

THE WEST-AFRICAN SPECIAL OPERATIONS FORCES: DEVELOPMENT AND  
INTEGRATION IN THE CONTEXT OF THE SUB-SAHARAN  
GROWING THREATS

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by

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The opinions and conclusions expressed herein are those of the student author and do not necessarily represent the views of the US Army Command and General Staff College or any other governmental agency. (References to this study should include the foregoing statement.)

## ABSTRACT

THE WEST-AFRICAN SPECIAL OPERATIONS FORCES: DEVELOPMENT AND INTEGRATION IN THE CONTEXT OF THE SUB-SAHARAN GROWING THREATS, by CPT Demba Mou Mapeinda Gueye, 114 pages.

Terrorism is probably the most serious threat to security and stability in West Africa, particularly in the Sahel-Saharan strip. In this Global War on Terror, development in US policy toward Africa has reinforced the need for indigenous SOF. In fact, instead of “nation building” with large, traditional military formations, civilian policy-makers are increasingly opting for a combination of air power, special operators, intelligence agents, indigenous armed groups and contractors, often leveraging relationships with allies and enabling partner militaries to take more active roles: “African solutions to African problems.”

In light of these aforementioned factors and given the low GDP of these nations and their difficulty in financing needed operations and capabilities, the West African nations need to join their efforts in order to find a way to achieve a unified action response to transnational threats in conjunction with the U.S Special Operations Command Africa and its western partners through their respective special operations forces.

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## ACRONYMS

A/G/S LOC	Air/Ground/Sea Lines of Communications
ACRI	African Contingency Response Initiative
AFRICOM	United States Africa Command
AQIM	Al Qaeda in Islamic Maghreb
AU	African Union
COIN	Counter Insurgency
CT	Counterterrorism
DOD	Department of Defense
DOS	Department of State
DOTMLPF-P	Doctrine, Organization, Training, Material, Leadership, Personnel, Facilities and Policy
ECOMOG	Economic Community of West African States Cease-fire Monitoring Group
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
EU	European Union
EUTM	European Union Training Mission
GWOT	Global War on Terror
HVT	High Value Target
ISTC	International Special Training Center
JCET	Joint/Combined Exercise and Training
JPAT	Joint Planning Assistance Team
JSOC	Joint Special Operations Command
JSOTF	Joint Special Operations Task Force
KASOTC	King Abdallah II Special Operations Training Center

KLE	Key Leader Engagement
LOO	Lines of Operation
MedCap	Medical Capacity
MINUSMA	United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
OD-A	Operational Detachment – Alpha
OD-B	Operational Detachment – Bravo
OEF-TS	Operation Enduring Freedom – Trans Sahara
QDR	Quadrennial Defense Review
SF	Special Forces
SOF	Special Operations Forces
SOTF	Special Operations Task Force
TSCTP	Trans-Saharan Counterterrorism Partnership
UN	United Nations
USSOCOM	United States Special Operations Command

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

A combination of emerging transnational threats (terrorism, piracy and transnational organized crime), evolving US policy toward Africa, and the increased demands placed on US special operations forces (SOF) has produced a situation in which new approaches to the use of SOF bear consideration. The last fourteen years have seen US SOF being used more than ever around the world, yet the Pentagon's military footprint in Africa is small compared with other parts of the world. According to Ken Opalo: "in 2012, US military aid and arms sales to Africa accounted for a mere 4.25 percent of the global total (the Middle East received 67.7 percent.) These military outlays were just 5.5 percent of the \$7.8 billion the US allocated for foreign assistance in the African region, with about 70 percent of this aid (\$5.6 billion) focused on health care" (Opalo 2014). Regardless of the size of the US military footprint in Africa, its expansion has serious implications for the continent's security, the consolidation of democracy and the professionalization of its militaries as well as for respect for human rights across the region.

#### Background

African concerns about terrorism have intensified in recent years. The resolutions of the UN General Assembly dealing with terrorism in recent years contrast sharply with the inaction of the organization in the early seventies. In fact, between 1960 and the early 1980s, calls for a consensus on terrorism did not have much effect mainly due to differences on the question of the use of violence by self-determination movements or

national liberation. Aware of the magnitude of these ideological differences, member states could not agree on global measures, but preferred to adopt piecemeal measures (Jonge Oudraat 2004).

The frequency and scale of terrorist incidents in Africa are indicative of a need for more capacity to address security challenges. In 2013 alone, for example, some 30 militants took over the Tigantourine gas facility in Algeria and killed 39 hostages. That same year, Somali militants raided the Westgate shopping center in Kenya's capital, leaving 67 dead. On 14 April, hundreds of school girls, most between the ages of 16 and 18, were abducted from the Government Girls Secondary School in Chibok in north-eastern Nigeria by the Islamist armed group Boko Haram.

The region is also politically unstable - just under one third of the states have experienced a coup d'état in the last four years. Organized crime in West Africa became an international security concern in the mid-2000s, due to the detection of large cocaine shipments transiting the region on their way to Europe. Subsequent assessments conducted by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crimes (UNODC) revealed that a number of transnational organized crime problems pose a threat to stability and development in the region, including oil bunkering, arms trafficking, human trafficking, migrant smuggling, toxic waste dumping, fraudulent medicine, cigarette smuggling, and the looting of natural resources (UNODC 2013).

General James B. Linder, the former commander of the US Special Operations Command, Africa (SOCAFRICA) stated that "Africa is the battleground of the future . . . The future of war is about winning people, not territory". This statement is especially true in Africa, continent where the notions of borders from the colonial heritage, without

taking into account family affiliations, ethnic or religious. More than anyone, terrorists ignore this notion of borders, acting wherever their ideologies lead them. Combating such type of organizations require a view different from the classic warfare between nations. (Griswold 2014).

Following the attacks of September 11, the proceedings of the Third Committee of the General Assembly of the United Nations (UN) focused on the links between terrorism and transnational crime. The discussions established the links between drug trafficking and transnational criminal activities, which include the ability to finance international terrorism (UN General Assembly 2001).

The close collaboration between the European countries and American countries in matters of fight against drug smuggling has almost closed the access roads of traffickers from Latin America to the old continent. As consequences, smugglers shifted to some of the world's oldest trade routes, the Sahel-Saharan strip, where Boko Haram and Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb meet. "Thirteen percent of the European cocaine trade flows through Africa. That's about \$4.2 billion a year" (Griswold 2014).

The Gulf of Guinea took the first place as the region with the highest number of reported piracy attacks in the world, surpassing the Gulf of Aden, widely known for high-seas hijackings. These attacks took larger proportions by becoming more and more violent. Thus, "given the limited maritime security presence off the West African coast, South American narcotics traffickers have found the region an attractive transit route to Europe. Oil theft and illegal bunkering plague the Gulf of Guinea. Nigeria alone loses between 40,000 and 100,000 barrels a day due to theft" (Osinowo 2015).

The power of the states in the region remains relatively low. In fact, the economic losses in this part of Africa are difficult to quantify. However, theft of natural resources, particularly oil and fish, accounts for perhaps 10 percent of Nigeria's daily production and is a highly organized operation. With 40 percent of the region's annual catch estimated to be illegal, unregulated, or unreported, West-Africa's waters also endure the highest level of illegal fishing in the world. In 2013, almost all of the estimated \$10.2 billion worth of regional trade with the United Kingdom moving through the Gulf of Guinea was declared at risk of theft (Osinowo 2015).

Are indigenous SOF the answer to these transnational threats in the region? On the political level, the creation of elite units aimed to provide the strategic leaders a military power to face potential sensitive threats, such as hostage rescue, High Value Targets (HVT) neutralization, in sum, to stand as counter – terrorism units. The different meetings at the level of the African Union or the Economic Community Of West African States (ECOWAS) suggested the need for these units to work together in order to support each other when needed (Niang 2016). That intent, along with the creation by the US of the Trans-Saharan Counter Terrorism Partnership (TSCTP) in 2005 were concretized by the series of Flintlock exercises, a multilateral partnership between West African nations' SOF (Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria and Senegal, with Algeria and Tunisia as observers) and some NATO and partners countries' SOF under US lead: Austria, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Estonia, France, Germany, Italy, Lithuania, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Spain, Sweden, and the United Kingdom (Warner 2014, 37).

The purpose of this study is to explore the efficacy of indigenous SOF, able to achieve unified action in conjunction with US SOF, based on the Senegalese Special Forces model and adjusted to the peculiarities of the West-African countries, able to respond properly and collectively to the growing threats on the continent. The issues facing the West African states require the adaptation of SOF missions, their development in accordance with the states' national security strategies, and their integration within their respective armed forces in order to fight transnational terrorism, piracy and drug trafficking, and participate in the defense of their nations.

However, due to their misuse, some of these units often time enabled the overthrow of governments. As first consequence, it diverts and impacts negatively the efforts of counterterrorism efforts in the region.

The coup of 17 September 2015 in Burkina Faso reminds us that the threat of coups persists despite the democratization process initiated in the late 1990s. The coups, an evil which have been rampant since many West African states gained their independence, remain present in the region - Nigeria , Gambia, Ivory Coast, Guinea, Mali, Niger etc. - where more than 25 coups attempts have been perpetrated since 1990 , as compared to 14 on the rest of the continent (Cessou 2015). In the majority of them, the perpetrators came from the elite units in charge of the protection of the presidents. These units represent, for the most part, their countries' SOF.

Military assistance, although formally generalized, gives priority to these elite units, often called Special Forces. Misused by the political powers, these units are over-equipped and given preferential treatment at the expense of the rest of the conventional armies. Curiously, the respective population of Mauritania, Mali and Burkina Faso



requested the dissolution of their countries' elite units as sine qua none condition to initiate a dialogue between the leading political party and the opposition: the Presidential Security Battalion (Bataillon pour la Securite Presidentielle–BASEP) in Mauritania (Tawary 2015), the 33rd Parachute Regiment Commandos (33 RPC) in Mali (Maliweb 2012), and the Presidential Security Regiment (RSP) in Burkina Faso (BBC 2015). All of these units were deeply involved in the different coups, which occurred in their respective countries, by leading them, or because of the frustration they created within the rest of the military.

The policy of the US toward Africa is a key factor bearing on the problem. In his commencement address at West Point on 28 May 2014, President Obama announced a five-billion dollar initiative to build counterterrorism partnerships in the Sahel, among other places, “to train, build capacity and facilitate partner countries on the front lines.” (Obama 2014). The US Africa Command (USAFRICOM) is tasked with carrying out this mandate, part of what has been called the Obama Doctrine (Stepak and Whitlark 2012). Everything suggests that the United States does not intent to settle permanently on African soil. In the spirit of the Defense Strategic Guidance of 2012, the US seek to maintain a “light footprint” on the continent, as stated by the former USAFRICOM commander. “In Africa, I would say a light footprint is consistent with what we need and consistent with the defense guidance . . . we need to build allies and partners’ capacities, and cooperate with others to address common security challenges,” Army General Carter F. Ham told the House Armed Services Committee in February 2012 (Miles 2012). The Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR) of 2014 embodies the 21st century defense priorities outlined in the 2012 Defense Strategic Guidance. These priorities include

sustaining a global approach (see figure 1) to countering violent extremists and terrorist threats, with an emphasis on the Middle East and Africa (DOD 2014).



Figure 1. US AFRICOM Regional Interests

*Source:* Azikiwe Abayomi, “The Militarization of the African Continent: AFRICOM Expands Operations in Cooperation With Europe,” Global Research, 22 April 2014, accessed 23 January 2016, <http://www.globalresearch.ca/the-militarization-of-the-african-continent-africom-expands-operations-in-cooperation-with-europe/5378627>.

These different considerations, strengthened by the US policy of a strategy of maintaining a light footprint, suggest strongly to African nations the urgent need to develop their own capacities in order to face their internal problems and find their place in the global war against terrorism. The problem is the misuse of the existing Special Units as presidential guards or privileged units, which do not really perform Special Operations. Meanwhile, from Boko Haram in Nigeria to al-Shabab in Somalia, from al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb to the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group, the rising threats

from the arc of terror have become a plague for the continent. Put on the right track, these different SOF could provide a tremendous added -value to the war against terror.

Given the vulnerabilities of the continent compared to the USA, the African leaders gathered in October 2001 in Dakar to define a common strategy to face that undefined threat following the 9/11 terrorist attacks. The leaders, through the AU Central Organ of the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution of Conflicts condemned the attacks against the United States and urged Member States that had not yet done so to sign and ratify the Algiers Convention. The Convention aimed to strengthen the effective implementation of the Convention and to give effect to Article 3 (d) of the Protocol on the establishment of the Peace and Security of the African Union, the need to coordinate and harmonize continental efforts in the prevention and the fight against terrorism in all its aspects as well as the implementation of other relevant international instruments (AU 2004). In the Dakar Declaration they adopted on 17 October 2001, African leaders, strongly appealed to African countries to ratify urgently the Convention of Algiers and convened an extraordinary summit to discuss progress made in the area of the fight against terrorism in Africa. They reinforced this message at the 5th Extraordinary Session of the Central Organ at Ministerial level held in November 2001 in New York, stressing the need for African countries to work together with the international community in the fight against terrorism (OUA 2001).

It is in this context that the African Union Commission convened from September 11 to 14, 2002 in Algiers, an intergovernmental high-level meeting on the prevention and fight against terrorism in Africa. A total of forty-nine delegations of Member States of the AU, the US, UN, EU and other international organizations took part in this meeting.

The holding of this meeting demonstrated the commitment of the member states of the AU to make every effort to fight against terrorism in all its aspects. It also highlighted their common recognition that, given the severity and violent forms of modern terrorism, its eradication requires strong political commitment to achieve common objectives and to undertake concerted actions at the intergovernmental level, particularly the exchange of information on the activities and movements of terrorist groups in Africa, mutual legal assistance, coordination of border surveillance, the establishment and strengthening of checkpoints at borders and the fight against the import, export and storage of weapons, ammunition and explosive devices (OUA 2003). All political conditions seemed to be set for an efficient counterterrorism strategy. Unfortunately, no real measures were taken in order to implement these resolutions. Therefore, at the tactical level, nothing was done to coordinate or standardize procedures in order to allow them work in conjunction with each other.

Despite the inability of the international community to include and accept a legal definition of terrorism, this has not been the case in Africa, where the Algiers Convention of 1999 gives the following definition of a terrorist act in Article 1 (3) and Article 3.

According to Article 1 (3):

A terrorist act means any act in violation of the criminal laws of a Member State and which may endanger the life, integrity or liberty, or may cause injury or death to any person whatsoever, a number of people or cause damage to any private or public property, natural resources, environmental or cultural heritage and which has the intention to: intimidate, create fear, coerce or induce any government, organization, organization, population or part thereof, to do or refrain from doing an action, or to adopt or abandon a position or act according to certain principles, or disrupt a public service or the delivery of essential services to the population or create a public emergency, create general insurrection in a country, any promotion, funding, donation, order, aid, incitement, encouragement,

attempt, threat, conspiracy, organizing, obtaining or who, with intent to commit an act as mentioned in paragraph. (OUA 2003)

This scourge threatens the sovereignty of the West African states and could undermine all efforts done in recent years in the field of peace and regional economic development. Hence the need for each state to take internal safeguards to better engage with its neighbors. As far as Senegal is concerned, the Government strengthens its homeland security policy while maintaining its constant commitment in support of peacekeeping missions of the United Nations (UN) and African Union (AU). No terrorist incidents were recorded in Senegal in 2014. However, the rise of Boko Haram in Nigeria and instability in Mali brought President Macky Sall to consider “terrorism as the biggest challenge to development in Africa”. According to some observers, Senegal is now seriously threatened by violent extremism and terrorist activity due to his support of the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali. The main concern is that the terrorist fighters escape from the hotspots of the region and cross the porous borders between Senegal, Mali and Mauritania to find a temporary safe haven in Senegal (DoS 2014a).

### Problem Statement

Development of US policy toward Africa has reinforced the need for indigenous SOF. LTC Moussa Diop Mboup from Senegal, then captain and student at the US Army Command and General Staff College (CGSC) class of 2008, concluded his Master of Military Art and Science (MMAS) thesis by observing that the rise of the African continent’s strategic value, due to its energy stores, elicited a dramatic change in the United States’ Africa policy from “benign neglect” to an increasing interest (Mboup

2008). During a press conference preceding his 2008 Africa trip, President Bush expressed the strategic change in very clear terms: “Africa is also increasingly vital to our strategic interests. We have seen that conditions on the other side of the world can have a direct impact on our own security” (Transcript Bush Addresses Policy on Africa 2008). Yet, Major Fernando M. Luján, USA, stated in a study published in March 2013 by the Center for a New American Security (CNAS):

looming budget cuts, ground forces worn down by years of repeated deployments, and a range of ever evolving security challenges from Mali to Libya and Yemen are quickly making light footprint military interventions a central part of American strategy. Instead of nation building with large, traditional military formations, civilian policy-makers are increasingly opting for a combination of air power, special operators, intelligence agents, indigenous armed groups and contractors, often leveraging relationships with allies and enabling partner militaries to take more active roles. (Lujan 2013, 5)

The African continent is a test case for a key aspect of the new strategic direction taken by President Barack Obama, by way of the “light footprint” concept. The essence of American strategy in Africa has remained unchanged since the beginning of the century, and even the 1990s: Africa is not a strategic priority, American presence must bear a minimal footprint (this explains the role of the Special Forces), no direct engagement for American soldiers, or at least none that is publicly displayed, behind-the-scenes leadership and intervention through partners, even in the aforementioned situation, the United States must not appear as a cobelligerent; In the long term, the key phrase is “African solutions to African problems.” More recently, this concept was even declared a model for the fight against terrorism and a source of inspiration for other regions, especially in the Middle East (Kandel 2014).

On its part, after gaining experience in bilateral training with the US SOF through Joint/Combined Exercises and Training (JCETs), the British Special Air Service (SAS),

the French, German, Dutch, and Spanish SOF, the Senegalese military authorities decided to adopt the US Army SOF model, the twelve-man team Operational Detachment Alpha (OD-A). The constrained budget environment of Senegal, however, does not allow the Senegalese armed forces to assume, alone, the fight against terrorism and the other threats off its shore such as piracy. At the same time, terrorist threats are present more than ever on the continent, from the Horn of Africa to the Sahel, from the North to the West part of Africa, moving without any border constraints and destabilizing countries, from the poorest to the richest (Mali, Niger, Nigeria, etc.)

### Thesis Questions

In light of these aforementioned factors and given the low GDP of these nations and their difficulty in financing needed operations and capabilities, the primary research question for this thesis is: how could the West African nations create the opportunity to achieve a unified action response to transnational threats in conjunction with the U.S Special Operations Command Africa through their respective Special Operations Forces?

To answer this question, this thesis will address several secondary research questions:

1. How to foster the best features from the West African nations' SOF working regularly with US SOF, to build a model for development and integration?
2. What are the Senegalese SOF capabilities to work with the US SOF and, more broadly, with the West African nations' SOF (organization, missions, limitations)?

### Assumptions

The quick spread of jihadist terrorism suggests that the West African political leaders could very soon strengthen their nations' SOF forces and give them resources to be professionalized and used appropriately. In his speech during the Armed forces day on November 2015, the Senegalese President Macky Sall, also current chair of the African Union, emphasized the "Peace and security are undermined by the numerous and multifaceted threats among which are: the piracy, arms trafficking, drugs, human trafficking, cross-border crime, and terrorism. . . . It becomes ever more essential to adapt training to the opposing modes of action. As such, I encourage the continuation of the training of Special Forces, by providing the most modern facilities and putting them in better conditions. These types of units because of their versatility and their ability to act in depth, are needed in the remote battle" (Sall 2015).

Additionally, it seems more and more likely that the US policy of light footprint (few boots on the ground) will continue to prevail in Africa.

Furthermore, AFRICOM will focus more and more on collaboration with African institutions to address regionally the shared threats. The Quadrennial Defense Review of 2014 (DOD 2014) stated that "in Africa, terrorists, criminal organizations, militias, corrupt officials, and pirates continue to exploit ungoverned and under-governed territory on the continent and its surrounding waters. The potential for rapidly developing threats, particularly in fragile states, including violent public protests and terrorist attacks, could pose acute challenges to US interests". But the report identifies also significant opportunities to enhance stronger governance institutions and to help foster military



forces capabilities that can be used to partner to address the full spectrum of regional security challenges (DOD 2014).

### Significance of the Study

In the field of military art and science, this study could be a starting point for a comparison and contrast study that aims to see whether the model could be applied elsewhere on the continent or not, due to different cultural approaches. The results of this study could be used to improve the West African nations' SOF effectiveness in a combined and joint fight against terrorist groups and piracy. It might also be used by the US SOCAFRICA to better orient assistance towards the development of African SOF capabilities. Finally, this study might also provide a basis for solving problems of coordination between the SOF components within a country and the other elements of the armed forces (Army, Navy, Air Force, and Gendarmerie) and, in the long term, interagency partners.

### Limitations

This study will focus on West Africa region. It will examine the steps taken by African leaders through IGOs (Intergovernmental Organizations) in order to face terrorism on the continent and the shortfalls of the adopted resolutions for a practical application. This is not a funded study, which limits the possibility to travel to West Africa to collect information directly from the other West-African nations. Being part of the Senegalese Special Forces, the researcher may have some bias due to his experience and relationship with other African SOF such as Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, and Nigeria. But the different SOF meetings, such as Exercises

Flintlock, and the external feedback from some Western SOF partners like the US, the Netherlands, Spain, France and Germany might help mitigate these biases.

Finally, this study will focus on terrorism for practical considerations, given the limited capacities of West African states to address this challenge. The specific cases of piracy and drug trafficking in that region might be another topic to analyze deeper in another MMAS thesis.

### Definitions of key terms

Doctrine: Fundamental principles by which the military forces or elements thereof guide their actions in support of national objectives. It is authoritative but requires judgment in application.

Special Forces: For the most part, Senegalese military doctrine is inspired by French official documents. Therefore, this study will use a French definition of Special Forces. France defines its Special Forces in accordance with the NATO definition, as military units specifically trained, educated and trained to carry out a range of specific tasks, ranging from “special operations” as part of a conventional conflict with those under unconventional warfare (Defense, Comite National 2014).

Special Operations: The United States doctrine for Joint Special Operations defines special operations as “operations conducted by specially organized, trained, and equipped military and paramilitary forces to achieve military, political, economic, or psychological objectives by unconventional military means in hostile, denied, or politically sensitive areas. These operations are conducted during peacetime competition, conflict, and war, independent or in coordination with operations of conventional, non-special operations forces. Politico-military considerations frequently shape special

operations, requiring clandestine, covert, or low visibility techniques and oversight at the national level. Special operations differ from conventional operations in the degree of physical and political risk, operational techniques, modes of employment, independence from friendly support, and dependence on detailed operational intelligence and indigenous assets” (Joint Chiefs of Staff 2014a).

Terrorism: A description and understanding of terrorism are not easy. Back to the Convention of Algiers, a terrorist act means any act in violation of the criminal laws of a Member State and which may endanger the life, integrity or liberty, or may cause injury or death to any person whatsoever, a number of people or cause damage to any private or public property, natural resources, environmental or cultural heritage and which has the intention to: intimidate, create fear, coerce or induce any government, organization, organization, population or part thereof, to do or refrain from doing an action, or to adopt or abandon a position or act according to certain principles, or disrupt a public service or the delivery of essential services to the population or create a public emergency, create general insurrection in a country, any promotion, funding, donation, order, aid, incitement, encouragement, attempt, threat, conspiracy, organizing, obtaining or who, with intent to commit an act as mentioned in paragraph (Cilliers and Sturman 2011, 6).

Unified action: The Doctrine for the Armed Forces of the United States Joint Publication (JP -1) defines unified action as “synchronization, coordination, and/or integration of joint, single-Service, and multinational operations with the operations of other United States Government (USG) departments and agencies, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), intergovernmental organizations (IGOs) (e.g., the United Nations), and the private sector to achieve unity of effort. Unity of command within the

military instrument of national power supports the national strategic direction through close coordination with the other instruments of national power (Joint Chiefs of Staff 2013).

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of this chapter is to provide an overview of the literature on the growing threats in Africa and the shift of terrorism, narcotrafficking and piracy in West Africa in particular. The review will also examine the extant literature on SOF and their use in combating these equivalent threats in other regions

#### Limited number of scholar studies on the subject

Captain Moussa Diop Mboup, Senegalese IMS in CGSC class 2008, pointed out in his MMAS thesis that the majority of publications on the post-9/11 Africa policy of the United States consists of articles in scholarly journals published by American foreign policy institutes and think tanks. The African continent remains far from having a similar number of foreign policy institutions, which makes it difficult to identify the African academic perspective on the issue. Moreover, the concept of SOF is relatively new in the West African region, which explains the lack of scholarly publications on the West African nations' SOF and the fight against terrorism and transnational threats. Even if they are still in their infancy, a number of publications are beginning to emerge and try to address the particular issue of the West African states dealing by themselves with terrorism and transnational crimes (African problems solved by Africans). The following overview will consist of three main parts. The first one will show the common threats that West African states share with the United States on African soil. It will focus more on terrorism and how the African scholars define the problem. The second point will evaluate the responses provided by the African nations to counter the global terrorism at

national, regional and international level. That point will also emphasize the role of SOF in environments alike, and how other authors view their importance in such type of conflicts. The last part of this overview will show the importance of the U.S. policy of building partner capacity in support to Western African nations' SOF in their fight against terrorism.

The primary school of thought emanating from the United States, and more broadly from the Western countries' reviews, focuses on the expansion of terrorism from Northern Africa (Libya, Algeria) to West Africa (Mali, Nigeria, Niger, Mauritania and today Ivory Coast).

#### West Africa and Terrorism

*In Implementing the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy in West Africa [La mise en œuvre de la Stratégie antiterroriste mondiale de l'ONU en Afrique de l'Ouest]*, Jason Ipe, James Cockayne, and Alistair Millar present the evolution of the threat in North and West Africa and examine how the states of the sub-region working with external partners, including the United Nations, the European Union (EU) and the United States, can enhance the anti-terrorist sub-regional cooperation. Each African state has conducted its own fight against terrorism. Since 2001, however the threat has evolved in the sub-region. A network of national organizations focused on the overthrow of local regimes has become a network of organizations that is increasingly regionalized and outwardly focused. Nonetheless, these African regimes have developed strong skills in counterterrorism, international cooperation essential to the effective enforcement of these newer transnational threats remains minimal (Ipe, Cockayne, and Millar 2011).

Ipe and his coauthors examine the general and specific terrorist threats and vulnerabilities in West Africa and their relationship with the wider transnational threats such as drug trafficking and kidnapping. They explain how the terrorist organizations in North Africa and the Sahel region have evolved over the past decade, extending their activities from one country to a whole region. At the end of the day, their report found that the nature of these threats cannot be explained outside of its historical context. It suggest that West African terrorism has strong ties with the development of governance in the sub-region, its colonial heritage and its enduring relationship with the external powers such as France and the African diaspora. Last but not least, the contemporary global Salafi jihad plays a major role in determining the relationship between the Islamist militancy and the illegal economic networks within the sub-region (Ipe, Cockayne, and Millar 2011, 6-11).

The report argues that anti-terrorism cooperation in the region should no longer only focus on military and police interventions but take a more holistic approach based on prevention. The long-term threat posed by terrorism in North and West Africa is the result of the ability of militants to operate in the territories, in markets and in places of expression where the state has no moderating presence. According to their study, the fight against terrorism initiatives in the sub-region should be integrated within a larger program to provide a solution to the weakness of territorial governance, in order to remove opportunities for violent extremist groups from their participation and support in the underground economy. To do so, the North and West African states must develop an armed response capacity to eventually be able to react in a concerted way, fast, flexible and adapted as the situation would require. Without specifically naming it, the authors

strongly suggest the development of Special Operations Forces in the region (Ipe, Cockayne, and Millar 2011, 16-25).

The second main terrorist threat in the West African region, Boko Haram or “Westernization Is Sacrilege”, can be found in the complex security environment of Nigeria. In *Confronting the Terrorism of Boko Haram in Nigeria*, James J. Forest explains how terrorists and criminals use relatively neglected areas as soil of expansion. Forest explains how ethnic fissures and unequal distribution of wealth and power (North versus South) have fueled the rise of terrorism in the country. Indeed, the factors of destabilization are multiple: availability of weapons, problem of insecurity, militancy in the Niger Delta and organized crime around the economic hub of Lagos. It is no coincidence that the worst forms of political violence in Nigeria today originate in the most socioeconomically disadvantaged parts of the country (Forest 2012, 25-30).

In the North, where unemployment and poverty are the highest, radical Islamists and the imposition of Sharia law have challenged the authority of the state. In the southeast, because of water pollution resulting from illegal oil bunkering in the Niger Delta, traditional fishing and agricultural activities are no longer possible. Consequently, criminal groups and armed militant gangs have engaged in kidnappings, extortion, car bombings, murder, and other forms of violent attacks against the government and multinational corporation facilities (Forest 2012, 31-43).

From Forest’s perspective, Boko Haram, which was a local phenomenon, has now complex strategic implications around the Lake Chad region. He concluded by stating that Boko Haram is a Nigerian entity that will eventually be defeated by Nigerians.



However, he recognized the role the international community could play to assist the African giant.

### Implementing Light Footprint Strategy: The Rise of SOF

One of the lessons learned from Afghanistan is the end of long-term commitments of Western conventional troops in low intensity conflict.

In the last fifteen years, Special Operations Forces have gained notoriety unprecedented in the history of the armed forces. They are nowadays used in all sensitive situations: preventing terrorist attacks, rescue hostages, the training of foreign forces for unconventional operations, seize critical facilities, scout in hostile territory and forbidden ground, and pave the way for the intervention of regular forces. In *Creating a NATO Special Operations Force*, David C. Gompert and Raymond C. Smith explained how much more valuable it would be if US and allied SOF trained to work together. Their study contributed to the development and the organization of the NATO members' SOF to formally collaborate and work together. Finally, it underlined the importance of SOF and their ability to adapt to evolving threats, like the ones NATO members and allies' SOF have faced in the last fifteen years. The same factors that drove the creation of NATO SOF can be identified in West Africa, and might inspire the development of common SOF capabilities to address terrorist threats.

What characterizes the Special Forces units is their small number, their mobility and their ability to build relationships with other forces. SOF are highly enterprising and flexible - qualities strongly desired in these fluid times characterized by uncertainty. While SOF operate in small units, there are proven advantages to organizing them to function across structural boundaries. The failure of Operation Eagle Claw, that aimed to

rescue the American hostages out of Tehran in 1980, led the United States to create in 1987 a joint US Special Operations Command (USSOCOM), combining SOF from the Army, Navy, and Air Force. The new command has a unified headquarters and a separate program budget to synchronize equipment and training requirements. This step gave the US an exceptionally profitable instrument of military action and the national strategy. For a cost of \$ 6.5 billion in 2006 (only 1.5 percent of the defense budget of the United States) SOF are used in almost all operating combat and are the spearhead of the fight against transnational terrorist insurrection, namely al-Qaeda around the world in Afghanistan, Iraq, the Arabian Peninsula, Africa and elsewhere (Gompert and Smith 2006, 2-8).

Gompert and Smith identified some allies that have high- performance commando and elite paramilitary forces that are not part to their ministries of defense, but generally to their ministries of interior. Within Spain's Guardia Civil, for example, are some of the world's finest counterterrorism forces. Most allies have small forces to perform missions for which the United States has SOF. However, there are some larger allies that have SOF-type forces in significant numbers capable of a wide range of missions, namely the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Spain, Italy, and Poland. All combined, the SOF-type capabilities of NATO allies are roughly half of US SOF, which is a quantitatively a significant capacity for global efforts, if ever these forces can be organized to work and fight together against common threats such as al Qaeda (Gompert and Smith 2006).

The urgency of the idea of NATO SOF lies in the particular relevance of SOF in the fight against transnational terrorism and the benefits of conducting this fight multilaterally, a declared goal of the United States and its allies. Generally speaking, SOF

are more useful than regular military forces for finding and eliminating terrorists. They were successful against al Qaeda in Afghanistan immediately after 9/11 and continue to play an important role in Iraq, the Philippines, and other areas.

### SOF as Response to Insurgencies

The concept of using small tailored forces to fight unconventional belligerents is not new in Africa. *Fireforce-One Man's War in the Rhodesian Light Infantry* by Chris Cocks describes the decisive role that the Rhodesian Fireforce played in the counterinsurgency campaign against the Zimbabwe People's Revolutionary Army (ZIPRA) led by Josh Nkomo and the Zimbabwe African National Liberation Army (ZANLA) led by Robert Mugabe. "They have the faces of boys but they fight like lions" (Binda and Cocks 2007, 78).

In Cocks perspective, the Rhodesian Security Forces were the most effective counterinsurgency units in the African modern history. Rhodesia, a former British colony (now Zimbabwe), unilaterally declared independence from the Crown after a disagreements on a power transition from European colonists to the Africa majority. A fifteen yearlong Bush War followed, between the Rhodesians and two African nationalist movements: Zipra, supported by the Soviets, and Zanja, backed by the Chinese.

The author pointed out how a small number of warriors, well trained and well organized, with relatively limited resources and manpower, covered efficiently an area of the size of Texas with (there were approximately 275,000 white Europeans and 7 million Africans living in Rhodesia during the war) (Cocks 1998). The primary form of movement was airborne, with the use of South African supplied Alouette helicopters and

DC-3 Dakotas. From these platforms, the Rhodesians developed a highly effective technique of aerial envelopment called the “Fireforce”.

The second important point Cocks noted is the interdependence between the elite units and the regular forces, with the Rhodesians guiding Fireforces onto terrorist targets, using mostly human intelligence from the Selous Scouts (an infiltration unit which employed “tamed” terrorists), observation posts, and spies run by their Central Intelligence Organization or Special Branch of the British South African Police. Once a group of terrorists was located, a Fireforce was dispatched through local Joint Operational Commands (JOCs).

Finally, the Fireforce tactic resulted in remarkably lopsided kill ratios in favor of the Rhodesians. Furthermore, thanks to their airborne capability, they had a mesh that allows them to cover an extremely extended area with a relatively small number of soldiers (Cocks 1998).

From the operational environment of the Fireforce, one can make two main observations: first, the Rhodesian insurgents used surrounding countries as sanctuaries and bases from which to launch cross-border attacks and infiltrations, just like today’s terrorists, more and more borderless. Second, much like the financially hard-pressed Rhodesian security forces, the military in many West African countries function under severe financial constraints, limiting their access to late-model, “high-tech” weapons and to substantial quantities of materiel. The example described by Crooks shows how a better cooperation of the West African nations, through an existing IGO such as ECOMOG or an equivalent, can foster the development of interoperable units trained and

able to take the fight against the shared threats, namely terrorism, in order to protect and defend the integrity of the region.

Successful SOF Campaign in West Africa:  
Examples of French Operations Sabre, Serval and Barkhane

*France's War in Mali Lessons for an Expeditionary Army* by Michael Shurkin gives a perfect example of a successful recent use of SOF facing the terrorist challenge in West Africa. In his study, the author depicted the expeditionary capabilities of the French armed forces, and the inextricable links that exist between SOF and conventional forces in such type of environment marked by long distances and limited lines of communications. He presents key observations and an analysis of French Army operations in Mali in 2013, Operation Serval, as a model for what an expeditionary, regionally aligned force might look like with a strong SOF footprint.

Shurkin introduced his study by a quick background of the conflict in Mali. A new Tuareg nationalist group, the National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad [*Mouvement national de libération de l'Azawad; MNLA*], took the lead of the insurgency that emerged on January 2012. Some observers, in the haste, put the blame on the spillover from the uncertain situation in Libya and, and accused a new wave of returning Libyan Army veterans. Though, the importance of the Libyan factor was probably exaggerated, and may have only precipitated events. Certainly, Libyan arsenal helped the rebels, but intelligence in the course of the war proved that the area contained already a huge amount of small arms weapons.

The belligerents, Ansar Dine, AQIM, and the Movement for Unity and Jihad in West Africa MUJWA appear to have been well funded from a variety of sources. Among

the known sources of money are the huge amount of ransoms paid by European governments and family members to free European tourists taken hostage (Shurkin 2014, 8-11).

France had no forces in Mali on 10 January 2012. Nonetheless, a French Special Operations Forces (SOF) contingent possibly numbering as many as 400, with ISR and helicopters, was in the region as part of a counterterrorism operation known as Operation Sabre, based in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso. Sabre force had a mandate that covered the Sahel band to deter and prevent from hostage taking, and personnel recovery when needed. On 10 January 2013, Islamist columns struck Konna, and for the first time, were just 48 hours away from Bamako. The flexibility of SOF structure allowed France to respond within a matter of hours by redirecting the Operation Sabre assets to do what they could to stop the Islamist offensive and, for about a week, they took the fight to their account pending the setting in motion of a larger force capable of prolonging the war against terrorists with the necessary logistical resources to implement such a campaign.

According to BG Barrera, when he met Hollande at Timbuktu, the president instructed him to “destroy those in front of you and go fast.” For Barrera, this was a welcome break after conducting so many stabilization operations: he was given orders to win, which enabled him to act as dynamically as he could have desired. As he told a reporter:

I wanted an offensive maneuver while sending a maximum number of troops north. Audacity, the taking of the initiative, joint and combined arms maneuver, the integration of everything, including SOF as supported and/or supporting forces, to attain “one sole goal, Victory,”—as our motto and emblem say. (Merchet 2013)

Shurkin concluded by stating that French SOF would continue to play a critical role in Serval, and emphasized the critical role of SOF and conventional force integration as key ingredient in the French Army's success in Mali. A report by the French senate, cited in the study of Shurkin, goes even further by calling for a strengthening of the capabilities of Special Forces (Reiner, Gautier, and Gerard 2014).

Serval and Sabre operations have demonstrated the importance of good coordination between conventional forces and SOF. The French general commander of Special Operations (COS), Gregoire de Saint-Quentin, has indicated that this joint was one of the most topical subjects of reflection; a symposium will be held also soon on the subject. For him, with the undeniable progress that has been made in the past fifteen years in the design and use of the tool, the Special Forces "the fact Special Forces proved today": the 2014-2019 military planning law takes it into account, by integrating it into the general defense system. From now, GCOS is consulted on all operational deployments. According to General de Saint Quentin, the relationship between special and conventional forces "matured on the field," and Serval operation marked in this regard "a turning point". The Mali was indeed an "ideal employment context": all the modes of action of Special Forces have been implemented, except to maritime knowledge (Reiner, Gautier, and Gerard 2014).

Finally, the three major different French led operations in Africa, Epervier in Chad (Sparrowhawk), Serval in Mali and Sabre in Burkina Faso and Niger are melted into a single operation, Barkhane. *From Operation Serval to Barkhane: Understanding France's Increased Involvement in Africa in the Context of Françafrique and Post-colonialism* by Carmen Cuesta Roca describes this ongoing operation, in conjunction

with the unity of effort from the French SOF deployed in Africa as part of Task Force Sabre and conventional forces, including those prepositioned for Serval. While focusing on the strategic aspects and historical background that link France to Africa, the author provides also explanation about some key elements of the French success for the overall campaign. Among others is the role of SOF in African micro-conflicts, using response capabilities and additional ways to those of conventional forces, but also multifaceted actions ranging from consulting and training of foreign troops to enforcement action. Such was the case in the Democratic Republic of Congo, during Operation Artemis, or more recently in the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire (Roca 2015).

#### The Need of Strong Partnerships between the US and the West African states

The Malian theater demonstrated once again the importance of strong partnerships to foster the mobilization of African States. In his monograph *Us Army Special Operations Forces and Building Enduring Partner Enabler Capacity*, MAJ LaVern T. Burkes provides an interesting analysis on an efficient and relevant building partner capacity that will precisely allow the US and more broadly the western countries to work in conjunction with indigenous forces in the GWOT. According to his study, since 2001, US Army Special Operations Forces (SOF) have conducted continuous counterterrorism (CT) and counterinsurgency (COIN) operations against al Qaeda and associated Islamist violent extremist networks (VENs), often partnering with host nation SOF. The first observation from these past 15 years of partner building capacity is the dependence of the host nation on the US logistic supplies. Therefore, building also partner nation logistics capacity must be considered as an imperative.



Burkes centers his monograph on a case study of Operation Enduring Freedom-Philippines and US Army Special Operations Command (USASOC) forces. He addresses the topic of building indigenous forces' partner enabler capacity to determine the effectiveness of US Army Special Forces with building partner enabler capacity pertaining to maintenance, medical, facility engineering, and sustainment to help others understand the importance of building a self-sustaining partner force to produce enduring security effects. It illuminates the on-going actions of a small Joint Special Operations Task Force (JSOTF-P), and building enduring partner enabler capacity.

In the end of the study, MAJ Burke offered three conclusions. First, USASOC should focus more on partner enabler capacity instead of considering the US overwhelming logistics capability at the different levels of war. Second, in order to strengthen their security and foster their military readiness, the US should enhance partners' logistics capacity building and prepare them to be autonomous in the conduct of military operations. Third, US Special Forces should adapt themselves to the local context to improve their efforts at the tactical level (Burke 2014).

The extant literature does not explore the means to build and maximize the capacity of indigenous SOF in Africa to meet transnational security challenges. However, the review of the available studies showed that the dynamics that thrive terrorism are not a new phenomenon. In fact, it established the commonalities between these threats regardless of their areas of interest. The borderless characters of transnational organized crimes described in *Implementing the UN Counterterrorism Strategy in West Africa* and *Confronting the Terrorism of Boko Haram in Nigeria* proved the vulnerabilities of the West African countries dealing directly or indirectly with terrorism.

In addition, the US policy toward Africa, which consists of light footprint for military engagements, calls the use of SOF to achieve the goals set by the US administration and defend the US national interests on the African continent. Throughout history, the employment of small units to counter insurgency and violent extremism has proven to be tactically successful. The examples of the Rhodesian Fireforce described by Chris Cocks, and the benefits related to the creation of the NATO SOF depicted by David Gompert and Raymond Smith provide some lines of thought in consideration of the synergy of force to combat terrorism.

Finally, with the success of the French SOF working in conjunction with the countries of the Sahel-Saharan strip, it appears that an enduring capacity building partnership is a key to relinquish the fight against terrorism in West Africa from the western partners to the indigenous SOF. The literature regarding the need of strong partnership claimed that the US and its traditional allies do as well as one can to help building the specific skills needed to stop the rise of terrorism in the region and remove the terrorist groups' sanctuaries all across West Africa.

## CHAPTER 3

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

To propose a model of special operations forces development, this study will rely on a qualitative research methodology, which will consist of a study centered on West Africa. It will also draw on the capacity development model of the German special operations training facility (International Special Training Center, ISTC-SOF).

First, qualitative research seeks depth rather than breadth. Instead of drawing from a large, representative sample of an entire population of interest like Africa as a whole, the study seeks to acquire in-depth and intimate information about a smaller area, relatively speaking, where people and nations share almost the same colonial history and the same problems. Second, the aim of that method is to learn how and why West African nations should develop synergy among their special operations forces and create the adequate environment to achieve unified actions, rather than focusing on what their special units do on a larger scale.

This study will examine a model for regional special operations forces based on the Senegalese SOF in the context of a stable but developing country. To do so, the study will focus on West Africa region and will approach the capabilities of some countries through the model of the Doctrine, Organization, Training, Materiel, Leadership and Education, Personnel, Facilities and Policy (DOTMLPF-P) analysis. The DOTMLPF-P is the process used by the US Army to provide solutions when a gap is identified in terms of capabilities and needs to be addressed, either with material or non-material approach (Cupp 2015). The DOTMLPF framework is an analytical tool for Geographic Combatant Commanders (GCC) to express specific requirements they need to accomplish the

missions they have been assigned by the Secretary of Defense (SecDef). For the success of Force Management, the DOTMLPF-P allows to apprehend the potential vacuum in the construct of strategic direction for the total United States military force structure. Briefly, it is a focus point for staff planners to consider certain critical issues and requirements prior to undertaking a new effort. Each point of the DOTMLPF-F evaluates a specific aspect of a situation and consequently helps assess the gap to fill in (Cupp 2015).

1. Doctrine: this first point examines how the military use the SOPs and other TTPs, if there is any. The goal is to see if there is a better way to solve a capability gap. This analysis raises simple questions: Is there something in place in terms of operations procedures, and if so, what is not correctly done (Rowsey 2014)?
2. Organization: it analyzes how forces are task-organized to fight. All being related to capacity, the purpose of this point is to explore the different options to better frame an organization in order to improve its capacity (Rowsey 2014).
3. Training: This point assesses how forces are prepared to fight tactically. That can go from basic training all the way to joint exercises. The purpose of this section is to see where and how improvement can be made. It identifies the main obstacles for efficient training, from lack of basic equipment to adequacy of the given training (Rowsey 2014).
4. Material: this step evaluates whether the right equipment is in place to reach the objective or not (AcqNotes 2016).
5. Leadership and Education: this portion studies how the organization trains its leaders from flag officers to strategic corporals. On the other hand, it sees also if

the organization expresses and concretizes its will to educate its future leaders (AcqNotes 2016).

6. Personnel: This point is all about talent management: does the organization have the right people to the right place (AcqNotes 2016)?

7. Facilities: The question this step focuses on is about the official and critical infrastructures that might be used to provide the needed support for forces (AcqNotes 2016).

8. Policy: Any domestic or international policy issues that may prevent effective implementation of changes in the other seven DOTMLPF-P elemental areas? (Filiberti 2015).

From an African standpoint, the interest of the DOTMLPF-P to build regional SOF capabilities resides in really four main factors: Doctrine, Organization, Training, and Policy. The reasons why these four points are more considered are multiple. First, for doctrine and policy, each country has its own agenda for its national interests. Therefore, each one has the latitude to use its SOF in the way that meets one's expectation. Likewise, organization and training depend on the context of each country (Jackson 2013). What is obvious in the US for example might not be necessarily suitable for constrained budget countries such as the majority of West African nations. Finally, the material issue, leadership and education, personnel, and facilities cannot be in place if the four aforementioned factors are not addressed. Furthermore, the US displays an increasing interest to Africa (Mboup 2008). A strong and enduring partnership with AFRICOM and its NATO allies might therefore mitigates the lack of capabilities these factors.

The study focusing on building a regional SOF capability, the policy factor of the DOTMLPF-P model will require a special attention, given the complex context of West Africa. In fact, as the study will show it, the region presents some delicate situations between the different neighbors (Maze 2015). The presence of the US as moderator might also help fostering the relationship between those nations.

The research will comprise three steps:

#### Step 1: Analyze the common threats in West Africa

This first step will determine the scope of threats in the West African region. To assess these threats, this study will recall the evolution of terrorist activities from North Africa to West Africa and then will show the rise of Boko Haram in the Great Lakes region. Finally it will try to analyze the connection and possible competition between these groups and the Middle East terrorist organizations.

#### Step 2: Describe the Specific Capabilities of West African states' SOF

This step will analyze the overall assets of the main West African SOF actively involved in the fight against terrorism. Through the lens of four points of the DOTMLPF-P: Doctrine, Organization, Training (and potentially Facilities) and Policy, this step will compare the West-African countries' SOF that used to work together through different exercises. The study will focus on Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, and Cote d'Ivoire. With the exception of Cote d'Ivoire, these countries used to work together through the US led exercises Flintlock, Western Accord, and Silent Warriors as well. The objective here is to determine what each West African SOF might put on the table in building more advanced SOF capabilities.

### Step 3: Create synergy between West African SOF and SOCAFRICA and their allies

This step will assess the current state of the region's SOF to work in conjunction with US SOF. It will show the programs developed by the US SOCAFRICA to foster the West African nations' SOF capabilities. In this process, the study will focus on the training and policy aspect of the DOTMLPF-P, in order to determine whether or not the West African nations' SOF can work in conjunction with each other and with the US SOCAFRICA and its allies. In addition, it will to explore the role for the US SOCAFRICA and, more broadly, the NATO partner nations willing to help the African nations' SOF to assume their role in the fight against Global Terrorism. Through this process, the study will try to establish the shift of the cooperation between the western countries and the African countries, from total assistance, including carrying sovereign tasks, to advising program allowing West African states to take responsibility over West African threats.

## CHAPTER 4

### ANALYSIS

After the Ivory Coast, which country will be the next target? Turkey, which has, too, to be hit in Ankara? Even France, which is sensitive to the first coming rumor? Especially one that ran from 11 to 12 March 2016 and which recommended to avoid going in the great Parisian surfaces. This is the essence of terrorism strike blindly, anywhere, anytime, without distinction, in any latitude, without warning with the objective to be born and grow at an opponent total insecurity and terror (RFI 2016).

— Nicolas Sarkozy, former French President

There is that potential, and I think that's one of the reasons why I believe the US military approach in Africa is what it is - light footprint in support of African-led efforts, very cautious when strikes are conducted to make sure that the action - the intended target is struck without effect on noncombatants. (Shapiro 2015).

— Gen Carter Ham, former USAFRICOM Commander

The purpose of this study is to explore the efficacy of indigenous SOF, able to achieve unified actions in conjunction with US SOF. Can the West African nations develop a model adjusted to the peculiarities of the West-African countries, and that can respond properly and collectively to the growing threats on the continent? Generally speaking, the issues facing the West African states are the adaptation of their SOF missions and their development in accordance with the states' national security strategies.

#### Strategic Operating Environment

It is worth to first define the strategic environment of West African region in order to address the challenges to human and regional security in the territory covered by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). One can first explore causal factors and their effects in changing the governance and the West African region



security environment, profiles the actors shaping that environment, and describes the nature and impacts of their interventions.

First, let us examine the geopolitical environment of West Africa, with emphasis on the strategic importance of the region and the vulnerabilities emanating from its location. Within the Sub-Saharan context, the evolving regional security architecture is deeply influenced by local, regional, and international actors, with their respective actions, motivations, and interventions. National, regional, and international institutions attempted to transform the security environment.

The former UN Secretary General Kofi Annan reckons that freedom from want, freedom from fear, and the freedom of future generations to inherit a healthy natural environment together constitute “the interrelated building blocks of human—and therefore national—security. The United Nations Development Program (UNDP) divides human security into seven components: economic, food, health, environmental, personal, community, and political security” (Gomes and Gasper 2013). For the purposes of this paper, “regional security” describes the common political, economic, and security arrangements that a contiguous transnational space of sovereign states with a degree of “pooled” sovereignty based on shared fears and expectations, may implement to promote mutual assistance and ensure the collective well-being of its population, institutions, and values, and their protection from perceived threats (Annan 2005).

West Africa’s complex security environment depends on three major factors. The first challenge is the management of natural resources in the region, the vulnerabilities inherent in its location, and environmental and demographic factors. Closely tied to the first point, the second source of uncertainty comes from the way the indigenous

governments deal with local and foreign actors. Ultimately, the dynamics of regional and external policy largely affects the region's security environment.

West Africa is significantly large in size (see figure 2). The sub-region has a land area of 4.7 million square kilometers, more than twice the size of Western Europe. The sub-region has a coastal area extending up to 6,000 kilometers from Angola in the south-west to Western Sahara in the north (Musah 2009). When discussing West Africa, two major issues are significant. First, the sub-region has global geo-strategic importance. Second, the sub-region is affected by a high level of insecurity. As far as natural resources are concerned, a large amount of hydro-carbon deposits can be found in the Gulf of Guinea, hence, the area meets the energy needs of most of the world. For example, Nigeria records an estimated 40-50 billion barrels of crude oil and gas reserves (OPEC 2015, 8). Similarly, Ghana, Cote d'Ivoire, Mali and the Mano River Union recently made oil discoveries in their various geographical areas. This is an indication of the natural wealth of the West African states. Apart from the large deposits of hydrocarbons, West Africa is also blessed with rich fish stocks, precious and strategic natural minerals such as gold, uranium, diamonds, and titanium. The vast, but increasingly dwindling tropical rain forest belt which extends from Guinea in the west to Cameroon in the east produces over two-thirds of the world's demand for cocoa. Large quantities of cotton, peanuts and shea butter are also found in the Savannah and Sahel regions in the north (Musah 2009).



Figure 2. West African Region

Source: Aka Bradley, Aka, “West African Zone,” NSBE, accessed 21 March 2016, <http://www.nsbe.org/Regions/Region1/Membership/Geographical-Zones/West-African-Zone.aspx>.

Certainly, securing West Africa’s territorial waters is a big challenge. Added to that are the security problems along its northern frontiers where borders in the middle of the Sahara desert are totally meaningless. That situation offers opportunities for the terrorist groups in the region, using the porosity of these borders to move their fighters or to protect smugglers who fund them in exchange (Abderrahmane 2012).

The vulnerable belt from northwestern Chad and northern Niger all the way to Mauritania via Mali accounts for most of the recent low intensity conflicts in West Africa. The Tuareg group, *Mouvement Nigerien pour la Justice* (MNJ), which is predominant in Niger is involved in a bitter struggle for autonomy from the government of Niger. The conflict stems from competition over uranium revenue and the failure of

the Niger government to meet its promises of resettlement after the peace accords of 1995. Similar to the nature of conflicts in this region, the fighting has been further complicated by drugs and human trafficking, banditry and terrorism. External influence have also played a major part in fueling the conflict. This is a result of Libya's claims to 30,000 square kilometers of territory in northern Niger. Niamey has responded continually by accusing Tripoli of providing shelter and arms to rebels. Another case is Algeria whose ethnic relationship with the rebels help to provide safe havens for their rear bases (Otayek 2016).

The porous nature of West Africa's northern borders and the proximity of the Sahel-Sahara make the region most vulnerable to terrorist incursions, arms trafficking, and destabilization, and also to human trafficking and refugee flows from the conflict zones to the East in Sudan and Chad. In addition, common water sources are becoming an object of conflict across the region, adding an environmental dimension an areas already deeply troubled by intestinal struggles in the sub-region (African Social Forum 2014).

One must consider the internal factors that explain the dynamics of West African states in their way to take into account the global threat in the region. Internal politics, regional power-plays, and bad governance entertain the severe insecurity in West Africa. The combination of the aforementioned factors keeps the region under the development threshold. Despite its valuable human and natural resources, West Africa remains still one of the most impoverished places in the world. Another weakness that might be identified is the notion of territorial integrity. National borders and internal enclaves are constantly under contestation from within and without. Countries never reach consensus

when it comes to formulate West African response to regional security, often influenced by the actions of the regional hegemon and other sub-regional powers. The civil war that started in Côte d'Ivoire in 2002, and the ethnic cleansing and clan-based animosities in Liberia and Sierra Leone illustrated the other threat the region experienced in the name of national identities or notion of citizenship. Furthermore, these crisis displayed the extent of an idle youth without real prospect of future. Warlords and corrupt government officials take benefits from these situations without any kind of remorse. Thereby, states and institutions fail, infrastructure collapse, and the population fall in food insecurity and environmental and public health hazards. On the humanitarian perspective, the rate of Internally Displaced People (IDPs) raises dramatically, while smugglers use the instability for human, weapons, and drug trafficking (Musah 2009).

It is now empirically established that violent extremist organizations such as terrorist groups use disadvantaged areas for recruitment (Gates and Podder 2015). As Secretary Rumsfeld confirmed it by appointing the USSOCOM leading service in Counterterrorism (CT), SOF units are the best suited to fight VEO (Joint Chiefs of Staff 2014b). For that reason, the US AFRICOM alongside 19 African nation partners and 9 NATO SOF's representatives gathered in Germany in November 2015 to "study the problem in depth" and determine what the roots of VEO are. That Command Post Exercise (CPX), Exercise Silent Warriors, established the importance of SOF as primary response for a comprehensive and cooperative approach that might enhance the military cooperation in the region (Taylor 2015). The secondary objective of Silent Warriors was to create a hub for SOF community that would help soften the relationship between West

African nations' SOF and, in the same vein, lessen the P for policy of the DOTMLPF-P used to assess the region's indigenous SOF capabilities (Kennedy 2004).

### Step 1: Analyze the common threats in West Africa

How could the West African nations create the opportunity to achieve a unified action response to transnational threats in conjunction with the U.S Special Operations Command Africa through their respective special operations forces? Through the lens of the DOT-P model, this step will analyze the threats that called the change of policy of West African states to apprehend the terrorism phenomenon. This section will establish the ties of terrorist groups in West Africa, and then will show how the porosity of the region's borders might destroy each country's efforts if not put in synergy with the others.

#### Historical context and ties of terrorist groups in West Africa

Violent extremism keeps rising from Libya to Mali. Most of the terrorist groups in the Sahel region originated in neighboring Algeria and continued to take direction from their Algerian branches (Moyar 2015). In the first years of the new millennium, the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat [*Groupe Salafiste pour la Prédication et le Combat* (GSPC)] took advantage of a burgeoning cocaine trade in the Sahel, which increased critically from 2002 to 2007 in response to increased international policing of Western Africa's coastline. Moreover, the GSPC rebranded itself. Becoming a franchise of Al Qaeda, the organization changed its name to Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb, or AQIM (Rollins 2011). Thereafter, the new emir of the organization, Yahia Djaouadi, took charge of the AQIM operations in the Saharan theater. He orchestrated the kidnapping of

Europeans for ransom, which is estimated to have funded AQIM for about ninety million (Nossiter 2012).

While most of AQIM's targets for kidnapping and terrorism were from western European countries known for their willingness to pay high ransoms, AQIM occasionally targeted North Americans, such as the Canadian diplomat Robert Fowler, an event that ultimately triggered an evolution of the Canadian policy in their utilization of SOF as advisors for Foreign Internal Defense (FID) in Africa (Pugliese 2011). Training both Malian and Nigerien SOF, the US SOCAFRICA and its Canadian counterpart strengthen the already existing bilateral cooperation between Mali and Niger to meet the challenge of securing the two nations' common borders. The common goals between these two nations can expand in the region, and might cause a positive dynamics in terms of policy in the use of SOF and justify the need to harmonize operations procedures for more efficient combined patrols (Coulibaly 2016).

Further South, violent extremism keeps rising, especially with the complex security environment of Nigeria and which keeps the area awake at night: Boko Haram (See figure 3). Why must Boko Haram be perceived as a common threat in the sub Saharan region? In fact, Boko Haram's attack on the United Nations Headquarters in Abuja, Nigeria's capital, on 26 August 2011 was the watershed that pointed out the passage of the terrorist organization from a purely Nigerian phenomenon to an international jihadist actor. Boko Haram's members come from (primarily Nigeria, but also Chad, Soudan, Niger etc.) The attacks of the group do not seek to distinguish innocent civilians from security forces, women from men, of children from adults. Using the ambiguous context of the Nigerian religious and ethnic grievances, Boko Haram

jeopardize an already instable neighborhood—Cameroun, Niger, Chad, Mali—and the spread of the terrorist activity in the Sahel countries creates also a competition environment that emulate them (Karmon 2014).

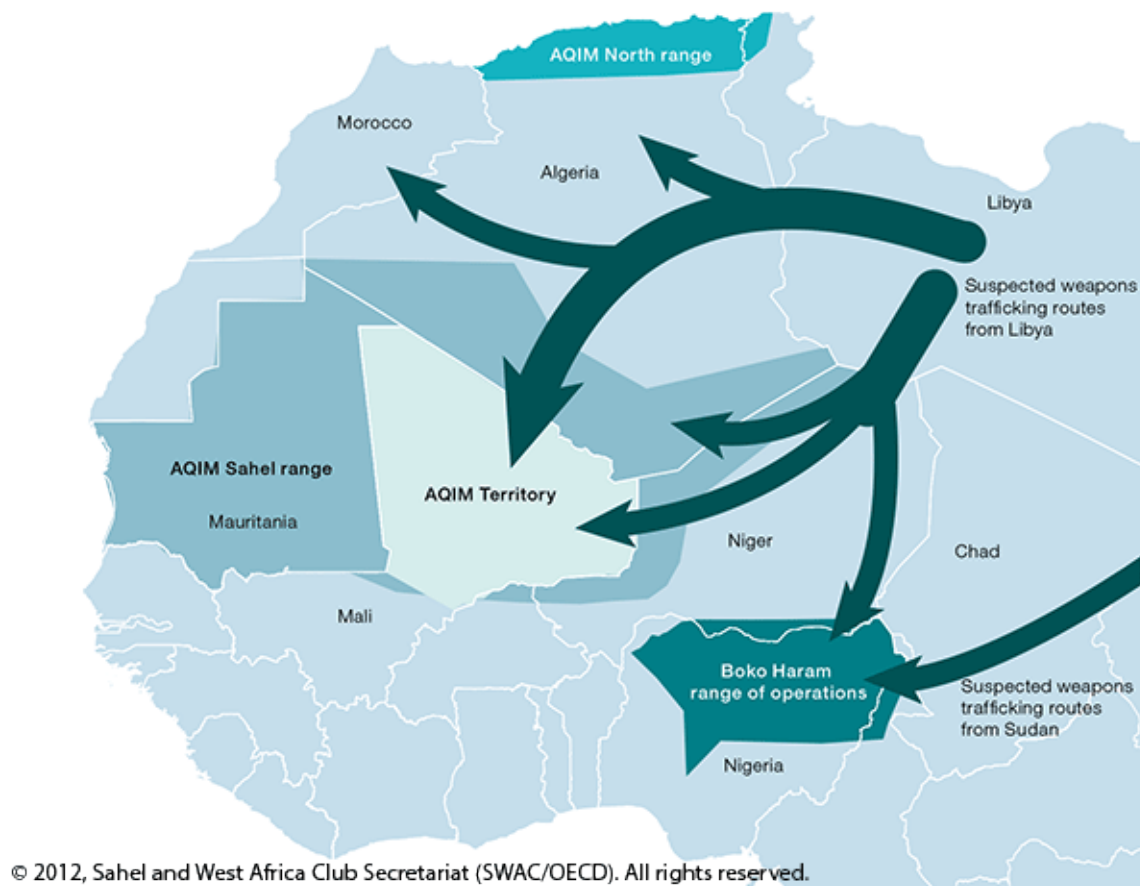


Figure 3. Terrorist threats in West Africa

Source: OECD, *Range of Boko Haram and AQIM operations* (Conflict over Resources and Terrorism: Two Facets of Insecurity, 2013), accessed 21 February 2016, <http://www.oecd.org/swac/ourwork/security-development.htm>.

The leader of Boko Haram, Abu Bakr Shekau, has repeatedly appeared in video messages sent from his hideout, allegedly located somewhere in northern Cameroon, and



Boko Haram has consistently used Cameroon as a rear base for carrying out attacks in Nigeria (McGregor 2012). In addition to its regional expansion, Boko Haram claims to take its Jihad to Europe as well, as stated in an apparition of the group leader: “Let the French president know that he has launched war against Islam and we are fighting him everywhere. Let him know that we are spread everywhere to save our brothers.” (Zenn 2014). This situation created opportunities for the neighboring countries to adjust their policy in order to fight the expanding threat. In spite of their historical dispute over the peninsula of Bakassi, Nigerian and Cameroonian political authorities learned to work together to confront Boko Haram (see figure 3). The immediate vicinity of N’Djamena pushed also Chadian authorities to take a more aggressive approach against Boko Haram. Chadian President Idris Deby called for the creation of a robust coalition force within a Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) including Nigeria, Chad, Niger, Cameroon, and the Central African Republic (McGregor 2012).

#### The challenge of porous West African borders

One huge frustration of Nigeria in its fight against Boko Haram is the ability of the terrorist group’s fighters to use the porosity of borders to escape into neighboring countries. This situation exacerbate the Borno state officials, who came to accuse Cameroon of refusing to arrest or chase Boko Haram militants fleeing across the border after carrying out attacks in Nigeria. From their part, Niger and Chad tried to contain the extremist group, but without adequate resources, their actions are relatively limited (Elkaim 2013). See figure 4.

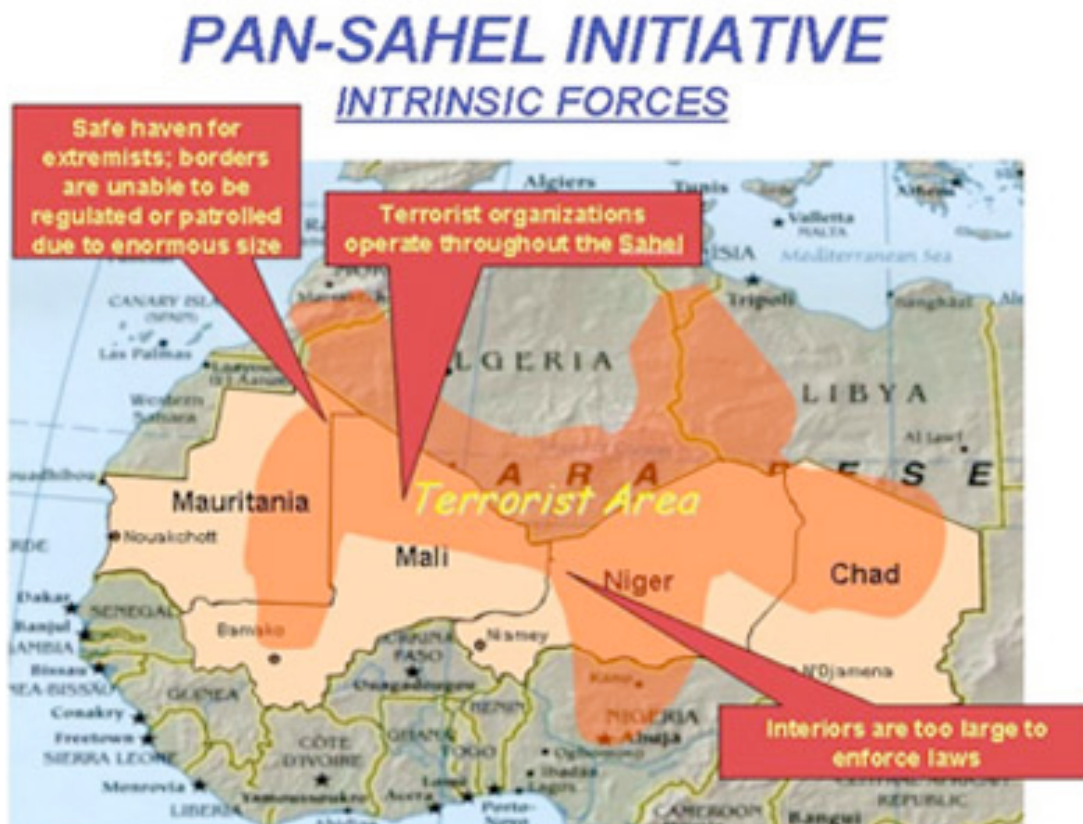


Figure 4. Illustration of porosity of borders

Source: Mahdi D. Nazemroaya and Julien Teil, “America’s Conquest of Africa: The Roles of France and Israel,” *Global Research*, 6 October, accessed 17 May 2016, <http://www.globalresearch.ca/america-s-conquest-of-africa-the-roles-of-france-and-israel/26886?print=1>.

Overall, politically speaking, the predictions are relatively encouraging for better partnerships in West African Region. The creation of the G5 Sahel, which comprises Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and Niger, is a perfect illustration of a synergy of sovereign states policies to address a common threat. From initially a purely security cooperation, the G5 Sahel aims for deeper political and economic integration (G5 Sahel 2015). In contrast, the MNJTF presents some difficulties to take off, because mainly of

political consideration. The analysis of the other factors of the DOT-P will help assess correctly the possibilities to build regional SOF capabilities (Moore and Snell 2015).

### Step 2: Describe and Assess Specific Capabilities of the West African nation's SOF

SOF's inherent capabilities allow them to overcome the risk and obstacles that would preclude conventional forces from undertaking the mission. The challenge today is how to focus SOF on these "special" missions. Throughout history, leaders had a tendency to overuse or misuse SOF. By the very nature of SOF attributes, SOF will always be a limited force vis-à-vis conventional forces. Consequently, care must be taken to use SOF where its special skills and capabilities are best suited. (Spulak 2007)

Terrorism represents today the most serious threat in West Africa, particularly in the Sahel-Saharan strip and the neighboring countries of Mali, Mauritania, and Nigeria. In that current context, West African countries are facing the upsurge of terrorism that became a Damocles sword over their heads and impacts their thinking and even their daily basis activities (Rufus 2016). Therefore, some countries using the lessons of their traditional partners in matters of security and defense have started or continue to develop their elite units dedicated to special operations. Using the DOT-P framework, this step will assess what are the existing capabilities of West African SOF that already present potentialities to work one with another and which gap need to be address. To date, no mention is made of the existence of Special Forces in West Africa in the Report of the IISS Military Balance 2015. However, their existence and capabilities can still be determined, to an extent, from other sources.

The following chart (figure 5) will display the factors used to see where the West African states might focus on to build a regional SOF capability and which domains

might be easily expanded to others countries willing to participate more actively to the GWOT.

Country	Doctrine	Organization	Training	Policy
Senegal	+		+	+
Nigeria	-	+		+
Cameroon	-	+	+	-
Cote d'Ivoire		+	+	
Niger		-	+	+
Mauritania	+		+	-
Burkina Faso	+	-		+

Figure 5. Analysis of West African states' SOF integration factors

*Source:* Created by author.

Note: + Positive outcome of this factor in relation to the country evaluated  
 - Negative outcome of this factor in relation to the country evaluated  
 No outcome marking means there is no positive or negative outcome observed with this factor in relation to the cast study evaluated.

### Senegal

Before analyzing the chart above, it is worth to remind a short history of the Senegalese SOF. The Senegalese Special Forces can trace its lineage back to the 1990s, when the internal conflict in Casamance took a decisive turn with the acquisition of machine guns and heavy weapons by the armed wing of the Movement of Democratic

Forces of Casamance [*Mouvement de Forces Democratiques de la Casamance, MFDC*]. Indeed, the Senegalese Army had to bear two consecutive hard blows in 1995: the failure of the Senegalese Army to recover four French tourists who disappeared literally in Casamance in March 1995 (Musila 2015) and nearly four months later, in July, the loss of twenty three soldiers the forest of Babonda. Consequently, the Senegalese authorities decided then to foster its personnel recovery capabilities by creating a special unit, the Special Commando for Research and Investigations [*Commando Special de Renseignement et d'Investigations, COSRI*]. The unit responded directly to the G3 of the Senegalese Armed Forces, and was meant to form a cohesive single unit. The selection process and the very good training provided by the French Special Forces from the 1st RPIMa aimed to frame the unit with the standard of the developed countries' Special Forces. Unfortunately, exposed to the delicate balance between capacity building and immediate result (Long et al. 2015), the unit was totally destroyed during its first mission and lost 25 out of 32 special operators in an ambush at Madina Mancagne, a village located just four miles South of Ziguinchor, the main city of Casamance region (Ndiaye 2002).

It was not until 2008 when one could see the desire of a Senegalese Special Forces unit from the political leader of the country. Pursuing his will to raise Senegal among the most prominent countries in Africa, the then President Abdoulaye Wade expressed his desire to have a SOF capability in Senegal.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> From the author knowledge from 8 year service in the Senegalese Armed Forces as Special Forces Officer.

Doctrine: Although not formally written, the doctrine for Senegalese is rated positive. The current version of the Senegalese Special Forces were created in 2008, right after the decision of the president to have such a type of unit to face the new challenges rising in the region. Besides counterterrorism activities, its core activities comprise preparation of the environment, special reconnaissance, direct action, hostage rescue and recovery, and its core operations are counterterrorism, counterinsurgency, stability, and foreign internal defense. Additionally, its use excludes any direct link with the political leadership, such as “praetorian guards” for the President (Gov Senegal 2010).

Organization: This point is rated blank for two main reasons that equilibrate each other. The positive aspect resides in the fact that the Senegalese military leadership studied carefully the different models of SOF partnering with Senegal. After a lot of combinations and adjustments, it seemed that the best task organization that fit to the CEMGA’s vision is the US Special Forces model, the twelve-man team SFOD-A. That can be explained by the modularity of such type of organization, tailored to carry all the different missions that an SF team should be able to do.

LTG John Mulholland, former deputy commander of the USSOCOM, defined the concept of an SFOD-A when assuming command of the 5th Special Forces Group (SFG):

The Special Forces Operational Detachment Alpha . . . is the fundamental fighting unit of Special Forces. It is a 12-man organization comprised of a captain, the second in command, who is a Special Forces warrant officer who has come up from the NCO ranks, and a master sergeant team sergeant, and then nine remaining NCOs who represent a multiplicity of skill sets: weapons, demolitions, medical, communications, intelligence, engineering, all those skill sets are contained within each team. There’s two of each on a team; it is designed from the very beginning to operate in two six-man elements, if necessary, to be a force multiplier in a battlefield so they can maintain the same capabilities in smaller elements. (PBS n.d.)

So far, the Senegalese Army SOF is the only structure in the region organized likewise, and will continue to develop its capabilities to meet all challenges that a SOF unit is expected to perform.

Following the wishes of President Macky Sall stated in his speech during the Armed Forces Memorial Day on 10 November 2015, the Senegalese navy and air force are currently developing their SOF components (Gouvernement du Senegal 2015). However, the weak point in this process is that the capacity building for those structures is being done without overall coordination from a joint SOF command that would synchronize the equipment and training of each entity. Each Senegalese SOF component is therefore developing its own task organization without a real cohesive approach.

Training: The training point is rated positive and many publications support this assessment. Part of the TSCTP, Senegal is also the only country that host three times the annual US led exercise Flintlock (Klutts 2016a). Its recognized stability and good relationship with the civilian population encourage Western partners to conduct frequent multilateral exercises on its soil. Therefore, the SSFC accumulated a lot of training experience from its different partner nations such as the Netherlands, at the point that it is cited as a model of SOF development in West Africa (Kulani J. 2016).

Policy: Senegal is currently dealing with the terrorist threat by increasing preventive measures, which justify the plus for grade. These efforts are also accompanied by a regional cooperation somewhat winded and laborious (Enquete 2015). Furthermore, Senegal and France agreed to an Action Plan against Terrorism (PACT), a project of 460 million FCFA (900,000.00 US dollars) to support Senegal. The PACT project, funded by the Priority Solidarity Fund of the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, aims to strengthen

the capacity of the police and gendarmerie services in Senegal and judges involved in the fight against threats related to terrorism (Ambassade 2016).

From the US partnership, it appears that the Senegalese authorities expressed clearly their will to work with the US because of the concerns of potential incidents terrorists, as well as radical extremism in Senegal (VOA 2016).

Aside from Senegal, around in the region, countries are developing their SOF capabilities, at a different pace of course, in accordance with their respective economic situation.

### Nigeria

As the giant of the region, Nigeria has the strongest SOF capabilities in the region. Through the TSCTP, number of West African nations' SOF took off with the support of the US. That involves then an eye on the created SOF units. The US paying particular attention to Human Rights issues, the massacre of Benue in October 2001 slowed down the security cooperation between the US and the West African giant (Global Security 2015). It was only with the rise of Boko Haram in the North-East of the country that the creation of a Special Forces unit came back on the negotiation table and was finally supported by the US Congress (Cooper and Searcey 2016).

Doctrine: The doctrine is left blank because of a mitigated factor that counterbalances the efforts of the country to wipe out the terrorist group acting on its soil. In order to work more effectively with the Army special units, and in the same time toughen its operations in the North-East and other internal security operations across the country, the Nigerian Air Force has established a Special Forces command. The Air Force Chief of Staff, General Sadiqi Abubakar, announced it during a lecture at the



National Defence College, Abuja, that focused on “Nigerian Air Force: Challenges and Future Perspectives” (Times 2016). On the maritime operations side, Nigerian Special Forces have gained huge expertise, because of the making available of naval assets such as the Shaldag Fast Patrol Boats. These platforms raised the level of the Nigerian SOF, giving them strong know-how on riverine operations (Bello 2012). However, the positive aspects above are opposed by the accusations of use of force of the Nigerian SOF against the population and based on ethnical and religious considerations (Stein 2015).

Organization: The second point of the model is rated positive. The creation of the Nigerian Army Special Operations Command (NASOC) motivates that assessment, insofar it provides a credible counterpart for the SOF community. Furthermore, even perfectible, it has the merit to join the different services as key components of the new strategic Command (Global Security 2015). The unit, the 72nd Special Forces Battalion, consists of troops drawn from the Nigerian Army, Navy and Air Force, and played a key part in the dislodgement of Boko Haram from the Sambisa Forest (Abubakar, Maiduguri, and Mutum 2015).

Training: Being officially established in 2014, it seems too soon to evaluate the outcome from the training that Nigerian SOF receives from its western partners. However, Nigeria has one of the most developed amphibious training center in West Africa. The existence of such platform expand its options for its special operations units (PremiumTimes 2014).

Policy: The last point is considered positive. The choice of Nigeria to accept the creation of the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) and allow other countries the right to pursuit terrorists from Boko Haram on Nigerian soil is a sign from President

Buhari to strengthen the regional cooperation in the Lake Chad basin (DOS 2016). In the same vein, President Buhari vigorously reboost the military cooperation with the US. Since he took office, the US has increased continuously its presence in the country, with the deployment of US SOF advisors in form of JPAT (Gordon 2015).

If Nigeria is the giant in term of military power in West Africa, it seems that Cameroon has the most advanced Special Operations Forces, because of the effective joint SOF command of the latter.

### Cameroon

The Rapid Intervention Battalion (BIR) was created in 1999 and was initially the Light Intervention Battalion (BLI). It was originally designed to counter the proliferation of banditry and transnational organized crimes. With the rise of Boko Haram, its missions evolved in 2008 to not only counter the spread of the terrorist group, but also assume the lead in Bakassi peninsula (Dougueli 2013).

Doctrine: The first point for Cameroon is globally negative. Theoretically, the Cameroonian armed forces are dedicated to the defense of territorial integrity and protection of its population. However, the post-independence history revealed two paradoxes in the way elite forces are used in the country. On one side, troops seem more used as a tool of repression in the service of power; on the other, there is a singulation of the Special Forces, including the BIR, creating a wave of indignation and frustration within the armed forces (Hengoup Ngangtcho 2011a).

Organization: If the utilization of its elite forces is subject of discussion, Cameroon has well organized the SF units. BIR is currently the most equipped and most trained strength of Cameroon. It is the center of the system of defense and homeland

security. BIR is now deployed in four fronts: securing the peninsula of Bakassi; counter highway robbers; reserve unit of each military region in the rapid intervention brigade; and presidential security. It consists of 4000 men and is a joint force with adequate training. The BIR to date is the lead in Cameroon homeland defense (Hengoup 2011c).

The BIR has a warship, small patrol boats, radars and helicopters. It also enjoys the support of the Air Force for reconnaissance and air support. The Marines Commando Forces, the frogmen unit and the Special Amphibious are also the supporting forces of the BIR. In total, BIR accounts for 10 percent of Cameroon's armed forces. It is mostly an army inside the armed forces. BIR has its own flag, marked with the seal of the lion. His recruitment is centralized, unlike the rest of the military forces recruitment (Salatou 2013).

Training: The training is overall rated positive. At its beginning, the BIR was under the order of an Israeli officer, Abraham AVI SIRVAN, who stayed in charge until his death in 2010. He oriented the training of the battalion to technics and tactics of the Israeli Defense Forces (Ondoua 2013, 334-336). Cameroon has also widened its cooperation in terms of training, especially with France that help the country strengthen its spectrum of special operations capabilities. The rises of Boko Haram and maritime piracy in the Gulf of Guinea justified its position (Kamguia 2010).

Policy: The last point of this assessment is negative. If its efficacy is domestically well known, it seems that the Cameroonians authorities are reluctant to deploy their SOF units outside the country (Elkaim 2013). In fact, early in the war against Boko haram, Cameroon has often been in disagreement with Nigeria. This situation now seems to be over, with the signature of bilateral agreements between the two countries regarding their

common enemy. However, there is still some mistrust of both sides in the effective implementation of policies of the two governments. Nigerian liaison officers have not integrated the Unit for cooperation and liaison that allowed the sharing of information and intelligence between the different countries of MNJTF. Yet, this coordination was formalized in a framework regulated by two documents: the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) and the Concept of Operations (CONOPS) (Nguembok 2015).

Recently, Cameroon received new equipment through their cooperation with France in the support to the fight against Boko Haram. It is about eleven off-road vehicles equipped with heavy machine guns, radio with very high frequency, forty bulletproof vest, as many helmets and various accessories. This equipment will allow increasing the operational capabilities of Cameroon Special Forces. Moreover, this gesture of France is added to the training given to the Special Forces operators in the non-conventional combat (Mbohhou 2016).

#### Cote d'Ivoire

After the terrorist attacks that occurred in Cote d'Ivoire on March 13, 2016, the Senegalese President, Macky Sall, invited other African countries to follow the example of the Ivorian Special Forces, whose reaction and response helped limit the damage when the terrorist attack of Grand-Bassam made twenty dead and several injured. "All our colleagues should learn from this experience Ivorian to upgrade our Special Forces. . . We have noted with pride your reaction and responsiveness strength of your army" (Innoncent 2016).

Doctrine: For a significant number of special units in Africa, there is not enough documentation regarding the concept of their employment. That situation justifies the

blank left in the chart for this factor. From what is known of the Ivorian Special Forces, this elite unit was created in 2011 by President Alassane Ouattara. Its primary duty was to protect the country against attacks and other destabilizing actions from Liberia, where state authority has not yet been fully restored. Since 2011, this unit has recorded thirty operations in the region. The Ivorian FS mandate has now expanded to take account the terrorist threats that keep spreading from all around in the region (JA 2015).

Organization: The unit seems well organized. As most of the Special Forces across the world, the Ivorian SF unit is a joint unit and consists of two airborne brigades. Among the subunits are two commando companies, two air assault battalions, one mountain battalion and a light security brigade (Afrique-sur7 2016).

Training: Not much information is released regarding the training and the readiness level of the Ivorian SF. However, the basic training provided by Morocco to the unit seems to have proven itself, considering the relatively successful way the Ivorian SF handled the terrorist attack at Grand Bassam in March 2016. More than that, the unit is now assisted by the French Special Forces, the 1st RPIMa, which brings its expertise and its experience from years and years of fight against Al Qaeda (Le Guerinec 2016).

Policy: With years of internal strife and civil war, the Ivorian defense policy is still in the reconstruction of the national cohesion. In fact, the participation of Cote d'Ivoire to the different regional military meetings is often limited to Staff or observers. However, as evidenced by the visit of General Rodriguez in 2014, the obvious interest of Cote d'Ivoire for the regional security approaches more and more the country to the US and, in the same occasion, to the West African partners of the US AFRICOM (AIP 2014).

## Niger

Already extremely weakened by the presence of armed groups affiliated with terrorist movements from North Africa, Niger suffers, after Cameroon, attacks by Boko Haram on its territory. Since November 2014, the insurgents have controlled an important number of villages next to Nigeria on a border strip of 350 km. The jihadists have conducted raids, abuses, and recruitment before moving to a really offensive way in February 2015: shelling, of sabotage attempts, ground incursions and suicide bombings (Champeaux 2015).

Doctrine: The defense and security forces of Niger were prepared and had received in June 2014 reinforcements in term of staff from the deployment “Ingar” which means “shield” in Kanuri. They are trained and advised by members of the American and French SOF through JCET and Joint Planning Assistance Team (JPAT) to remove the terrorist groups from their sanctuaries and stop all kind of smuggling across the Sahara desert (Global Security 2014). However, the multiple coups that have seen the implications of the military counter-balance the grade for this portion, and justify the blank in the chart.

Organization: A goal had been already set to establish, by 2012, two battalions of about 1,200 men dedicated to the fight against AQIM. However, about 2,500 soldiers were deployed on the borders with Mali and Libya to secure the transition points between these two countries and restrict movement or terrorist intrusions and arms smuggling (Verheyde 2012).

Policy: Niger is in the heart of the regional cooperation between the West African states and their western partners, reason why its policy is rated positive. On the financial

side, the Pentagon spends seventy million dollar for the formation of two counter-terrorism units, one in Mauritania and another in Niger. Twenty nine million dollar are allocated for the acquisition of logistics and monitoring equipment for the Mauritanian anti-terrorist unit. In Niger, on an overall budget of \$ 39.5 million for the training of troops in Niamey, 15 million are devoted to fly drones by the territory of Mali, an activity carried out from a base in Niger. This expenditure shows the clear will of the USA to support the efforts of West African countries in the fight against terrorism, whether it is Islamic jihad or transnational organized crime (Schmitt 2014).

### Mauritania

In the recent past, between 2007 and 2011, Mauritania has suffered a series of terrorist attacks particularly targeting Western citizens. Terrorism was not new in the country, but the succession of hostage situations, assassinations, suicide bombing etc. has triggered a reinforcement of the military response capacities, including Special Forces capabilities (Faujas 2015).

Doctrine: Doctrine is rated positive. Indeed, the peak of terrorism between 2007 and 2010 has provoked a holistic approach from the Mauritanian authorities against the VEO. A new doctrine was adopted, with an emphasis of the role of SOF and its interdependence with the intelligence community (Affaires Etrangères 2012, 16-18).

Organization: There is not sufficient data to support a grade. However, as many of their West African counterparts, the US led exercise Flintlock reveals that Mauritanian SOF are organized in battalion to perform actions more like ranger type activities. They are deployable from strongpoints to anywhere on the borders (Faujas 2015).

Training: Mauritania gets a positive grade for the training aspect. The country hosts a permanent French SOF detachment in Atar, which participate through bilateral agreements to the training of the local SOF and commando units. In addition, Mauritania takes active part to Flintlock exercises. Finally, since 2011, a US MARSOF team is permanently deployed in JPAT to deepen the training of their Mauritanian counterparts (Wilson 2011).

Policy: for Mauritanian authorities, the fight against AQIM is a national priority and will have no mercy. It is that hard way that Mauritanian President Mohamed Ould Abdel Aziz expressed during a televised debate on 5 August 2011. During his intervention, he said: “We are not willing to undergo the diktat of terrorism” (AFP 2011). This posture, underpinned by the development of a National Strategy against Terrorism (SNLT) was structured around four components: doctrinal and religious, cultural and academic, communication, politics, justice, defense and security. As for military action, the Mauritanian defense forces intervened several times in Malian territory (in collaboration with the Malian army) to dislodge AQIM terrorists who had taken refuge, especially in the border area of the forest of Wagadou (Seck 2011).

### Burkina Faso

Comparably to the majority of the West African nations, Burkina Faso created its Special Forces unit very recently. This unit was certified operational as SOF in March 2013, after nearly two months of training with their Dutch counterparts (Bartell 2015).

Doctrine: This point is rated positively. The Burkinabe SOF unit, based in Bobo Dioulasso, is essentially dedicated to counterterrorism. As matter of fact, the creation of this unit was triggered by the expansion of terrorism in the region and the increasing



kidnapping in the region, especially AQIM and the other terrorist groups enjoying the lucrative income from ransom (Bartell 2015).

Organization: It consists of a company-size element from the 25th Airborne Commando Regiment [*Regiment de Parachutistes Commandos, 25 RPC*], with three maneuver platoons. Although under the 25 RPC, the unit responds directly to the Burkinabe Army Chief of Staff, which allows it more flexibility and access to more resources (TOE 2013). From experience, having a sub-unit in a garrison with different standards caused often frustration and might affect cohesion, reason why this point is rated negative.

Policy: Burkina Faso is a one of the most frequent country in West African multilateral exercises such as Flintlock or Western Accord. Their partnerships with both TSCTP and the G5 Sahel hosting the French led operation Barkhane show their will to participate actively in the efforts of the region to contain terrorism (Bartell 2015).

### Step 3: Create synergy between West African SOF and SOCAFRICA and their allies

On reading the chart above (figure 5), it appears that the West African nations lack cruelly of documented doctrine for their SOF units. However, it seems that the different policies of the countries regarding their elite units are relatively converging. Some countries, due to some latent cold crisis such as the different that opposed Nigeria to Cameroon at the peninsula of Bakassi, seem to not be looking for deeper partnership. When it comes to two major powers, that situation might potentially affect the ability of the West African nations to work alongside the others. At the tactical level, each country chose the task organization with which it is comfortable. As long as the considered unit

meets the challenges its authorities give it in terms of special operations, it is not so important that this specific unit uses a platoon, a company, a squad or any type of denomination. However, it is critical for the different West African countries building their SOF capabilities to have a reliable and enduring structure that might be a credible counterpart for the SOF community (Long et al. 2015).

Finally, the Training component of the DOTMLPF-P seems to be the best tool to assess appropriately the need of the West African nations' SOF. In fact, with the exception of Cote d'Ivoire, the West African SOF are mainly trained and equipped by the US, through exercises such as Flintlock. Partnering with US SOCAFRICA, some NATO allies contribute actively to the SOF capacity building of West African SOF. That partnership sees for example Senegalese SOF paired with the Dutch Mariner SOF, while Burkinabe SOF work along their Dutch Army counterpart, Nigerien SOF with the Canadians, Nigerians with Germans, Mauritaniens with Spanish SOF. . . . The US SOCAFRICA oversees all training programs and plays the role of facilitator in the different African countries, and validate the training request of each partner nations (AFRICOM 2012). Thus, in accordance with each country initial level, the training provides appropriate counterterrorism capability to the West African SOF, and gives them also the potentialities to work one in conjunction with another in order to face collectively the terrorist threat in the sub-region (Lakanaria 2016).

At the strategic level, the West African states are aware of the need to establish command and coordination structures based on existing platforms or headquarters, to take the maximum advantage of potentialities acquired tactically by units and better synchronize their efforts in the fight against terrorism and transnational crimes.

Regarding the planning and conduct of operations, the West Africa has a military tool that has proven itself in the sub region, and offers some opportunities when it comes to the establishment of a joint special operations command for West African SOF: the Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group (ECOMOG).

In summary, the DOT-P components seem to be the key elements to build West African SOF synergy. In fact, it is very difficult to integrate new capabilities into existing resources in order to meet new threats or new requirements. To be successful in Africa, one can implement this tool through different exchange programs, such as bilateral or multilateral exercises among West African countries and/or with NATO partners.

#### Interoperability through Multinational Exercises

Currently, the US led annual exercise Flintlock provides a formidable platform of exchange of procedures, in an environment very close to real life situations (see figure 6).

According to US SOCAFRICA:

Exercise Flintlock is designed to foster regional cooperation to enable our African partners to stabilize regions of North and West Africa, reducing sanctuary and support for violent extremist organizations. Exercise Flintlock provides increased interoperability, counterterrorism, and combat skills training while creating a venue for regional engagement among all TSCTP nations. The Flintlock exercise at its core is a special operations counter-terrorism exercise. It is designed specifically to train and exercise regional forces by country among African partners of specifically focused on North and West Africa to counter the relevant threats that they are dealing with today. (United States Africa Command 2014)

According to US Army Lt. Col. William D. Rose, director of special operations exercises of the US AFRICOM, Flintlock Exercise as it is today focuses most of the West African states and has become an unmissable for the SOF community of the region. In the early age of the exercise, it consisted almost of bilateral cooperation. One big strength of Flintlock is that each country can request a specific training that might support its

effort in the GWOT. The training offered varies from staff officer level (planning through battle captain) to Tactics, Techniques and Procedures (TTPs) that include “social patrolling.” These type of patrol can be compared to Key Leader Engagement (KLE) often done through Medical Capacity (MedCap), a specific subject developed by the US Civil Affairs teams (Klutts 2016b).

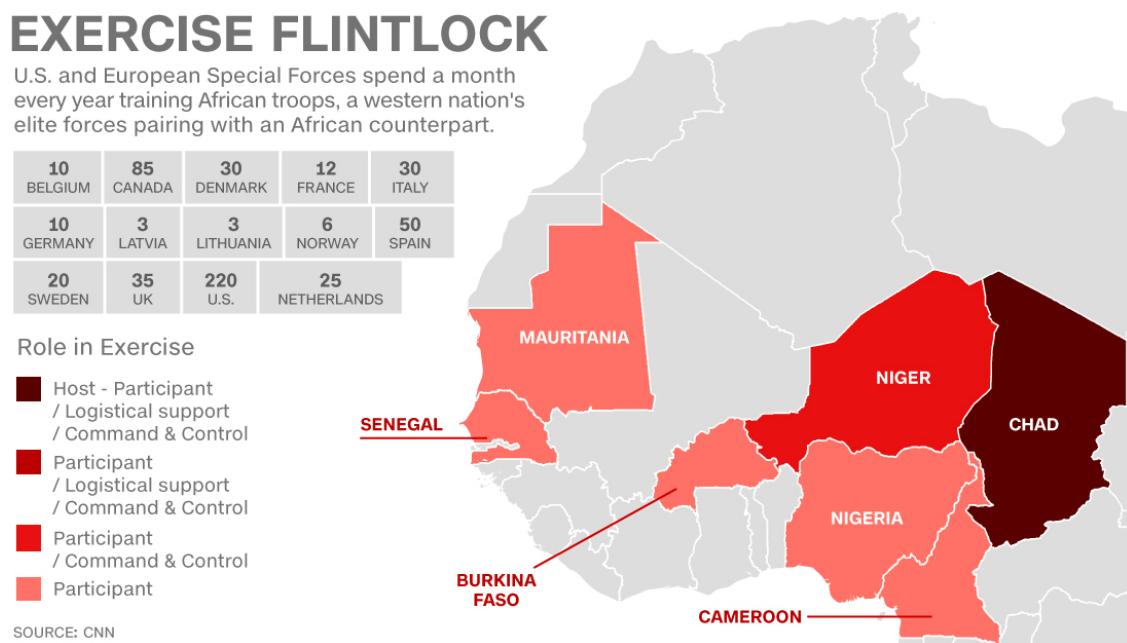


Figure 6. Flintlock 2015

*Source:* Arwa Damon and Brent Swails, “Feeling the Heat: West Combats Extremists’ Advance in Africa’s Deserts,” *CNN*, 27 February 2015, accessed 17 January 2016, <http://edition.cnn.com/2015/02/26/africa/africa-isis-training/>.

Flintlock is what the African countries want it to be. The chart shows that it requires less effort to synchronize the TTPs and SOPs of the West African SOF, as they

are all trained or assisted by AFRICOM and its partners. Therefore, it might be a starting point for a harmonization of national policies for a cross-regional security.

#### The increasing role of the US in the development of West African states' SOF

Following the 9/11 attacks, the surging American interest in Islamic extremism reached into every country with a significant Muslim population, to include those in the Sahel. The bilateral and multinational cooperation increased dramatically to counter the terrorist threat in the region. From 2002 to 2004, the United States underwrote the Pan-Sahel Initiative, which equipped 150-man rapid-reaction companies in Niger, Mali, Mauritania, and Chad, and trained them using the US SOF.

The portfolio of the Joint Special Operation Task Force–Trans Sahara (JSOTF-TS) expanded to include responsibility for managing all US military efforts in the region, in coordination with the various US Ambassadors, and host country governments, inclusive of Algeria, Tunisia, Mali, Mauritania, Senegal, Morocco, Burkina Faso, Niger, Nigeria, and Chad. In anticipation of disorders related to a potential destabilization of Libya, the United States extended the duration of JCETs to three months during 2010 and 2011 (Powelson 2013).

#### Failure to monitor the trained units

One issue often pointed out by the US SOCAFRICA teams training West African SOF is the non-consistency of the targeted units to training. One can provide the example of Mali, where the same issue was also reported by the European Union Training Mali (EUTM) (Gros-Verheyde 2013). In fact, prior to the coups of 2012 (which marked the withdrawal of the western advisors from the country), no Malian units trained, with the

exception of the 33rd RCP, were able to perform correctly any type of assault by using the basics (assault element, fire support and coverage).

The main cause of that lack of skills was the frequent rotation of Malian personnel and the limitation of JCETs to one for each of the four counterterrorism companies per year. Almost all trained personnel were rotated before a second JCET took place. The trainers thus had to start at square one with each new JCET, necessitating that they cover only basic skills, such as rifle marksmanship, individual movement, driver's training, and crew-served weapons familiarization. In frustration, the Americans urged the Ministry of Defense to change its six-month personnel rotation policy for the companies, but to no avail. A small number of USSOF were working with the Ministry of Defense at this time, in coordination with the US State Department, but they were focused on operational planning, not personnel (Powelson 2013, 29-41).

#### A New Approach for the multinational cooperation

From its historic ties with West Africa in particular, France still occupies an important place in the construction and development of African armed forces. Lieutenant General Babacar Gaye, then Senegalese Armed Forces Chief of Staff, recognized in 2003 the significant role of French cooperation for West African nations through different programs. However, he noted among several points, that cooperation has often been exploited as an element of domestic policy in African countries, even in France. Thus, the presence of French bases in Africa has for a long time crystallized the political opposition to the early days of African independence and keeps stimulating discussions. Additionally, the concepts of major Franco-African maneuvers evolved from the coercive action of hardline forces in peacekeeping operations for peace with the concept of

Strengthening African capabilities for peacekeeping (RECAMP), a concept already developed it was appropriate. Hence frustration based on fidelity to the principle of solidarity, so that it is more equality, non-indifference and non-interference (Gaye 2003).

Ten years later, it turned out that the suggestion of General Gaye, which privileged the multinational approach based on regional institutions, proved itself as the key component of the military cooperation. This multilateral approach then deploys in two areas: education and training of cadres - who turns out to be a tool of strengthening cohesion between States and also a strengthening tool of stability - and the creation of depot of equipment, like equipment prepositioned concept of RECAMP, to act urgently to prevent the spread of destabilizing threats.

The French intervention to restore Malian territory in 2013, through Operation SERVAT, defined new lines of effort deployed by France and some of its partners in West Africa. The main outcome is, indeed, Operation Barkhane, which is a totally new form of military engagement with SOF as key elements. It is an inclusive coalition of five West African countries (Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and Niger) with France as lead nation in support of the GWOT (see figure 7). With a special focus on these countries' SOF, Barkhane revolves around a triptych of strategic levers that are structural elements by which French military forces engaged in the Sahel-Saharan strip guarantee the effectiveness of the operation: the control of operational time, the control of time of anticipation, and the control of the time of intelligence (Houenou 2015).



Figure 7. Operation Barkhane: French/US Cooperation West African states

Source: Africa Confidential, “Operation Barkhane,” 2014, accessed 13 December 2015, [http://www.africa-confidential.com/article/id/5837/Firefighters\\_against\\_an\\_inferno](http://www.africa-confidential.com/article/id/5837/Firefighters_against_an_inferno)

Over the past decades, French interventions in Africa were generally based on parallel command structure. Operation Barkhane and its extension in the fight against Boko Hara showed a real will from the French to share their existing assets in terms of ISR, but also to let the West African states assume their fight by implementing African solutions to African problems. At the request of Nigerien authorities, France deployed air assets for reconnaissance and surveillance along the porous borders of Cameroon, Chad, Niger, and Nigeria (Griffin 2015, 4-9).



The consequences of this evolution of the French cooperation for West African SOF interoperability are multiple. First, the French SOF are helping their counterparts from the five African nation taking part of Barkhane to harmonize the training of their counterterrorist units through combined patrols (Brown and Dungelhoeff 2015). The subsequent valuable outcome of Barkhane for the indigenous SOF is the training and exchange of procedures they might get from the French SOF deployed in the area. Not often used to engage friendly the population, the local SOF learned from the French troops the process of key leaders' engagement (KLE), which has proved its value to the NATO's SOF conducted Village Stability Operations (VSO) in Afghanistan (JDef 2014).

#### To a new form of partnership?

The US military cooperation is relatively new in Africa. In this continent, laboratory of the US policy of light footprint, the USSOCOM has the lead (Kandel 2014). The Joint Special Operations University published in 2013 the results of a symposium: "the Role of the Global SOF Network in a Resource Constrained Environment". The conclusions reached at the end of the conference insist particularly on two of the four Lines of Operation (LOOs) established by Admiral William H. McRaven, then Commander of the USSOCOM: the Global SOF Network and the Responsive Resourcing. At the end of the day, the four LOOs (including "Win the Current Fight and Preserve the Force and Families") complete each other and concur to concretize the mid-term USSOCOM Vision: "A globally networked force of SOF, Interagency, Allies, and Partners able to rapidly and persistently address regional contingencies and threats to stability" (Ricks 2013).

The requirement for USSOCOM to implement this new form of partnership is that the host country must first have a formally established SOF unit or equivalent to serve as counterpart. The idea behind is that partner countries' SOF are no longer just a substitution of local elites units, or an opportunity for the host country to transfer their sovereign mission to them. The host country must indeed join the action to the word regarding its willingness to carry out its special operations autonomously. The major problem that usually arises in the training of special forces to the developing countries is the balance between achieving immediate operational effects and developing enduring partner capacity (Long et al. 2015).

Between 2010 and 2011, the JPAT rotations took another decisive turn, with a duration of at least six months. The new partnership focused on building the core capability of the host nation Special Forces Companies (SFCs). In a relatively small amount of time, the US SOF teams succeeded to relinquish increasingly the role trainers to the Senegalese Special Forces core cadres (NCOs and officers). They developed also a culture of mission command, so far very sensitive in the West African context. Shortly after, a sizeable number of the senior NCOs displayed a maturity in terms of competence and commitment comparable to the US Army NCOs. Considering the prior level of the unit, that accomplishment was a huge step in the development of the SSFC. The trust that resulted from that gain led a platoon of the SSFC to conduct of exercise Flintlock 2011 from 21 February–11 March, in conjunction with a Dutch, German, and Spanish SOF and a small US JPAT cell in Senegal (Powelson 2013).

Finally, the critical point is to find the appropriate balance between immediate result and long term development. The goal of the partnership must be clearly expressed

throughout the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) signed by all partners' chains of command. A lack of clarity about this balance can produce misunderstandings between higher headquarters and those units actually partnering with host-nation SOF.

In summary, it appears that the major concerns shared by the West African states are the presence of the terrorist groups in the Sahel-Saharan strip and, on the other hand, the expansion of Boko Haram that claims to be a key player in the current security environment. In this context, the countries of the sub-region, partnering with US and AFRICOM allies SOF, keep building adequate capabilities to fight appropriately and, when needed, collectively violent extremism.

However, an analysis through the prism of the DOTMLPF-P method showed that capacity building for West African SOF needs a real political will from local leaders. Tactically, the units can be relatively well trained. Without clear doctrine for their use, they might end up doing actions they were not supposed to perform and, at the end of the day, losing from their sight their initial objective: protect and defend their nation from transnational threats.

The new areas of cooperation played and continue to play a major role in fostering West African SOPs, enhancing simultaneously possible regional responses that can also meet western standards. Briefly, build West African capacity for West African problems.

A good start for the West African states' SOF and their western partner nations to set the conditions at the tactical level that would allow the different SOF units to be efficient and totally interoperable would be the studies of experience of the ISTC.

### Example: The European ISTC

The International Special Training Centre (ISTC) provides centralized tactical and operational training for NATO SOF and similar units from all around the world. The ISTC's primary mission is to provide world class training focused on building multinational interoperability in peace time. For that reason, the ISTC has permanently an experienced and dedicated group of SOF instructors from major NATO members. The aim behind this international instruction cell is to ensure that units that request a training from this center get the advanced skills they were looking for to succeed in the current and future multinational operating environment. Nine member nations -Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Greece, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Turkey and the United States make up the current cadre of instructors at ISTC. ISTC also provides training for SOF units from other nations, including Partners for Peace (PFP) and non-NATO nations, either at the in Pfullendorf or by deploying Mobile Training Teams (MTT) in the country that requested a specific need for training. The ISTC offers courses that would be relevant to West African SOF, for example: "Conduct After Capture Course (CAC), Tactical Combat Casualty Care (TCCC), Combat Marksmanship Course (CMMS), Close Quarter Battle (CQB), Desert Sniper Course etc. (ISTC 2016).

The bottom line is all the instruction and training provided are done according to the guidelines set by the standards of NATO SOF Headquarters. Last but not least, one of the goals of the ISTC, according to the center website, is to reduce and share training costs through centralization of advanced/specialized training for SOF and similar units (ISTC 2016). As expressed in some lessons learned from Afghanistan, the training and

instruction provided at ISTC were very valuable for the NATO SOF engaged with the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) (Mackle 2010).

At the end of the day, it seems that sharing same threats does not necessarily mean having common vision and strategy. The West African states are aware of the need of special capabilities and the need of a collective response to counter the volatility of terrorism. Yet, their respective agendas prevent them from first, building enduring capacity, and second, from finding a reliable working base for their respective SOF. The analysis that the DOT-P provided, established a real need to focus on doctrine and policy in order to achieve unified action one with another.

Based on the European example, it appears possible for West African countries to unify their efforts in terms of SOF to fight effectively the major threat they share. Indeed, when passing the data provided by the DOT-P analysis with the experience of the ISTC, one perceives that almost all the critical factors are gathered to successfully get West African SOF to work in synergy. The different policies are relatively converging (except for Cameroon and Mauritania, but their active participation in respectively MNJTF and G5 Sahel show a real will and also need to work more openly with their neighbors). The training performed in the different countries is more or less similar. In their majority, the West African nations' SOF are trained by the US and European allies SOF, which use NATO platform to share and harmonize their procedures and experiences. The difference in task-organization, as stated earlier, does not really affect the ability of the West African SOF to work together. Even the US SOF are task-organized differently according to the service they belong to (NSW 2016). The only point that might be an issue is the

doctrinal consideration. Nonetheless, the presence of the US and its allies might help mitigate considerably this factor.

## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### Introduction

West African countries' leaders unanimously condemned the terrorist attacks of the recent past years, and decided to wage a struggle without mercy to the terrorist groups. A first important step has been reached, with the acceptance of Nigeria to see foreign troops tread its soil to support him in his fight against Boko haram, finally aware that it cannot alone handedly halt the Boko Haram military expansion. Nigerian Foreign Minister, Aminu Bashir Wali remains firm despite this agreement and is justified in these terms:

Fight through a conventional war is one thing. The guerrilla struggle against terrorism, it is another thing. Conventional Armed Forces are not particularly suited to deal with such conflicts. (Tine 2015)

Yet, there is still an acute shortage of will when it comes to implement those different policies. On the doctrinal side, some efforts are being made by the countries at different pace, but they are still submerged by the classic temptation to keep the elite units around the political leaders. This way of doing often time prevent the military leader from establishing enduring doctrine for these type of units.

Finally, the majority of West African states, with the exception of Senegal, have more "Commandos-type" task organization, than really SF light footprint frame.

#### Conclusion

The accepted definition of Special Forces as NATO published it, reduced to the level of sub-Saharan Africa does not square with the realities of the countries of this

region. Indeed, due to inexistent doctrine, one can see how often derived from military elite units, considered Special Forces in these countries were involved in beatings-states hosted. Burkina Faso and Mali are an example among many others. These examples illustrate a problem of clear guidance of these elite units. Professional issues, integrity, civility and respect for republican values then arise and indicate the boundaries of these units supposed to reflect excellence or “elite” of the armed forces of those countries.

Another problem facing the development of elite units or “Special Forces” in sub-Saharan Africa is the mismatch between resources available and the nature of threats. The persistence of the terrorist threat to the whole region proves ineffective response of African states but also a lack of a common strategy with the base, the pooling of Special Forces to defeat the main West African terrorist groups such as AQIM and Boko Haram. Indeed, the absence of screaming human and anticipation materials, surveillance, intelligence, deep action and hostile environment recognition reinforce ineffectiveness of elite units in the fight against terror.

Though, there is no doubt now about the fact that the terrorist evil is now spreading in Africa, and it is not too exaggerated to say that these fundamentalists of all stripes advance without opposition, especially on the sub-Saharan continent. Indeed, sub-Saharan Africa has long been a breeding ground for the proliferation of illegal activities, and terrorism is unfortunately no exception. The attacks, bombings and kidnappings multiply throughout the Sahel band, from Nigeria to Mali, via Niger, Burkina Faso, and recently Cote d’Ivoire. Already well-established in some countries, the different violent extremist organizations continue their expansion strategy. From then on, it is urgent to take the necessary measures to stop this plague.



Meanwhile, the U.S. military teams keeps deploying to as many as 35 African countries early next year for training programs and other operations as part of an increased Pentagon role in Africa. The move would see small teams of U.S. SOF dispatched to countries with groups allegedly linked to al-Qaeda, ISIS and other known terrorist groups, in countries such as Libya, Sudan, Algeria and Niger (Blog 2013). The way the US is working with Africa, by engaging regionally the dialogue with the countries, offers options for West African nations to work on the most sensitive point of the DOTMLPF-P: an inclusive and convergent common policy to fight terrorism.

Yet, even though America's "war on terror" has now brought the US deep into tropical Africa and the Sahel against terrorists that destabilize the region, nearly all of the numerous groups cited are no more than loose bands incapable of threatening the United States and their interests. The first directly threatened, the West-African countries, must thenceforth take the lead and fight as one to defeat the terrorist groups. To suppress them means establishing political order and the rule of law over vast territories, which have known little of either.

The ongoing experience of light footprint by the use of US SOF shows the value of such type of units, best suited to train West African SOF facing common threats in the region, namely but not limited to, terrorism, transnational crimes etc. Special Forces worldwide have proven themselves within the past fifteen years in very complex environment, and now constitute the backbone of the military strategy. Indeed, the study displayed that they are the very illustration of the will of states to provide specialized and highly capable forces for so-called "special" missions, of high strategic significance,

sensitivity and secrecy. The action of Special Forces in the world is characterized by discretion, speed, accuracy and efficiency (Stratego 2015).

Finally, it is worth to recall the conclusion of Adiaratou Wakha Aidara Ndiaye, stating that “This battle [against terrorism] will be won only inclusively through strategic cooperation with northern allies to take advantage of their technological powers. This helps prevent the risk that terrorists strike unexpectedly. With what is happening in our continent, through the Saharan belt, defense and security forces and security actors, in general, have objective limitations related to a problem of human and financial resources. It is necessary that the people themselves can participate in the management of its own security.”

### Recommendations

#### Create a Decentralized Special Warfare Training Center

To begin with, West African nations’ SOF should deepen their relationships with one another and with the western countries by extended programs of training that will allow them to create and adjust their SOPs, given that the future military interventions would be done collectively. One good way of doing so is to create a decentralized Special Warfare Training Center. The principles of such a platform would be the following:

First, the center will split its platforms among three of four countries that are willing to participate to that program. It might be headquartered in Senegal because of its easy access and stability, with Command and Control assets. The HQ will host an International S2/S3, with liaison elements of participating countries. Other possibilities of location for the HQ might arise when countries will express their interest.

Second, in addition of the interoperability it offers to all participants, this form of exchange might also help for a better allocation of funds from both western partners and host nations. The host nation for a specific component will bring on the table its own existing training areas, which will be eventually modernized by partner nations to meet the standards of western SOF. Like the International Special Training Centre (ISTC) in Pfullendorf, Germany, it will provide training for ECOWAS Special Forces and similar units in West Africa in each specific area of competency. The geographical environment will determine the domain where each component of the school will focus its training: urban area course, jungle warfare training, desert environment training and maritime/riverine operations. Senegal, Nigeria, Niger and Sierra Leone or Liberia would be the targeted states to host the different platforms of training. The reasons why these countries (two French speaking and two English speaking countries) are chosen are multiple.

Senegal for instance possesses very advanced training areas for counterterrorism and direct actions in close quarter battle (CQB). Furthermore, its geographic position with multiple lines of communications (SLOCs, ALOCs and GLOCs) and the existence of level 3 hospitals internationally recognized makes it an important hub in the West African region. Therefore, Senegal might host, in its SOF compounds, the urban area course and the main HQ of the center. The HQ will be divided in two parts. The first part would be the command and control, mainly focused on synchronizing international exercises and also on planning and conducting real joint special operations. The second part will be some kind of TRADOC (Training and Doctrine Command), in charge of defining and adapting the missions and core capabilities of the West African SOF.

Likewise the US TRADOC, it will be dedicated to design, build, and develop the capacities of the SOF units, and will supervise the four components of the center in their respective area of expertise. The composition of the HQ will depend on each country desiderata, but it will comprise most likely a representative of each West African nation with US AFRICOM advisors and other western partner nations.

Niger has a long tradition of desert environment operations. Furthermore, the US led exercise Flintlock 2014 has shown the capacity of the Nigerien anti-terrorist units in long range patrol and special reconnaissance. Finally, it would help the participating nations to take advantage from the US technologies in term of Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance (ISR). Niger could then welcome the desert environment training.

Nigeria, as the military power of the region and with its advanced amphibious training center, might be the best choice to host the maritime/riverine component of the school.

Finally, the choice of Sierra Leone as the fourth component is motivated by two reasons: first, the British SAS have an existing a very well set jungle training facility in the country. The second reason is the internationalization of such type of facility might help foster the capabilities of the host nation armed forces. On the other hand, it might help stabilize the area, extended to its neighboring countries.

Similar to the German ISTC, that Special Training Centre, with the support of the U.S. AFRICOM and other partner nations from developed countries, will employ experienced and dedicated groups of multinational instructors (African as well as Westerners) to ensure that students learn the advanced skills they need to succeed in a 21st century Special Forces environment. Students from other nations, even non-

ECOWAS member nations can request training either a rotation within the different centers, or request an African form of FID for a limited budget environment.

However, West African countries should set some conditions in order to facilitate the cooperation between their respective SOF units and the western SOF units.

#### Create a Joint Special Operations Command at national level

Most of West African states have their SOF units under each service, with sometimes little or no coordination between them. Senegal for instance will need to create a single command for its SOF units from Army, Navy and Air Force. The model that would suit the best the Senegalese SOF would be a combination of the US model and the French model.

The US model (the USSOCOM), with its sub-unified command JSOC, studies special operations requirements and techniques, ensures interoperability and equipment standardization, plans and conducts special operations exercises and training, and develops joint special operations tactics. Similarly, the French model of Special Operations Command [*Commandement des Operations Speciales (COS)*] is responsible for planning, preparation and conduct of special operations. In terms of training, it plans and conducts joint exercises and exchanges and combined. On this occasion, it can control the capacity held by units of Special Forces participating in the validation of skills. In organic matter, it has mostly an advisory and coordinating role with the General HQ–*Etat-major general des Armees (EMGA)*– which it expresses its needs in capacity expected. The service staffs are responsible for the development of these capabilities by appropriate recruitment policy, equipment and operational readiness of the forces.

While the US model is in charge of acquisition and procurement to ensure interoperability between special operations forces, the French one lets this prerogative to each service, focusing more on command and control domain. For matter of culture and logistic considerations, Senegal ought to let the equipment acquisition prerogative to each service.

Each country has its own priorities and national realities. The two main things to keep in mind for the creation of national special operations command are:

1. The capacity to better coordinate SOF actions either for international or domestic terrorist threats. That includes a permanent dialogue with the homeland security units (gendarmerie and police through the Anti-Terrorist Fight Cell–*Cellule de Lutte Anti-Terroriste –CLAT*)
2. The existence of a credible focal point for the partner nations counterparts, able to discuss and advise the General Chief of Staff for SOF matters (combined exercises and multinational operations)

Set up regional Special Operations Commands (TSOC)  
for UN and AU missions

The 2015 edition of the United Nations Peacekeeping Missions Military Special Forces Manual depicts the need of Special Forces capabilities in some specific missions, especially in Africa. In fact, Special Forces have various capabilities, including the use of force, to be employed in UN Peace Operations. Reconnaissance, military assistance, long range patrolling and information collection are non-lethal capabilities that go beyond the use of force - which in peacekeeping is always a measure of last resort. If force must be

used, UN Special Forces can provide a calibrated, precise, proportional and appropriate capability (UN 2015).

The creation of this type of structure would allow achieve unified action for the Force Commander. In addition, it would be a perfect transition from Flintlock Exercise to a real mission where the West African states' SOF could prove their ability to work in conjunction with their US/NATO counterparts. Finally, the lessons learned from their first engagements as West African Special Operations Task Force will be very valuable and relevant for the development of the decentralized special warfare training center.

Naturally, it will require political and diplomatic involvement at the highest level of the military chain of command, since the created SOTF would have power to cross borders and act in countries different from theirs in order to pursuit and eventually destroy the terrorist groups and transnational crime organizations destabilizing West African nations. Currently, the Malian theater offers a unique opportunity to start this experience, with the presence of numerous SOF units from both West African region and NATO area. The examples of the French led Operations Sabre and Barkhane might be closely studied and adapted to implement the aforementioned command structure.

#### Recommended Items for Further Research

##### Develop a West African SOF network

Very tied to the decentralized special warfare school, the development of a West African SOF network will be very helpful in the GWOT. Strategically speaking, it will facilitate the exchange of intelligence on the common threats, and will hence allow to anticipate potential terrorist attacks anywhere in West African region. The convention of

Algiers of 2002, ratified by forty-nine AU members, already established the legal basis for an efficient platform to exchange information.

This network might also help to objectively assess the need of capabilities of West African SOF for collective or national response to an identified regional threat. Well advised and properly equipped, the West African SOF units might concretize both US strategy of light footprint and African objective: African responses to African problems.

#### Special Operations Forces missions in West Africa: Domestic or Expeditionary?

Once the concept of Special Forces in the West African space is well defined, one should wonder what should be the limits in time/space of a SOF unit from one singular country acting or pursuing transnational criminals who could have harmed the citizens from that specific state. Can Senegalese SOF be projected somewhere on the continent or elsewhere in the world to rescue Senegalese citizens in hostage situations? Could they do the same for members of other countries from West Africa?

#### Developing West African SOF Technology

In the world of SOF, technology and advanced equipment go alongside training and mission. However, the majority of West African states cannot afford the latest equipment needed to perform Special Operations. Most of them rely on cooperation agreements to get some material. In addition, this situation maintains the dependency of indigenous SOF on their western counterparts. Therefore, establishing platforms for industrial and technological research might be an area to explore.



### Summary

The framework that the DOTMLPF-P offers shows certainly a lack of documentation in identifying Special Forces in sub-Saharan Africa. It is often due to the absence of such forces or the opacity surrounding their existence (no publication, no exploits, etc.).

So, despite the disparity of the West African SOF capabilities, the United States and its allies should seize the opportunity to contribute to a greater international effort to help turn the region gradually from a zone of conflict to a zone of hope. Doing so will be good for America's own security and economic interests, as well as humanitarian ones. In more sustained conflicts, such as those occurring in the central African nations, the U.S. would not be able to intervene significantly without committing to full-scale operations with conventional forces. For this reason, SOCOM is likely to become a leading influence in future U.S. operations in Africa, as it has been in Afghanistan since 2001.

The last word? *"Enough discussion, it is time to act."* Idriss Deby Itno, Chadian President (Koeta 2016).

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