become a recurring theme throughout U.S. military history. Well after the landmark 1986 Nunn-Cohen legislation which greatly increased SOF's capabilities,<sup>3</sup> SOF missions in Operation Desert Storm were generally de-conflicted rather than integrated with conventional operations. The rest of the 1990s were marked with SOF and CF successes and failures, but without a definitive test of integrated SOF and CF C2 under combat conditions. On September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001, SOF stepped into the limelight as the supported command in the GWOT, and the parameters of SOF/CF integration shifted dramatically.

While progress has been made in the synchronization of SOF and CF effects, doctrinal gaps and other Command and Control (C2) issues at operational and tactical levels still detract from the effectiveness of SOF as a critical enabler in the GWOT.<sup>4</sup> The joint force and the Services must continue to improve the ability of SOF to conduct C2 and integrate C2 with their own capabilities. Integrated SOF and CF command and control is a base requirement for maximizing SOF effects in the irregular and asymmetric environments characteristic of the GWOT. This paper will analyze the C2 integration between SOF and CF in Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF), the current main effort of SOF and the U.S. military, and make recommendations for force-wide changes in doctrine, organization, training, materiel, leadership, personnel, and facilities as appropriate.<sup>5</sup> The analysis framework I will use is from Joint Publication 3.05, Doctrine for Joint Special Operations, which states that commanders exercising command authority over SOF should:

- (1) Provide for a clear and unambiguous chain of command.
- (2) Avoid frequent transfer of SOF between commanders.
- (3) Provide for sufficient staff expertise to plan, conduct, and support the operations.
- (4) Integrate SOF in the planning process.
- (5) Match unit capabilities with mission requirements.

Command and control of all aspects of SOF is too broad of a subject to explore in this paper. This paper concentrates on the C2 issues that most pertain to units conducting integrated ground operations, primarily Army Special Forces (SF), Navy SEALs, and U.S. Army and Marine conventional forces. SOF maritime and air operations and other joint SOF such as psychological operations and civil affairs deserve to be explored in much greater detail than I can devote on these pages. The reader should also note that

while this paper is written in past tense, the struggle in Iraq is ongoing and much supporting documentation is still classified. Certain specialized SOF counter-terrorism (CT) elements operating in Iraq cannot be addressed at all in unclassified venues, and I have excluded CT units from the specific discussion. These limitations do not, however, unduly constrain an examination of the most important CF/SOF integration issues, and the themes in this paper are generally relevant to all SOF.

## **II. SOF/CF C2 integration in Iraqi Freedom (OIF)**

The Major Combat Operations (MCO) phase of OIF marks a watershed moment in the integration of SOF and CF. From the pre-planning for the invasion through the declared end of MCO on 1 May 2003, all the capabilities of SOF were synchronized into to the campaign to level never seen previously in U.S. military history.<sup>6</sup> Figure 1. shows a sketch from General Tommy Franks autobiography, *American Soldier*, with SOF in the lead in the west and north. The Combined Forces Special Operations Component Command (CFSOCC), working directly for the CENTCOM commander, controlled two Combined Joint Special Operations Task Forces (CJSOTF-North, CJSTOF-West) built around the 10<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> Special Forces (SF) Groups, respectively. When the 4<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division's (4ID) deployment through Turkey was stopped, CJSTOF-North became the supported command in northern Iraq, with effective C2 of sixty thousand Kurdish Peshmerga fighters. Significantly, several large CF units including the

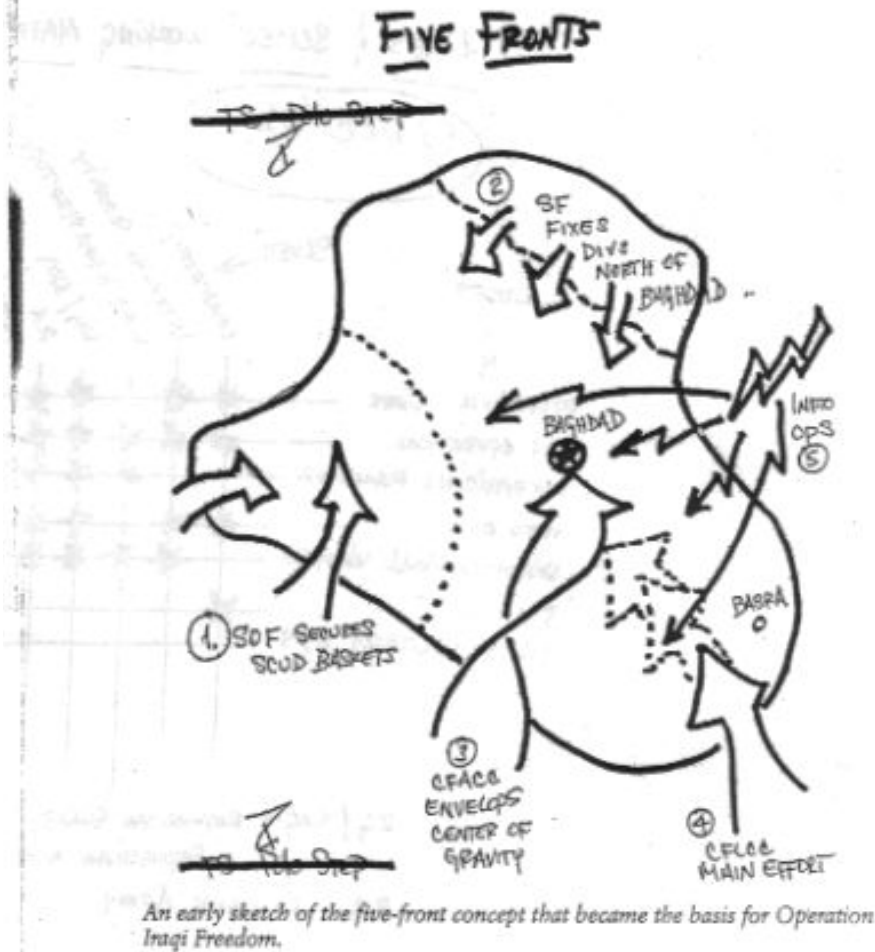


Figure 1.

173<sup>rd</sup> Airborne Brigade were shifted from the 4<sup>th</sup> ID to Tactical Control (TACON) under CJSOTF-North.<sup>7</sup> SOF also played a critical supporting role in the main attacks in the south. Every type of SOF in the U.S. inventory was used in the MCO phase. Robust SOF liaison teams were put in place in conventional headquarters to ensure SOF integration

and mitigate the possibilities of fratricide, and a Special Operations Command and Control Element (SOCCE) was established to ensure coordinated operations with the Marines. The C2 and liaison during this period was in accordance with joint and service doctrine, with SOF units operating at a distance from CF units generally under SOF pure command, and SOF units closely supporting CF primarily in TACON relationships.<sup>8</sup>

The integration of SOF and CF into OIF was a major success overall, but not problem-free. Despite a capable LNO team at the British HQ, a Special Forces company working for the British 1<sup>st</sup> Armored Division was unable to conduct effective operations. The division commander refused to allow the SF Company to pass information laterally to his subordinate units, and insisted on a time-intensive mission approval process. Without the ability to exercise initiative, the SF Company became ineffective and had to be withdrawn.<sup>9</sup> Cultural differences, lack of understanding, and friction between the equal rank commanders of the 173<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Brigade and CJSOTF North forced the injection of an SF general officer to take overall charge of the operation. These problems significantly impacted the synchronization of the units, despite the positioning of a robust SOF liaison team with the CF headquarters, and a clear C2 relationship.<sup>10</sup>

With the end of the MCO phase, SOF in Iraq were consolidated under one CJSOTF. The CJSOTF was formed around SF Group headquarters elements that rotated into Iraq every six months. The CJSOTF, TACON to the Multi-National Corps-Iraq (MNC-I), was the only SOF headquarters under the C2 of a conventional commander. All subordinate SOF elements were under its operational control (OPCON) with no delegated TACON to CF. As the situation in Iraq deteriorated into an active insurgency, the simple metrics of real estate and complementary target sets began to drive SOF and CF to routinely operate together at previously unthinkable levels. CF were required to “own” of all the land in Iraq<sup>11</sup> for counter-insurgency (COIN) operations and stability tasks, but

SOF teams were advising Iraqi combat units, developing human intelligence (HUMINT), and conducting Counter-Terrorism (CT) missions in the same battle space. Often the lines between SOF CT targets and CF COIN targets were indistinguishable in complex urban environments. Without directed TACON or OPCON, SOF/CF integration below CJSOTF level was best defined by supporting relationships. The parameters of supporting relationships are depicted at figure 2.

**Support is a command authority.** A support relationship is established by a superior commander between subordinate commanders when one organization should identify, protect, complement, or sustain another force...Support may be exercised by commanders at any echelon at or below the level of combatant command...**JFCs may establish support relationships within the joint force to enhance unity of effort....**

**Mutual support.** Mutual support is the actions that units render each other against an adversary because of their assigned tasks, their position relative to each other and to the adversary, and their inherent capabilities.

**Establishing supported and supporting relationships** between components is a useful option to accomplish needed tasks...components may simultaneously receive and provide support in different mission areas, functions, or operations. For instance, a joint force special operations component may be supported simultaneously for a direct action mission while providing support to a joint force land component for a deep operation...

Figure 2. Joint definitions of supporting relationships from Joint Publication 3-0 *Doctrine for Joint Operations*, 10 September 2001, pg. II-9

When the tempo of SOF operations in CF battle space increased, so did instances of CF commanders “shutting down” the operations of SOF teams because they did not exercise directive control. Most CF and SOF personnel were unfamiliar with applying supporting relationships to tactical maneuver operations, or knew how to reduce risk between SOF and CF through integration procedures. Some CF commanders were extremely concerned about the possibility of fratricide, especially when SOF units were operating in non-military vehicles or clandestine posture. These concerns were magnified by a gap in communications connectivity between SOF and CF. SOF were heavily



equipped with long range communications and most SOF systems were satellite based, to include SOF “Blue Force Tracker” (BFT) systems. CF units used line of sight FM systems almost exclusively. Most of these technical issues were eventually resolved, but some CF leaders still used their authority as the landowner to restrict SOF mobility and operations. SOF units routinely transited tactical and operational level boundaries, and SOF believed that TACON or OPCON to CF units would cripple their ability to prosecute operational and strategic level targets. LNO teams helped to integrate operations to a degree, but there were few if any SOF LNOs working in CF headquarters below division level. Most tactical level units worked through their differences through necessity. CF needed SOF human intelligence and precision targeting, while SOF needed responsive conventional quick reaction forces (QRFs) and logistical support. SOF and CF leaders found themselves in mutually dependent supporting relationships, and worked through C2 differences through informal lateral contacts. As a result, SOF and CF were generally successful in integrating their operations as the U.S. settled into stability operations and COIN, despite the unresolved C2 issues and doctrinal shortfalls.<sup>12</sup>

### **III. C2 Analysis of SOF/CF integration in Operation Iraqi Freedom**

#### **Provide for a clear and unambiguous chain of command.**

At operational level, the joint force commander established a coherent C2 architecture for the major combat phase of OIF with the development of the CFSOCC and two subordinate CJSOTFs. Friction did occur in places, as noted between the 173<sup>rd</sup> Airborne BDE and CJSOTF-North, but this was despite a clearly directed TACON relationship. With most CF and SOF geographically separated during the MCO phase, instances of conventional commanders inhibiting SOF teams’ freedom of action were minimal.

During the COIN phase of OIF, command and control conflicts increased due to the close proximity of CF and SOF units and their operations. This friction most often occurred at higher tactical levels. At lower levels, especially battalion and below, informal relationships were generally well developed and effective at achieving integrated effects.<sup>13</sup> SOF operational commanders began strongly emphasizing the need for lower level leaders to reach out to their conventional counterparts, develop rapport, and establish cooperative relationships as quickly as possible. Some SOF commanders actually began this process by visiting their CF counterparts in CONUS, or engaging with them on training exercises prior to deployment. When leader relationships were good, CF battalions and companies would receive timely and actionable SOF intelligence and situational awareness, while SOF would get logistical support and responsive QRFs. One mid-grade SF officer with multiple tours in Iraq and Afghanistan noted “the younger generation gets it, they are more concerned with the results of what we do than who is in charge or who gets the credit.”<sup>14</sup> Higher levels of command, insulated from the immediate effects of informal CF/SOF integration, continued to try and gain directive control over SOF.

**Avoid frequent transfer of SOF between commanders.**

As almost all SOF were kept within OPCON of SOF command lines, few formal transfers occurred in either the MCO or COIN phases. Some SOF units received dramatic mission changes or were shifted throughout the sectors of several different CF units, but apparently with few negative effects. No reviewed materiel addressed this as a significant issue.

**Provide for sufficient staff expertise to plan, conduct, and support the operations.**

Due to the extended duration of the prewar development, SOCCENT planning cells and individual SOF subject matter experts were able to integrate successfully into

CENTCOM and subordinate CF headquarters staffs. SOF LNO packages with major units usually provided sufficient connectivity to facilitate integrated operations in the MCO phase. The small number of available SOF LNOs and lack of Special Operations Command and Control Elements (SOCCEs) did have a negative effect on the COIN phase that followed. Task organized SOCCEs are defined in doctrine as the preferred C2 enabler for SOF operating in CF battle space. SOCCEs are doctrinally tasked to co-locate with CF headquarters and take C2 of SOF forces operating in the CF sector,<sup>15</sup> but the density of SOF GWOT requirements made manning these elements problematic.

Eventually, the same close proximity of SOF and CF units that caused initial friction usually enabled informal contacts that bridged the lack of SOF expertise on CF tactical level staffs. Savvy CF battalion commanders and field grade staff officers became comfortable getting advice and targeting information from Special Forces sergeants. One OIF report from senior field grade conventional officers noted “[brigade] and in cases [battalion] staff officers interacted with these [SOF] agencies with informal coordination on a daily basis. These agencies were a major source of information effecting ... operations to capture or kill AIF within BN AOs...”<sup>16</sup> Liaison tasks at tactical levels were conducted when necessary through these informal coordination visits, but the lack of sufficient SOF LNOs continued to be identified by CF as a concern.

### **Integrate SOF in the planning process.**

On taking command of SOCCENT in June 2002, brigadier general Gary Harrell noted that “SOF planning to that point had been quite rudimentary. [SOCCENT] had to get serious about Iraq...we were going to write a SOF campaign plan.”<sup>17</sup> General Harrell’s efforts led to effective SOF integration in the CENTCOM planning process. Many specific SOF missions were changed or conducted differently than planned due to the dynamic nature of the environment, but the essential tasks of the major SOF elements

were well accounted for. In the COIN phase of OIF, integrated planning efforts at the operational level were adequate. Key CJSOTF staff routinely traveled to the Multi-National Corps-Iraq (MNC-I) headquarters for planning sessions, and most problems with integration of SOF and CF plans seemed to be related more to the ever-changing threat and a lack of strategic guidance rather than inherent challenges between SOF and CF.<sup>18</sup> Tactical level commanders integrated SOF into planning using the same lateral contacts with SOF leadership as they did to conduct integrated operations. There were many planning shortfalls at tactical level, but most leaders assessed these as driven more by the extremely high operational tempo of both CF and SOF tactical units.

**Match unit capabilities with mission requirements.**

CENTCOM generally achieved excellent troop to task alignment by keeping SOF units under SOF commanders in the MCO phase. SOF missions to the great extent were practical to their unique unit capabilities and conducted within doctrine. Some units had to scramble for equipment to operate in their unique environments, but SOF units adapted and overcame these issues in time to minimize their importance.<sup>19</sup> In the COIN phase, SOF units were sometimes tasked beyond their organic capabilities due to their relatively small size for operating in high threat environments. Responsive support from local CF units became a baseline requirement for mission accomplishment and survivability.

One C2 capability issue with significant implications is the austere rank and supporting staff structure of SOF units. Prior to the expanded use of SOF in the GWOT, the preferred operational headquarters for a major operation such as OIF would be a Combined Forces Special Operations Component Command (CFSOCC) built from the Theater Special Operations Command (TSOC). The TSOC is the theater commander's standing headquarters for controlling SOF operations. Due to the wide scope of their Theater Security Cooperation (TSC) responsibilities, which often stay constant even in

wartime, and the necessity to C2 multiple fronts in the GWOT, TSOC commanders find themselves unable to maintain operational level headquarters for extended operations such as OIF. Various other C2 arrangements, to include totally ad-hoc structures have been tried with less than optimal results.

The JSOTF and CJSOTF headquarters structures in OIF were built around Special Forces Groups, tactical army headquarters elements commanded by colonels (although SF operate at operational and strategic level, U.S. Army combat arms units are normally considered to be tactical in nature up through division level). The CJSOTF commanders' nearest operational "peer" equivalents were two-star general officers. The CJSOTF leadership in OIF was well treated and respected by operational and strategic level leaders, but often ran into difficulties with the many staff officers who were equal or superior in rank to the most senior SOF commander in country. The CJSOTFs performed extremely well, but with their relatively limited organic manning and single service origins, were often over-tasked to run major joint operations. The inadequate rank and staff manning of the CJSOTFs is a major C2 issue that has long term implications. Due to the pace of SOF operations worldwide, forming JSOTFs and CJSOTFs around SOF tactical level headquarters is a trend that appears likely to increase rather than diminish.<sup>20</sup>

#### **IV. Recommendations**

*"Of course you SOF guys want supporting relationships, they just mean you can go do whatever you want"*

Infantry colonel reaction to SOF OIF lessons learned brief<sup>21</sup>

#### **Doctrine.**

*Establish supporting relationships as the default C2 between SOF and CF in joint and Service doctrine, and develop doctrinally based Tactics, Techniques, and*

***Procedures (TTP) to assist with implementing them.*** The Joint Universal Lessons Learned report from OIF-1 (S/NF) notes that “Supported / Supporting relationships, rather than Operational Control (OPCON) and Tactical Control (TACON) arrangements, better support operational level command and control in the emerging battlespace, particularly in complex urban environments.”<sup>22</sup> Doctrine, particularly within the Services, has not yet captured the evolution of supporting relationships between SOF and CF or established effective procedures to facilitate them. SOF have few problems working within supporting relationships, perhaps because they are routinely tasked to “control” indigenous forces using only cultural skills and influence. CF, often unfamiliar with joint doctrine and schooled in the primacy of clearly defined OPCON and TACON lines, may resist supporting relationships without further clarification and development of appropriate doctrine. Support, already addressed generically in joint doctrine, should be further developed to specifically include SOF and incorporated into joint and service doctrine as the default relationship between SOF and CF. Doctrine should continue to allow for more constrained C2 relationships such as OPCON and TACON where and when it is uniquely required, usually for specific operations of relatively short duration.

***Acknowledge in doctrine that SOF LNOs will rarely be available below operational levels, establish SOF/CF liaison as a mutual requirement, and develop TTP to fill liaison gaps.*** Joint and Service doctrine notes that C2 issues between SOF and CF can be mitigated with the use of liaison teams. However, doctrine tends to address LNO responsibilities as a SOF responsibility only, and limited SOF personnel numbers will rarely allow SOF LNOs below division level.<sup>23</sup> In a GWOT environment, one SOF battalion size unit with fifteen or so operational teams might be working across the sectors of eight to ten conventional coalition brigades with twenty or thirty subordinate battalions. Even a small LNO presence at some of these headquarters would significantly

impact the SOF unit's operational capability. Doctrine must be revised to reflect these realities.

*De-emphasize the doctrinal role of the SOCCE.* SOCCEs were a useful construct for a time when SOF operated only in direct supporting roles to CF and SOF/CF integration was minimal. SOCCEs may have a useful role in specific operations when SOF are TACON, OPCON, or in direct support to CF, but are of much less use in the sustained operations characteristic of the GWOT. After years of successful operation in Iraq and Afghanistan, organic SOF C2 architectures have been established that they are capable of controlling SOF operations and integrating them with CF.

### **Organization.**

*Build SOF headquarters into capable CJSOTFs.* Special Forces Groups have now become the default SOF operational level C2 nodes in the GWOT. The SF Groups have generally performed superbly in this role, but building an operational level joint headquarters from a single service tactical headquarters is fraught with pitfalls. As noted previously, tactical rank levels, personnel limitations, and single-service base manning all detract from SOF's ability to effect the operational and strategic environment.

USSOCOM could set a new standard in joint transformation by building the Special Forces Group, SEAL team, and USAF Special Operations Squadron headquarters elements into standing joint force headquarters. The transition, while difficult, would be greatly assisted by the inherently joint nature of SOF. At a minimum, the new role of the SF Group headquarters must be acknowledged and the Army Service structure of these units should be increased to enable them to function as CJSOTFs with minimal augmentation from joint personnel. As a supporting or alternative course of action, USSOCOM could build standing joint headquarters staff elements that would fall in on single service units to ease the transition into JSOTF configuration.

## **Training.**

***Integrate pre-deployment training between SOF and CF the maximum extent possible.***

Due to a brutal deployment tempo, Army SOF participation in the Combined Training Centers (CTCs) since the start of the GWOT has dropped off dramatically.<sup>24</sup> This has reduced tactical level CONUS training opportunities between SOF and CF, and often leads to these units working together for the first time under actual combat conditions. This has a cascading effect on the leader trust required for mutual support to work well. Navy SEAL units rarely participate in significant numbers at any of the CTCs, a surprising shortfall considering their routine operations with Army and Marine units in OIF. While SOF participation in the CTCs issue is problematic for the foreseeable future, SOF can help train up their CF counterparts on SOF capabilities by sending key leaders to CTC rotations as SOF role players, a minor investment that has the potential of great dividends. Every attempt should be made to have at least the corresponding headquarters elements of SOF units that will be operating near CF units in combat participate in CF CPXs and CTC rotations prior to deploying.

**Significantly increase their mandatory curriculum hours spent on SOF education and make SOF operations critical in exercises at professional development schools.** Despite a patent lack of knowledge on SOF and special operations in general in the conventional force, the amount of time and resources professional development schools devote towards education on SOF capabilities and operations is almost insignificant.<sup>25</sup> Education on SOF capabilities, limitations, and effects can and should take a much more prominent role in officer and NCO education. TTP for integration of SOF should be a major topic of discussion at all levels of the educational system. SOF should routinely be established as the supported force for exercises in professional military education, requiring students to develop strategies for



enabling SOF as the main effort. As SOF will likely be the force of choice in the future irregular environments likely to dominate U.S. defense concerns for the future, exposing CF to SOF driven scenarios would also better their ability to understand and operate in such environments.

### **Materiel.**

*“People are more important than hardware”*

The first SOF truth<sup>26</sup>

*Close gaps in CF and SOF communications technologies and situational awareness tools.* Although material discrepancies are the least important integration issue between SOF and CF, there are technological capability gaps that must be addressed by the joint force. SOF training and equipment levels on tactical satellite based C2 systems far exceeds that of its CF counterparts, but SOF has a corresponding shortfall of tactical line of sight C2 systems and situational awareness (SA) tools that are compatible with CF systems. Developed along separate acquisition paths, SOF satellite based SA systems are only marginally compatible with CF line of sight “Blue Force Tracker” technology.<sup>27</sup> SOF and CF units have been able to minimize the impact of this with software patches, trading equipment, and maintaining frequent face to face contacts, but as CF reliance on digital SA grows it is essential that SOF and CF be fully compatible on all C2 systems.

### **Leadership.**

*“I’ve seen SOF and conventional forces working together better here than I’ve ever seen combined arms working together, even better than I’ve seen between armor and artillery throughout my career. Now, when can I get you SF guys OPCON?”*

General Officer, Mosul, 2005<sup>28</sup>

*Elevate the Ranger Regiment and Special Forces Groups, Air Force Special Operations Squadrons, and SEAL Team commands to one-star rank.*

The current SOF leadership structure was conceived with the expectation that SOF would always be in a subordinate role to CF. While SOF leaders today usually receive excellent consideration, it is simply the nature of any military structure that a (colonel) brigade level CJSOTF commander will not have the same influence as a two-star division commander. As the SOF O-6 level commands become the standard building blocks of CJSOTFs in the GWOT, SOF rank structure must be grown to enable greater input at operational levels. Only by establishing opportunities to grow SOF war-fighting general officers will SOF be able to consistently conduct major operations as an equal partner with CF or the supported command as required. Consideration should be given to increasing the rank authorizations for all SOF who operate primarily as indigenous combat multipliers, Army Special Forces in particular, up one level. For example, Special Forces “A Detachments” would be led by majors, “B Detachments” by lieutenant colonels, and “C Detachments” (battalion level headquarters) by colonels. While this recommendation is likely to cause multiple coronary events in the halls of the Pentagon, the end state would be better leader interaction and more SOF credibility with both U.S. conventional forces and the indigenous forces SOF work with.

*Establish CF and SOF leader to leader contacts during pre-deployment.* The most critical requirements for synchronizing SOF and CF operations are leaders who understand and trust each other – leaders who “get it.” CF and SOF leaders must strive to understand each other’s capabilities and limitations, to include the differing levels of risk acceptance between SOF and CF, and recognize that their effects can be mutually supporting without being constraining. To facilitate trust and understanding, SOF and CF commanders and key staff personnel should to visit each other in the planning stages of major operations. The priority for these visits should be the establishment of personal contacts. SOF leaders must understand the full spectrum of responsibilities of the CF

“landowner,” then build rapport and confidence with their conventional counterparts just as they would with indigenous elements. CF leaders must learn what SOF brings to the fight and how to integrate their effects into operations, without restrictive and counterproductive directive C2. When SOF and CF leaders are willing and able to cooperate even when well out of their respective comfort zones, SOF and CF will be on track for seamless integration.

### **Personnel and Facilities**

Beyond the major issues of establishing a greater SOF rank structure and more robust staffs to facilitate CJSOTF operations as previously noted, personnel issues do not have a great impact on SOF/CF command and control. Facilities issues are insignificant in this discussion.

## **V. Conclusion**

A final victory against the stateless threat the U.S. military faces in the GWOT, if such a thing is obtainable at all, will not be won on conventional battlefields. SOF, by definition the primary U.S. military practitioners of counter-terrorism, irregular warfare, and unconventional warfare, will continue to grow in importance to the joint force. Truly synchronized efforts between conventional forces and SOF can only be achieved within a well-defined, well-supported, and well-understood C2 architecture. Strategic leaders of the joint force must establish common communications architectures, refine doctrine, enhance SOF organizational C2, and most of all develop mutual trust through leader education and combined training. Without synchronized effects between SOF and CF, we risk mission failure on current and future GWOT battlefields.

Endnotes:

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<sup>1</sup> John W. Silkman, “Unconventional Warfare and Operational Art: Can We Achieve Continuity in Command and Control?” Monograph, School of Advanced Military Studies, 2004: 1. Special Operations Forces are the only U.S. military elements tasked with UW as a primary mission.

<sup>2</sup> Robert B. Asprey, *War in the Shadows: the Guerilla in History* Vol. 1. Lincoln, NE: iUniverse, Inc. 2002: 68.

<sup>3</sup> Susan L. Marquis, *Unconventional Warfare: Rebuilding U.S. Special Operations Forces*. 1<sup>st</sup> ed. Washington D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 1997:144-147.

<sup>4</sup> The latest (2005) version of FM 5-0, Army Orders Planning and Production, does not address Special Operations or SOF except in context of Civil Affairs and Psychological Operations. Other SOF are addressed in more detail in other Army doctrine, but exclusion from this very recent basic reference document is a warning sign of other doctrinal integration shortfalls.

<sup>5</sup> The “DOTLMPF” methodology is commonly used in the U.S. Army and the joint force to structure resource shortfalls. It is the standard template for lessons learned at the Center for Army Lessons Learned (CALL).

<sup>6</sup> Joint Forces Command, *Joint Lessons Learned: Operation Iraqi Freedom Major Combat Operations* SECRET/NOFORN. United States Joint Forces Command, 2004: 4-19. Information extracted was unclassified. The integration of SOF and CF was given the highest rating of “capabilities that reached new levels of performance.”

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 4-20.

<sup>8</sup> Charles H. Briscoe, Kenneth Finlayson, Robert W. Jones Jr., Cherilyn A. Walley, A. Dwayne Aaron, Michael R. Mullins, James A. Schroder, eds. *All Roads Lead to Baghdad: Army Special Operations Forces in Iraq*. 1<sup>st</sup> ed. United States Army Special Operations Command History Office, 2006: 134-154

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 283-285

<sup>10</sup> Michael D. Hastings, “The Integration of Conventional and Special Operations Forces,” thesis, U.S. Army Command and Staff College, 2005: 67-83.

<sup>11</sup> A few Joint Special Operations Areas (JSOAs) were established in Iraq, but only for very brief periods. The metric of real estate ownership is changing as Iraqi (conventional) units take control of more sectors, but as of this writing most of Iraq was still under coalition forces control.

<sup>12</sup> Joint Readiness Training Center (JRTC), *Special Operations Forces Combined Arms Assessment Team (CAAT) OIF After-Action Report*. Fort Polk, LA: Special Operations Training Detachment, April 2005

<sup>13</sup> Center for Army Lessons Learned (CALLCOMS), Sep 12, 2006, Chapter 2, Intelligence, TOPIC C, Special Forces

<sup>14</sup> Author’s notes: interview with a Special Forces major, Baghdad, Iraq, February 2006.

<sup>15</sup> Ronald S. Magnum, “Linking Conventional and Special Operations Forces,” *Joint Force Quarterly*, National Defense University, Washington, DC. Issue 35, October 2004: 59.

<sup>16</sup> JRTC, *Trip Report, OIF Recon, 1-11 March, Maneuver Task Forces*, Fort Polk, LA: Operations Group, 14 October 2006. The referenced observation includes consideration of both SOF and civilian intelligence agencies.

<sup>17</sup> Briscoe, 29.

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<sup>18</sup> Thomas E. Ricks, *Fiasco: The American Military Adventure in Iraq* 1<sup>st</sup> ed. New York: Penguin Press, 2006: 392. Ricks notes that there was no campaign plan developed to fight the insurgency until August 2004.

<sup>19</sup> Briscoe, 84-95.

<sup>20</sup> Mark Jones, Wes Rehorn, “Special Operations Forces – Integration in Joint Warfighting,” *Joint Center for Lessons Learned*, Vol. 2, Issue 2 March 2003: 32-33

<sup>21</sup> Author’s notes. The author was present when this briefing was conducted at Fort Polk Louisiana, August 2005.

<sup>22</sup> Joint Forces Command, 11-1.

<sup>23</sup> CALLCOMS, *ibid*.

<sup>24</sup> Author’s notes. Prior to the GWOT, ten SF battalions – nearly half the total force, were scheduled to train at the National Training Center (NTC) or JRTC every year. That number had dropped to five by FY 05.

<sup>25</sup> Author’s notes. Discussion with Prof. John Waghelstein, 19 October 2006. At the Army’s Command General Staff College (CGSC) in 1979, out of a 1,000-hour curriculum, only six hours were devoted to mandatory study of irregular warfare or SOF type operations. This statistic has not changed significantly over the years at any level of professional military education.

<sup>26</sup> United States Special Operations Command (USSOCOM), *Posture Statement 2006*, U.S. Government, 2006: 1. The other three SOF truths are: quality is more important than quantity, SOF cannot be mass-produced, and competent SOF cannot be created after emergencies occur.

<sup>27</sup> Hastings, 53-58.

<sup>28</sup> Author’s notes: interview with a Special Forces battalion commander, Mosul, Iraq, March 2005.

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