

ARMY SPECIAL OPERATIONS FORCES (ARSOF): HOW CAN ARSOF REDIRECT
EFFORTS IN COLOMBIA FROM TACTICAL TO OPERATIONAL LEVEL SUPPORT
DUE TO THE RECENT TRANSITION OF THE FUERZAS ARMADAS
REVOLUCIONARIAS COLOMBIANAS (FARC)

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fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree

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General Studies

by

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WHINSEC
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ABSTRACT

ARMY SPECIAL OPERATIONS FORCES (ARSOF): HOW CAN ARSOF REDIRECT EFFORTS IN COLOMBIA FROM TACTICAL TO OPERATIONAL LEVEL SUPPORT DUE TO THE RECENT TRANSITION OF THE FUERZAS ARMADAS REVOLUCIONARIAS COLOMBIANAS (FARC). by CW2 Marcus A. Montez, 83 pages.

The remodeling of Army Special Operations Forces (ARSOF) support to Colombian Security Forces during the transition phase of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia needs to be revised at to retain stability in the country. The Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias Colombianas (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia or FARC) are going through a transition phase. The Colombian Military campaign strategy lacks the necessary measures to support transition efforts to prevent Transnational Criminal Organizations (TCO) and other belligerent non-state actors such as the Ejército de Liberación Nacional (National Liberation Army or ELN), Ejército Popular de Liberación (EPL) and Bandas Criminales (BACRIM) from expansion, placing the security gains made over the last two decades at risk. This research attempts to identify opportunities for ARSOF to sustain foreign internal defense (FID) goals, as well as expand into operational and strategic levels to identify means of achieving improved security outcomes by improving and adjusting the current ARSOF support to Colombia.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
MASTER OF MILITARY ART AND SCIENCE THESIS APPROVAL PAGE	iii
ABSTRACT.....	iv
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	v
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	vi
ACRONYMS.....	viii
ILLUSTRATIONS	ix
TABLES	x
CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION	1
Background.....	1
Problem Statement.....	5
Primary Research Question	7
Secondary Research Questions.....	7
Assumptions.....	7
Definitions	8
Scope.....	9
Inside the Scope	9
Outside of the Scope	10
Limitations	11
Delimitations.....	12
Significance of the Study	12
CHAPTER 2 REVIEW OF LITERATURE.....	14
Introduction.....	14
Section 1: El Salvador Peace Accord and the Colombian Peace Model	14
Section 2: US Strategy, Law, and Funding.....	15
Strategic Documents	15
Section 3: USSOUTHCOM Campaign Plan	15
Section 4: ARSOF's Indirect Approach in El Salvador and Colombia.....	18
CHAPTER 3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	19
Introduction.....	19
Research Phases	19

Case Studies	20
Analysis Criteria	20
CHAPTER 4 ANALYSIS	21
Section 1: El Salvador Peace Model and Colombian Peace Model	22
The El Salvador Peace Accord Model	22
Social Economic Conditions	26
The Colombian Peace Referendum.....	28
The Colombian Peace Model.....	29
The FARC Insurgency	31
El Salvador Peace Accord and Colombian Peace Referendum Conclusion.....	33
Section 2: US Strategy and Funding.....	34
US Strategy	34
National Military Strategy	35
Methods in Addressing Strategic Issues	39
The National Defense Authorization Act	41
Research of US Strategy and Funding Conclusion.....	43
Section 3: USSOUTHCOM Campaign Plan	44
USSOUTHCOM Vision	44
How the US Supported El Salvador.....	45
Colombian FARC Hypothesis: Transition.....	47
USSOUTHCOM Campaign Plan in Colombia Conclusion	49
Section 4: ARSOF’s Indirect Approach in El Salvador and Colombia.....	49
ARSOF Indirect Approach in El Salvador.....	49
ARSOF Indirect Approach in Colombia.....	51
ARSOF Transition to Operational and Strategic Level Support.....	57
ARSOF Indirect Approach in El Salvador and Colombia Conclusion.....	59
Conclusion of Analysis.....	60
CHAPTER 5 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	63
Conclusions.....	63
Recommendations.....	64
Areas for Further Study and Policy Recommendations.....	66
BIBLIOGRAPHY	70

ACRONYMS

AOR	Area of Responsibility
ARSOF	Army Special Operations Forces
BACRIM	Bandas Criminales
CA	Civil Affairs
CMO	Civil Military Operations
CNT	Counter Narcotics Training
COIN	Counterinsurgency
CT	Counterterrorism
ELN	Ejército de Liberación Nacional
EPL	Ejército Popular de Liberación
FARC	Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia
FID	Foreign Internal Defense
FMLN	Frente Farabundo Marti para la Liberacion Nacional
JCET	Joint Combined Exercise Training
MTT	Mobile Training Team
NMS	National Military Strategy
NSC	National Security Counsel
NSS	National Security Strategy
SOF	Special Operations Forces
SOUTHCOM	US Southern Command
TCO	Transnational Criminal Organization
TSCP	Theater Security Cooperation Plan

ILLUSTRATIONS

	Page
Figure 1. Demobilization and Disarmament	25
Figure 2. Continuum of Conflict	36
Figure 3. The Integrated Approach	38
Figure 4. Stabilizing Effects	39
Figure 5. Special Warfare Operational Art in El Salvador.....	51
Figure 6. Social Movement Theory Model	53
Figure 7. US Special Warfare Operations Since World War II	56
Figure 8. Framework for Raising Special Warfare to the Operational Level	59

TABLES

	Page
Table 1. Colombian FARC Hypothesis: Transition.....	48

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

We need to out-innovate our exceptionally innovative adversaries. We need to leverage revolutions happening in commercial space and machine learning to transform how we and our partners use things like nano-satellites to provide critical situational awareness. We need to develop advanced data analytics of publicly available information to understand how these groups recruit members and how they conduct their operations in the cyber domain. We need a better understanding of how illicit funds move through the global financial system, and who benefits from these funds. We need to increase regional cooperation with our key allies and partners and increase integration across our own military, law enforcement, diplomatic and intelligence organizations.

Of these efforts, none is more important than the absolute imperative to foster trust, expand relationships, and prioritize efforts across our US government “blue” network. If all these “needs” sound familiar, they should. They are exactly the fields at which today’s modern SOF professionals excel. No organization in the world does counter-threat networks better. And so that’s why I’m here today, to enlist your help.

— Transcript: Adm. Tidd remarks at
Global SOF Foundation Symposium, 22 February 2017

Help our Nation win:

—Prioritizing and synchronizing global SOF activities to meet complex global challenges

— Joint Special Operations University

Background

In the 1950s and 1960s, political perspectives and security conditions changed throughout Central and South America as a result of social and economic factors, regional instability, and outside state influences. Several countries were battling internal struggles involving revolts and insurgencies. Small pockets of civilian revolts were inspired by revolutionaries such as Ernesto “Che” Guevara, who had himself been inspired by Mao’s People’s War. Eventually, Guevara refined Marxist theory into a

movement in Latin America, which in turn resulted in the development of the *foco* theory.¹ The *foco* theory is considered a small band of insurgent groups coming together for a cause or revolution based on the social-economic conditions faced. This type of Marxist revolutions inspired movements across Latin America. It was inspirational movements such as the Cuban revolution that inspired and spread across Latin America. “Within some of the countries such as Cuba, Nicaragua, Colombia, Peru, and El Salvador there were multiple peasant protests and movements because classes of society were seeking improved social and economic conditions.”² All of these movement are related to each other because their presence in Latin America caused regional instability and revolutions across the region.

Che Guevara published an extended essay where he described the power of guerrilla warfare when supported by the masses, which in itself has not caused much discussion. However, he describes other points of discussion that have led to a distinctive revolutionary theory, popularly referred to as the *foco* theory. The most important point represents a major break from conventional Marxist theory, whereby the proletariat must build class-consciousness through the development of advanced capitalism, revolutionary solidarity through the collective experience of class oppression and then finally a revolution by the proletariat.³ The majority of the revolutions were aligned with Marxist

¹ The Cambridge Dictionary, s.v. “Foco,” accessed January 17, 2017, <http://dictionary.cambridge.org/>.

² Ernesto “Che” Guevara, *Guerrilla Warfare: Introduction by Marc Becker* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1998), 7.

³ Joshua Johnson, “From Cuba to Bolivia Guevara’s FOCO Theory in Practice,” *Innovations: A Journal of Politics* 6 (Winter 2006): 1-2, accessed January 13, 2017,

groups or left-wing labor unions, this was observed in El Salvador where communist support was being sent to insurgencies through means of supplies, equipment, and training further adding to fears of a Communist revolution.⁴

By adhering to the *foco* theory of guerrilla warfare, insurgent groups in El Salvador and Colombia notably the Frente Farabundo Martí para la Liberación Nacional (FMLN) and the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias Colombianas (FARC) exploited critical vulnerabilities of the environment and convinced small pockets of rural populations to organize revolts in El Salvador, the long-term presences of the FMLN resulted in a Civil War that lasted from 1980 until 1992 and eventually led to the Chapultepec Peace Accord in 1992.

In 1960, Che Guevara wrote an extended essay in which he proposed that the Cuban revolution revealed the basic requirements for any Latin American nation to successfully wage a guerrilla war. He argued that the Cuban experience presented three fundamental lessons:

1. Popular forces can win a war against the army.
2. It is not necessary to wait until all the conditions for making revolution exist; the insurrection can create them.
3. In underdeveloped Latin America, the countryside is the basic area for armed fighting.⁵

<http://people.ucalgary.ca/~innovate/issues/2006winter/Johnson%20Cuba%20to%20Bolivia.pdf>.

⁴ Guevara, *Guerrilla Warfare: Introduction*, 7.

⁵ Ibid.

Meanwhile, in Colombia, peace talks have already taken place, and that a transition within the FARC is already planned. Beginning in 2012 and lasting into the present moment, the FARC have been involved in peace talks with the Government of Colombia. During the ongoing peace negotiations, it can be assumed that the FARC is planning on demobilization and into the political realm. The demobilization of the FARC will cause a power vacuum. If this transition occurs, the result will be open opportunities for smaller belligerent groups to destabilize areas that were once stable and secure over the last twenty years.

A transition zone is considered a zone or time-window where the transition process of the FARC will be achieved. The transformation of the FARC from an insurgency to a legitimate political party provides an opportunity for the Army Special Operations Forces (ARSO) to increase foreign internal defense (FID) in Colombia. The void the FARC provides amongst other insurgent groups has the potential to allow other smaller belligerent insurgent groups to grow or create a power struggle. This may in turn lead to a catastrophic hybrid threat further causing regional instability.

When insurgent groups combine efforts there is a potential to change the principles of how they operate. Modern-day insurgent groups have access to multiple resources such as technology and weapons. When they join other groups they continue to achieve mutually benefiting goals. "A hybrid threat is the diverse and dynamic combination of regular forces, irregular forces, and or criminal elements all unified to

achieve mutually benefitting effects.”⁶ Hybrid threats can respond in this manner in Colombia if the government is not prepared to counter them.

Historically, the US has supported partnered nations in Latin America through Theater Security Cooperation Plan (TSCP). The mechanism preferred is through foreign internal defense under a negotiated TSCP. ARSOF utilizes the authorities and permissions granted in TSCPs to conduct FID. The guidance for integrating US military forces, including ARSOF, is within the theatre campaign plans and country plans. Successful ARSOF operations require an effective interdependence, interoperability and integration with partnered nation security forces. The campaign plans essentially provide the framework used to guide ARSOF to assist Latin American security forces.

Problem Statement

The continued focus of ARSOF to operate at the tactical level limits the potential to influence at the operational level and ultimately to achieve strategic effects. In the researcher’s opinion, the anticipation of the FARC transitioning into a legitimately recognized party will cause a power vacuum amongst Transnational Criminal Organizations (TCO) and other belligerent non-state actors such as the Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN), Ejército Popular de Liberación (EPL) and Bandas Criminales (BACRIM). Ultimately, the void left by the FARC will create opportunities for their criminal expansion resulting in prolonged turf disputes. In many of the countries within the United States Southern Command (USSOUTHCOM) area of responsibility

⁶ US Department of the Army, Training Circular (TC) 7-100, *Hybrid Threats* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, November 2010), v.

(AOR), the US continues to partner with security forces and build partnered nation capacity similar to the capacity-building efforts during the execution of Plan Colombia. Plan Colombia was a diplomatic strategy between Colombia and the US agreed upon in the early 1990s. The plan focused on countering drug trade in Colombia. The US provided financial support and military aid to build partnered nation capacity. However, Plan Colombia focused on counter drug trade in South America. The TCOs, ELN, EPN, and BACRIM will compete in a power struggle to control territory that was once controlled by the FARC. These violent non-state actors will develop or modify their strategy, operations, tactics, and organization based on the FARC's transition. There is an integrated approach to counter and deter threats that may arise when the FARC moves into the "transition-zone."⁷

An important piece of the FARC's transition is the peace accord. The peace accord was not approved by the citizens of Colombia at the beginning. Further refinement was needed to win the popular vote and acceptance after the transition began in 2012. For example in October 2016, the referendum failed ratification and the voters rejected the peace deal with FARC rebels with a 50.2 percent vote against it.⁸

The Advocacy for Human Rights in the Americas (WOLA) states, "Organized crime groups and the smaller National Liberation Army guerrillas are poised to fill territorial power vacuums that the FARC leave behind, if Colombia's state proves unable

⁷ Your Dictionary, s.v. "transition zone," accessed February 3, 2017, <http://www.yourdictionary.com/>.

⁸ BBC News, "Colombia Referendum: Voters Reject FARC Peace Deal," last modified October 3, 2016, accessed December 13, 2016, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-37537252>.

to fill them first. To keep these challenges under control, Colombia will need generous, determined, and active US support for increasing state presence and reintegrating ex-combatants—not criticism or opposition.”⁹ Outside organizations are assessing the changing circumstances in Colombia. WOLA has determined that based on the transition of the FARC there will be a shift in power within non-state actors in Colombia.

Primary Research Question

How does ARSOF enhance Colombian Security Forces’ capabilities during the reintegration of the FARC into Colombian society?

Secondary Research Questions

1. How are ARSOF being used in the fight against narcoterrorism in Latin America?
2. What is the probable next fight following the Peace agreement with the FARC?
3. How do we identify skill gaps associated with the next challenge in Colombia?
4. What must we do better to prepare ARSOF for future threats in Latin America?

Assumptions

1. ARSOF and Colombian security forces will continue to partner at the tactical level based on a long term strategic relationship in Colombia. The current ARSOF campaign plan includes FID that will require an evolving long-term solution as a result of FARC and Colombian governmental response.

⁹ Advocacy for Human Rights in the Americas (WOLA), “Some of the many reasons why the United States Should Keep Supporting Colombia’s Peace Accord,” last modified February 1, 2017, accessed 9 March 2017, <http://colombiapeace.org>.

2. The United States President, Congress, USSOUTHCOM, and international partners are open to ARSOF legal authorities and policy changes in the theater security cooperation plan (TSCP) that support stability operations in a post FARC transition.

Definitions

Army Special Operations Forces (ARSOF): “are those Active and Reserve Component Army forces designated by the Secretary of Defense that are specially organized, trained, and equipped to conduct and support special operations;”¹⁰

Banda Criminal (BACRIM): “criminal gang, criminal group, or criminal organization;”¹¹

Foreign Internal Defense (FID): “Foreign internal defense is the participation by civilian and military agencies of a government in any of the action programs taken by another government or other designated organization, to free and protect its society from subversion, lawlessness, insurgency, terrorism, and other threats to their security;”¹²

Special Forces (SF): “are US Army forces organized, trained, and equipped to conduct special operations with an emphasis on unconventional warfare capabilities;”¹³

¹⁰ US Department of the Army, Army Doctrine Publication (ADP) 3-05, *Special Operations* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2012), iv.

¹¹ Gereon Frahling, ed., s.v. “banda criminal,” *Linguee* (Cologne, Germany: Linguee GmbH, 2017), accessed January 17, 2017, <http://www.linguee.com/spanish-english/translation/banda+criminal.html>.

¹² USSOCOM, Joint Publication (JP) 3-22, *Foreign Internal Defense* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, July 2010), iv.

¹³ US Department of the Army, Army Doctrine Reference Publication (ADRP) 3-05, *Special Operations* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, August 2012), 3-13.

Transnational Organized Crime (TOC): “Transnational criminal organizations are self-perpetuating associations operating across national borders that use violence, corruption, and fraud to protect and disguise their illicit, profit-driven activities;”¹⁴

Scope

Inside the Scope

Unfortunately, the current US Defense strategy design does not adequately address the enabling of Colombian defense forces at the operational and strategic levels to immediately address the growth opportunities that may become available to smaller criminal groups based on the FARC demobilization process. Therefore, the current strategy for the employment of ARSOF resources needs to be revised to mitigate belligerent groups from capitalizing on the power vacuum opportunities created by the FARC demobilization procedure. This thesis investigates the current peace agreement referendum, model, and negotiations with the FARC published by the Government of Colombia (GoC). It also explores the current US Defense strategy to assist Colombia in sustaining the security gains made over the last twenty years which have been affected by the unexpected outcomes of the ongoing peace accord. Currently, the US Defense strategy in Colombia has experienced significant success by leveraging the employment of ARSOF’s indirect approach capabilities to expand the operational skills of the security

¹⁴ Kamala D. Harris, “California and the Fight Against Transnational Organized Crime.” *Gangs Beyond Borders*, State of California- Department of Justice- Office of the Attorney General, March, 2014, accessed March 2, 2017, <https://oag.ca.gov/transnational-organized-crime>. 2015, <https://oag.ca.gov/transnational-organized-crime>.

forces in Colombia. However, most of this focus has remained at the tactical level, creating gaps in future responses at other levels of conflict.

This thesis is focused geographically on the Western Hemisphere to include El Salvador, Central America and Colombia, South America. The thesis also covered USSOUTHCOM, United States Special Operations Command South (USSOCSOUTH), and US Special Operations Command (USSOCOM) unclassified resources. The sources for this study included works from members of the Department of State (DOS), Foreign Area Officer (FAO) corps, and ARSOF who have extensive working experience in the region. The international research population included: partner nation military security forces and national police from Colombia and El Salvador who are currently attending the Command and General Staff Officer Course (CGSOC) at the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation (WHINSEC).

Additionally, this research explores how ARSOF can enhance Colombian security forces capabilities to advance the ongoing peace talks between the FARC and the GoC. The example of the transition model used in El Salvador in 1992 provides an important model for how ARSOF might enable partnered nation security forces to counter threats. The referendum in Colombia that began in 2012 and continues today is analogous in many ways to the peace accord model used during the end of the Salvadoran Civil War. This thesis assisted in providing an outside perspective of a potential problem for future ARSOF engagements in Colombia once the FARC demobilize.

Outside of the Scope

The topic of this thesis is related to other insurgencies and organizations operating in and around Colombia, including the EPL, ELN, TCO, and BACRIM. Similar problems

affect ongoing security considerations in Colombia with regard to these organizations, and have potential to increase once the FARC is fully integrated into a peace accord. However, the study of these organizations is outside of the scope of the current project. Further, this study does not examine the Ministry of Defense (MOD) and Ministry of Interior (MOI) in Colombia or its partner nation security forces.

Limitations

A historical study of the transition model used in El Salvador will provide some important historical background that is not immediately available through partner nation, criminal, and classified US data. The level of classification will necessarily limit the access to some information. For example, a large amount of ARSOF training and advising data, which applies to partner nation units, remains classified. Similarly, various aspects of special operations targeting, intelligence activities, budgets, and operational outcomes remain classified. For this reason, research for this study was conducted primarily through analysis of the Defense Institute of Security Assistance Management (DISAM) Annual report of 2015 on Building Partner Capacity. Another limitation considered was the open source information on the country campaign plan named *Espada de Honor III (Sword of Honor)*. The country specific plan identifies some shortfalls in the country strategy, as describe by Philip K. Abbott, “is that the dream of a classic military victory over the FARC is simply no longer feasible. In spite of this reality, the *Sword of Honor* strategy continues to follow the same enemy-centric approach as previous

strategies.”¹⁵ The research into the *Sword of Honor* strategy will be open source. As a result, much of the research will be qualitative. Additionally, a transition in the Executive branch in the US and administration is taking place. The new administration will likely publish a new National Security Strategy (NSS) that could benefit this thesis moving forward.

Delimitations

Research of the Salvadoran case is limited to the in-depth analysis of the transition model implemented in 1992. Initial findings from this case study reveal various observations and lessons that are useful for recommending different employment of ARSOF resources in Colombia to assist with the ongoing peace accords there.

The Colombian case study focuses on the evolution of the Colombian agreement referendum from 2012-2016, the current USSOUTHCOM campaign plan, and how ARSOF supports the plan. This research draws primarily from open-source information, unclassified and releasable military after action reviews, and primary academic sources. It will only encompass ARSOF and their partnering relationships in Colombia with respect to building partner nation capability and capacity.

Significance of the Study

This thesis has two primary aims; first, to identify the means of improving security outcomes by modifying current ARSOF support to the Government of Colombia partner security forces; and second, to develop long-term sustainable solutions to current

¹⁵ Philip K. Abbott, “Colombian Peace Negotiations: A Critical Juncture for Positive Change?”, *Small Wars Journal* (February 2017): 3.

security challenges. The United States NSS, National Military Strategy (NMS), and the ongoing Colombian and FARC peace accords affect national strategies across Latin America. The proposed peace model is a template for other countries to use, one with significant implications other countries wishing to emulate the indirect approach modeled by the US in El Salvador to achieve stability. Many of the key US strategic documents address stability with the goal of achieving the end-state. As a result, US military assistance policy will need to be revised to keep pace with the changing environment.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

This research provides an architecture framework supported by historical and theoretical information. This method will assist in answering the research question and method of approach to the research. The review of literature elaborates on research that is relevant to the topic, current US security policy, current military strategy in USSOUTHCOM, and the current peace agreement referendum in Colombia.

The 1992 Salvadoran Chapultepec Peace Accord provides a historical reference point and model for the ongoing Colombian peace referendum. Extant literature supports current US security concerns, specifically with regard to military strategies in USSOUTHCOM that affect the implementation of ARSOF in El Salvador and Colombia. The peace accord in El Salvador was employed with an insurgent group transitioning into a legitimate political party, a situation much like that unfolding in Colombia today. Within the context, open-source information related to the current peace accord in Colombia provides valuable up-to-date information on the state of the FARC transition.

Section 1: El Salvador Peace Accord and the Colombian Peace Model

The 1992 peace talks which brought the Civil War in El Salvador (1980-1992) to an end provides a blueprint for Colombia's own peace accord in the present moment. The model details US involvement in the region, and highlights how an indirect approach in El Salvador appealed to US policy makers and was part of the mechanism for ARSOF participation in a limited role with strategic implications. Despite its applicability to the

region, the Chapultepec Peace Accord provides only adequate recommendations for the current Colombian situation, as the tactics used in El Salvador were most appropriate during the timeframe and in the context of the Salvadorian Civil War. For this reason, this thesis concentrates on the period from 1992 until signing of the peace accord in January 16, 1992, and focuses on the resources essential for understanding the complexity of the issue. It does this by analyzing the Salvadoran and Colombian cases individually to understand the second and third order effects or a potential policy shift.

Section 2: US Strategy, Law, and Funding

The Theater Security Cooperation Plan nested within the NSS, NMS, and USSOUTHCOM Campaign Plan provides the national framework and guidance for ARSOF in the Western Hemisphere. In these documents, regional stability is of the utmost concern for protecting the homeland. The proposed peace accord in Colombia has been recognized as a future model for states to utilize when seeking regional stability.

Strategic Documents

1. USSOUTHCOM Theatre Strategy 2016
2. National Security Strategy 2015
3. National Military Strategy 2015
4. Defense Institute of Security Assistance Management Annual report on Building Partner Capacity 2015

Section 3: USSOUTHCOM Campaign Plan

The current USSOUTHCOM Campaign Plan and the USSOCSOUTH Campaign Plan provides the guidance to ARSOF when engaging in the region. One of the important

goals in achieving stability in Latin America is to build partner nation capacity and sustaining international relationships. ARSOF takes an approach to building partner nation capacity by identifying the needs of partnered nation forces while simultaneously utilizing components operating within their authorities to accomplish the mission.

Therefore, “if the US is to be effective in building and improving interagency capabilities, it must apply its resources in an integrated manner. To achieve integration, it is necessary to put organization structures in place that require the institutional participants to come together for joint planning and program execution.”¹⁶ At the operational level, there is little extant research which engages with the ways that ARSOF applies its expertise, and most of the information that does exist is classified. At the strategic level, ARSOF operations are functions that the Theater Special Operations Command (TSOC) manage. Therefore, it is important to understand the measures taken by the TSOC to employ ARSOF.

The Joint Special Operations University (JSOU) has been a key contributor in providing institutional knowledge through short duration professional development to Latin American countries in the form of mobile training teams (MTT). JSOU has focused on institutional knowledge to partner nation at the operational level.¹⁷ A number of JSOU papers, articles, and manuals addressing FID identify areas where ARSOF can fill the

¹⁶ John E. Baquet, “Comprehensive Action: A Whole of Government Solution to Fighting Transnational Terrorism” (Master's thesis, School of Advance Air and Space Studies, Air University, 2010).

¹⁷ Joint Special Operations University, Introductions to Special Operations, Theater Special Operations Commands, Lesson 10, Slide 12, accessed 9 May 2017, <https://www.socom.mil/jsou/Pages/default.aspx>.

gaps at both the operational and strategic levels in Colombia. There is a cost benefit when ARSOF MTTs instruct at the operational institutional level. If prepared, ARSOF can conduct the same training as a JSOU MTT at a minimum cost. This is the case because ARSOF is already integrated in Colombia and understands the operational environment. However, ARSOF needs institutional training knowledge to be able to teach in a FID environment at the operational level.

During the FARC's transition phase it is important to keep security concerns balanced. If there is an increase in non-state actors' actions, then it will cause security issues. If the Colombian security forces cannot maintain the status quo it will perpetuate high costs and potential operational failings during critical periods during transition between peace and conflict operations.¹⁸ The transition phase has potential advantages and disadvantages to the security conditions in a region. Some of the advantages center on stability, security, and reform. In the case of the USSOUTHCOM, the campaign plan must be reevaluated to confirm that it is appropriately nested within the plans of both the country team and the host nation. The advantage of the transition phase is that it reshapes the campaign plan and allows for new ways of thinking about US approaches to Latin America. The major disadvantages are that the transition phase can delay or change successful plans that are currently underway in Latin America. As a result, it is better to be prepared for change within a campaign plan than lose the advantage because of a lack of plans.

¹⁸ Ibid., 60.

Section 4: ARSOF's Indirect Approach in El Salvador and Colombia

The last important body of research, which has been written about in limited form, is the employment of military forces in internal state security functions. The vast majority of this literature addresses the different roles that ARSOF plays at the operational level; however, in terms of strategic level employment of ARSOF, publications are extremely limited. These works are either parts of Latin American country studies, regional histories, or civil-military relations studies. They cover the milestones in which Plan Colombia was the first step accepted by the Colombian government to move the ministry of defense (MOD) into a transition zone further professionalizing, training, and building the capacity to counter the FARC and TCOs with the assistance of ARSOF. Very little academic work has been written, which describes the use of the military internally, in particular countries in Latin America, in support of state activities. Looking across the existing body of literature, there is a gap in the literature. Unfortunately, only a limited amount of academic literature covers the use of Special Operations Forces to train and build effective operational-and national-level organizations.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This thesis will use a qualitative case study comparison methodology to answer the research question: How does ARSOF enhance Colombian Security Forces' capabilities during the reintegration of the FARC into Colombian society? It also uses military partner force capacity-building cases to determine how the host nation has benefitted from the current USSOUTHCOM Theater Security Cooperation Plan. The research will compare the transition model utilized after the Civil War in El Salvador in 1992 and the current concept in Colombia for the transition of the FARC from 2012 until 2016. The case study methodology offers a means for isolating differences between the Chapultepec Peace Accord and current Colombian Peace Agreement in order to determine whether the model worked because of ARSOF indirect participation. Further, this comparative model will highlight important similarities and differences between the peace accord strategies, this allowing for deeper analysis of the research question.

Research Phases

Phase 1: Background Research on Historical Comparison

Phase 2: US Strategy, Law, and Funding

Phase 3: USSOUTHCOM Campaign Plan in Colombia

Phase 4: ARSOF Indirect Approach in El Salvador and Colombia

Phase 5: Analysis and Collation of Data

Case Studies

These case studies highlight unique challenges and differences related to the location of El Salvador and Colombia, the countries' laws, and their relationships with the US.

1. El Salvador
 - a. Analysis of Salvadoran Chapultepec Peace Accord
 - b. FMLN Insurgency
 - c. ARSOF Direct and Indirect Approach and use in El Salvador
2. Colombia
 - a. Analysis of Colombian Peace Referendum
 - b. FARC insurgency
 - c. ARSOF Direct and Indirect Approach in Colombia
3. El Salvadoran and Colombia
 - a. El Salvadoran and Colombian Peace Model Differences and Similarities

Analysis Criteria

Analysis concentrates on multiple opposing means for comparing the case studies.

The following criteria were evaluated to assist in responding the research question:

1. Indicators of a transition
2. Transition models and comparisons
3. ARSOF sustainability
4. Legal authorities
5. Threats to stability

CHAPTER 4

ANALYSIS

ARSOF operations in Latin America have driven a transformation in building partnered nation capacity. Using the El Salvador Chapultepec Peace Accord model and analyzing how it relates to the Colombian-FARC model, ARSOF can provide the space and time necessary for stability operations in Colombia which can enable peaceful political solutions. Since the Salvadoran Chapultepec Peace Agreement of 1992, the ARSOF approach in El Salvador has been indirect. This means that ARSOF has been used to train partnered nation security forces without becoming directly involved in operations. This approach resembles the process used in the Colombian peace agreement from 2012-2016. Further, ARSOF was instrumental in obtaining regional stability in El Salvador due to its strategy and the funding it procured to support the peace process. Moreover, USSOUTHCOM continues to execute plans using a military strategy funded by the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) to build partnered nation capacity intended to sustain the security gains made over the past several years. ARSOF supports those plans by conducting FID with approved permissions and authorities.

The processes used by ARSOF in both El Salvador, and Colombia emerged through trial and error. For example, the support ARSOF conducted in El Salvador assisted Salvadoran Security Forces (ESAF) in preventing the FMLN insurgency from gaining power. In Colombia, the FARC are now working through the same transition process. Although there are differences between the two peace models, the lessons learned in El Salvador during the peace process in 1992 can assist ARSOF in Colombia today.

Section 1: El Salvador Peace Model and Colombian Peace Model

The El Salvador Chapultepec Peace Accord was the result of a Civil War between the FMLN and the government of El Salvador that lasted from 1980 until 1992. The poor social-economic conditions were combined with a Marxist theory in the period leading up to the Civil War. The insurgency operations caused a fear in the government of El Salvador. For example, “the largest offensive ever of the rebel Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front, in November 1989, made evident the urgency of a negotiated settlement of El Salvador’s protracted civil war.”¹⁹ Even more, concepts that were developed in El Salvador during the Civil War developed in other areas of Latin America and helped influence insurgencies during that time period. Resulting from this, other subversive and guerrilla organizations including the FARC learned tactics, techniques, and concepts to support their war in Colombia.

The FARC began in 1964 along the same tactics as the FMLN. The FARC became one of the longest lasting insurgencies in Latin America. However, the FARC are now in a transition phase and it is important to conduct a comparison of the two peace models to identify the differences and similarities including lessons learned that will benefit ARSOF in a future post FARC transition.

The El Salvador Peace Accord Model

The author’s analysis is that the activities of insurgent groups like the FARC and former FMLN have already impeded inter-agency areas of responsibility. The historical

¹⁹ Margarita S. Studemeister, *El Salvador, Implementation of the Peace Accords* (Washington, DC: US Institute of Peace, January 2001), 7.

Chapultepec Peace Accord achieved with the FMLN in El Salvador provides a potential model for achieving regional stability in Colombia. Indeed, this peace accord resembles the peace referendum currently under negotiation between the Colombian government and the FARC. James Roush summarizes the El Salvador model as an agenda for peace.

The key provisions as he views them are summarized as follows:

1. In terms of military reform measures, the agreement restructures the armed forces doctrine and stressed human rights. It also consisted of a fifty percent reduction of military manpower; and National Guard, treasury police, and all elite counter-insurgency battalions to be dissolved.
2. There was also a request for a new National Civilian Police force to be established for both urban and rural areas; recruits to be trained at a new, independent police academy.
3. Additionally, an independent national judicial council was to be established to foster a fair and independent judiciary; a school for judicial training to be established to improve the professionalism of judges and other judicial officials and a creation of a human rights ombudsman.
4. Another important reform in the agreement was the electoral system. This consisted of a special commission that would be established to study draft reforms to the electoral code.
5. Finally, a national reconstruction program would be developed to assist the worn torn areas of the nation. The main objective of the Plan was to integrate development of zones affected by the conflict. Also, measures were to be taken to facilitate the reintegration of FMLN into the country's civil, institutional, and political life. This included political participation by the FMLN, adoption of legislative or other measures needed to guarantee former FMLN combatants the full exercise of their civil and political rights; legalization of the FMLN as a political party, with the right to full political participation.²⁰

In the Chapultepec Peace Accord, a forum was established for the purpose of dealing with social and economic concerns following the post-peace agreement. While in

²⁰ James L Roush, "The El Salvador Accords: A Model for Peace Keeping Actions," Promoting Peace Organization, last modified 1997, accessed August 12, 2016, <http://www.promotingpeace.org/1985/1/roush.html>.

the Colombian peace agreement both agreements addressed reconstruction programs. The plan in El Salvador focused on developing zones affected by conflict, and measures were taken to reintegrate the FMLN into society. Likewise, the current Colombian model emphasizes the importance of reintegrating the FARC into society. In this way, the Colombian peace agreement is similar to the Salvadoran one established in 1992.

In Colombia, zones are being established to assist in the demobilization of the FARC as they were established in El Salvador. For example, Adam Isacson describes the zones as 26 zones, where FARC members arrive and turn-over weapons while walking through a transition process that is monitored by the Colombian government and overseen by the United Nations (UN).²¹ This approach would assist in the demobilization and disarmament of the FARC. Figure 1 describes the planned zoned areas where the demobilization process would be conducted. During these operations Colombian security forces have the opportunity to take advantage of developing information operations to counter other insurgent groups. ARSOF military information operations (MISO) in this environment can be of assistance because, “while most attention on Colombia’s armed conflict has focused on the roughly 7,000-strong FARC, the ELN-with up to 2,000 members-retain an active presence in the country, the themes and messages identified during the demobilization can be used to counter the ELN. Since the FARC are beginning to demobilize, there is concern that the ELN, along with criminal organizations and neo-paramilitary groups, could move to fill territorial and economic vacuums that the FARC

²¹ Adam Isacson, “Confronting Colombia’s Coca Boom Requires Patience and a Commitment to the Peace Accord,” Colombia Peace Organization, March 13, 2017, accessed March 17, 2017, <http://colombiapeace.org>.

and EPN. This would assist in targeting other groups in a non-lethal manner that would potentially have positive effects. This point is important because it provides a similar example where the professionalizing of the El Salvadorian Armed Forces by US military advisors in military operations, including MISO, during the Civil War achieved success. “During initial meetings and discussions with American Embassy, one FMLN *Comandante* commented that it was the presence of US military advisors throughout the countryside that made the difference in the improvement of the ESAF’s human rights record and professionalism.”²³ The actions taken by the US advisors assisted the ESAF in countering the insurgency and identifying the problem. Military information operations was just one method used to counter the FMLN problem in El Salvador. There were several other issues in El Salvador that relate to Colombia such as social economic conditions.

Social Economic Conditions

The effects of poor social-economic patterns resulted in unstable conditions in El Salvador. For example, “El Salvador was a leader in coffee production and heightened productivity of coffee in the early nineteen hundred brought social-economic issues such as the literacy rate at no more than 30 percent; most informed sources believed it to be far lower.”²⁴ Additionally, the rate of alcoholism was extraordinary. The magnitude of the problem could be measured in the consumption of liquor, which made up 25 percent of

²³ Victor M. Rosello, “Lessons From El Salvador” (Master's thesis, U.S. Army War College, 1993), 100-108, accessed April 3, 2017, dtic.mil.

²⁴ Ibid.

public revenue in 1918. Another measure was the extremely high rate of births outside marriage. “By the early 1920’s, 59 percent of births in El Salvador were ‘natural children’ as compared with 49 percent in Guatemala and 24 percent in Costa Rica. Finally, studies at the time revealed levels of malnutrition that, investigators charged, were producing unacceptably high rates of infant mortality.”²⁵ The imbalance of social-economic conditions and poor living conditions erupted in demands for governmental relief, yet the government was under military control within an oligarchic system that could not provide for the basic social needs of the public. This political situation caused a further divide and a growth in grievances. The lack of government ability to provide for the public set the stage for the growth of insurgent groups with outside, non-state actor support. The popular movement became the voice of the peasants and filled a leadership gap that the government could not provide.

This disproportion exploded in a demand for governmental relief. When these conditions presented themselves the government had minimum to no response that could assist the social economic imbalance. The lack of state assistance further caused a divide in the population and government. This void allowed for motivation and growth of insurgent groups with outside belligerent non-state actor support. This lesson learned from El Salvador can also be observed in a post FARC transition. If the government of Colombia lacks the capability to assist social economic factors in rural and the zoned FARC areas, there is a potential of further dividing the population. ARSOF at this point can step in and conduct an analysis based on the conditions and use the lessons learned in

²⁵ Ibid.

El Salvador to better prepare Colombian security forces. For example, civil affairs (CA) can partner with Colombian security forces and provide lessons learned from other areas of operations to assist Colombia civil affairs units that are directly involved with the demobilization of the FARC. Additionally, there are lessons learned and archives of civil affairs information that can be relooked to assist in a post FARC transition. The civil affairs point of view is another challenge for ARSOF but also an opportunity to assist Colombia security forces granted there is an understanding of the Colombian peace referendum. ARSOF CA can do an overwhelming amount of interagency and military connections through civil infrastructure projects, crop substitution for demobilizing FARC members, and a GoC to interagency connection.

The Colombian Peace Referendum

Colombia's 53-year war with the FARC drew renewed international attention in June 2016, when the FARC signed a ceasefire accord with the President of Colombia, Juan Manuel Santos. The steps of the peace accord process that followed this ceasefire resemble those taken in the Salvadoran Chapultepec Peace Accord. At the beginning of the peace process, then-President Obama proposed a framework that would benefit the government of Colombia within the peace talks. The plan, called Peace Colombia, continued along the same lines as the earlier Salvadoran effort. As President Obama explained, "Peace in Colombia will focus future US assistance under three pillars: consolidating and expanding progress on security and counter-narcotics while reintegrating the FARC into society; expanding state presence and institutions to strengthen the rule of law and rural economies, especially in former conflict areas; and

promoting justice and other essential services for conflict victims.”²⁶ Additionally, the request for financial support under Peace Colombia was requested by President Obama from the US Congress that also included humanitarian assistance to zones affected by the Colombian-FARC conflict. Additionally, the Department of Defense counter-narcotics programs, if enacted by Congress, would increase their efforts to \$450 million.²⁷

The Colombian Peace Model

The Colombian Government and the FARC have taken the necessary steps to come to an agreement that leads to peace. The plan Peace Colombia supports the Colombian peace model which consisted of five key points for peace:

The five point agreed upon in the Colombian and FARC agreement consist of the following:

1. The end of political violence: The FARC ceases to be a rebel army and transforms into a political party. Once the accord is officially signed, as soon as late September, the rebels will begin moving into U.N.-monitored camps where they will disarm in phases over a period of 180 days.
2. Justice for victims of the conflict: Special tribunals to adjudicate war crimes and other atrocities committed by the rebels as well as paramilitary groups and government security forces.

²⁶ US Presidential Press, “Fact Sheet: Peace Colombia – A New Era of Partnership between the United States and Colombia,” 4 February 2016, accessed 3 March 2017, <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2016/02/04/fact-sheet-peace-colombia-new-era-partnership-between-united-states-and-colombia>.

²⁷ Roberta Rampton, “Obama pledges more than \$450 million aid to help Colombia peace plan,” *Reuters*, 5 February 2016, accessed 9 May 2017, <http://www.reuters.com/search/news?blob=Obama+pledges+more+than+%24450+million+aid+to+help+Colombia+peace+plan>.

3. Rural development: As part of the development reform, the government will invest heavily in infrastructure projects and state-building in the long-neglected areas where FARC has held sway.

4. FARC in politics: A limited number of seats in Congress will be granted to the FARC starting in 2018, they will not have voting rights but can speak on matters pertaining to the implementation of the peace accords. They will be assured a minimum of five seats in Colombia's Senate and five seats in its lower house for two legislative terms starting in 2018.

5. Ending the drug trade: The United States is a stakeholder in ending the drug trade because it has had a large presence in Colombia attempting to train and assist Colombian security forces to counter the drug trade. Under the peace accords, FARC essentially agrees to go out of business as a narcotics-trafficking organization and to work with the government and others attempting to wean Colombia's rural farmers off coca.²⁸

In the Colombian Peace Accord, a forum for the end of political violence, ending the drug trade, and FARC in politics as described above in the model set the conditions for a similar peace agreement. Another familiar term found in both agreements consisted of rural development programs. For example, the plan in El Salvador at the time focused on the integrated development of zones affected by conflict and measures were taken to reintegrate the FMLN into society. In the current Colombian model, the reintegration of the FARC into society is important and is similar to the El Salvadorian process where rural consolidation zones will also provide locations where the demobilization process will take place.

²⁸ Nick Miroff, "Here are the details critics would say the devils in Colombia's peace deal with FARC," *Washington Post*, August 24, 2016, accessed March 22, 2017, https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2016/08/24/here-are-the-details-critics-would-say-the-devils-in-colombias-peace-deal-with-farc/?utm_term=.56c0f381ed72.

The FARC Insurgency

The FARC insurgency numbers among the longest in modern history. The longevity of the guerrilla group and the means by which it thrived from its origins in 1964 until 2012 has stumped researchers. Before the ceasefire, the FARC was considered a near-peer adversary of the government. It had held this status since 1958, when “The rebel remnants moved into the southeastern savannah and jungle, where they engaged in ‘armed colonization.’ There, they festered as a marginal nuisance for nearly two decades.”²⁹ “Other groups came and went, with only Ejército de Liberación Nacional, based principally in the Northeast, joining FARC in showing staying power.”³⁰ “FARC, in other words, did not become a serious factor due to the mobilization of an alienated mass base. Rather it became a serious factor due to the power which came from drugs grown by a marginalized population. Regarding national percentage, these marginalized actors would not be major players. They became so only because of their role as the base upon which drug cultivation—and thus insurgent finances—was built.”³¹

During the acceptance and transition, ARSOF can support Colombian security forces. First, ARSOF can benefit from reviewing the lessons learned in El Salvador. The lessons learned in El Salvador can provide information or gaps where ARSOF can be

²⁹ Eduardo Pizarro Leongómez, *Las FARC, 1949-1966: De La Autodefensa a La Combinacion de Todas las Formas de Lucha* (Bogota, CO: Instituto de Estudios Politicos y Relaciones Internacionales, 1994), 187-203.

³⁰ Corporación Observatorio Para la Paz, *Las Verdaderas Intenciones del ELN*, (Bogota, CO: Intermedio, 2001), 255-270.

³¹ Thomas Marks, “Colombian Army Adaptation to FARC Insurgency,” The Strategic Studies Institute and the North-South Center, January 2002, accessed January 24, 2017, <http://www.strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/pdf/PUB18.pdf>.

employed to better support the Colombian security forces in a post FARC transition. For example, one of the key points that relates to the FARC transition is disarmament and demobilization. Stubemeister states in a key point, “Experience shows that a disarmament and demobilization process must be intelligently designed and managed in order to prevent post-conflict violence and crime. In El Salvador, the demobilization of armed government and guerrilla forces left many combatants from both sides unemployed and maladjusted, contributing to a rise in public insecurity.”³² In Colombia’s environment, the demobilization of the FARC will leave other insurgent groups or criminal organizations struggling to fill that void. Therefore, the benefits in researching the lessons learned may provide information where ARSOF can fill potential gaps during the demobilization of the FARC. Furthermore, ARSOF can combine CA and MISO into one operational support team that is attached to their Colombian partners in a demobilization area to gain vital information in messaging and civil military operations. The operational support teams can also take the lessons learned from real world demobilization processes and provide that information to institutions for analysis. The opportunity is presenting itself during the transition of the FARC in Colombia. However, it is difficult to conduct foreign internal defense without the US national framework that provides the authorities and financial support to engage with partnered forces. It is imperative that ARSOF relooks at their authorities and funding because the transition of the FARC has the potential to open doors for other non-state actors.

³² Studemeister, *El Salvador, Implementation Peace Accords*, 5.

El Salvador Peace Accord and Colombian Peace Referendum Conclusion

The US has an important role to play in ensuring that talks with the FARC move forward, and that criminal networks and neo-paramilitary actors across the country do not fill the vacuum left by the FARC. Peace Colombia is a step in supporting Colombia in its efforts to dissuade reports that criminal gangs are moving to take control of traditional FARC areas and dissuade rebel elements from demobilizing. To ensure that these efforts are not successful, the US will need to provide generous support for increasing state presence and programs to reintegrate ex-combatants.³³ Additionally, Colombian Congress must approve a series of other laws to implement the accord in accordance with the key points of the agreement: “establishing a transitional justice system, guaranteeing protections for opposition political movements, carrying out a new rural development policy, among others. But the amnesty law is the one that must come first since the FARC won’t even start turning in its arms without it.”³⁴ The most important point of the peace accord is the amnesty law which stipulates that both the government and the FARC deem the transition to be successful. This point is particularly important because it demonstrates both parties’ acceptance of the transition.

³³ Advocacy for Human Rights in the Americas (WOLA), “5 Ways Supporting Peace in Colombia Benefits U.S. Interests,” last modified January 30, 2017, accessed March 3, 2017, <http://www.wola.org>.

³⁴ Advocacy for Human Rights in the Americas (WOLA), “Peace is Ratified: When is “D-Day?”, last modified December 1, 2016, accessed January 26, 2017, <http://www.wola.org>.

Section 2: US Strategy and Funding

US Strategy

The US approach to Salvadoran peace in the 20th Century set the conditions in a challenging global security environment. The US was concerned with the conclusion of the Cold War and small-scale conflicts in the Western Hemisphere, as well in other regions of the globe. The NSS of 2015 presented by President Obama realized that, “the nexus of weak governance and widespread grievance allowed extremism to take root, violent non-state actors to rise, and conflict to overtake state structures.”³⁵ To meet these challenges, the President searched for opportunities to continue to work with partners and through multilateral organizations to address the root causes of conflict before they erupt and to contain and resolve them when they do.³⁶ However, matters of national security were minimal compared to the US. American government agencies who were more concerned with international communities whose interactions with state actors supporting insurgencies in Latin America—namely the FARC in Colombia and the FMLN in El Salvador—that could spill over US borders.

In the 21st Century the threats to the homeland and a stronger international relationship would need to be fostered for security concerns. “These matters that included international strategic relationships are broader and more diverse because they affect several aspects of the US elements of national powers.”³⁷ It was not until global terrorism

³⁵ US President, *National Security Strategy* (Washington, DC: The White House, 2015), 10.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 11.

presented an immediate security concern to the US after the 9/11 attacks, “that the 21st Century would be an environment in which traditional insurgencies or organizations were sidelined and the US response to the global war on terrorism would change national strategic guidelines and law.”³⁸ To succeed, the US shifted its focus in national security matters from terrorism entities such as Al Qaeda and small Jihadist groups to protecting the homeland, while at the same time sustaining assistance to partnered nations fighting against insurgent groups like the FARC. For example, “violent extremist organizations (VEOs) pose a serious threat. “VEOs, in contrast, pose an immediate threat to transregional security by coupling readily available technologies with extremist ideologies.”³⁹ “Such ‘hybrid’ conflicts may consist of military forces assuming a non-state identity, as Russia did in the Crimea, or involve a VEO fielding rudimentary combined arms capabilities, as ISIL has demonstrated in Iraq and Syria.”⁴⁰

National Military Strategy

The hybrid threat of VEOs and non-state entities has become a source of concern and a major consideration for the US resulting from the potential instability these groups can bring to a state. Because of the void the FARC will leave in Colombia, it can be assumed that other smaller insurgent groups will take shape and fill that void. It is at this point of the transition process where ARSOF policy must heighten its posture, since the potential impact of these new groups is unknown. The continuum of conflict described in

³⁸ Ibid., 10.

³⁹ Ibid., 4.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

the 2015 NMS (figure 2), takes that threat into consideration and relates it to the probable consequences of a hybrid threat as it may evolve in the case of the transformation of the FARC in Colombia. Based on the researchers' analysis, the FARC and other insurgent groups in Colombia have been taking advantage of emerging technological innovations to help broadcast their message and expand their ranks. The use of technology amongst insurgencies allows them to inform other non-state actors, share ideologies, recruit new members, and generate support for their cause.

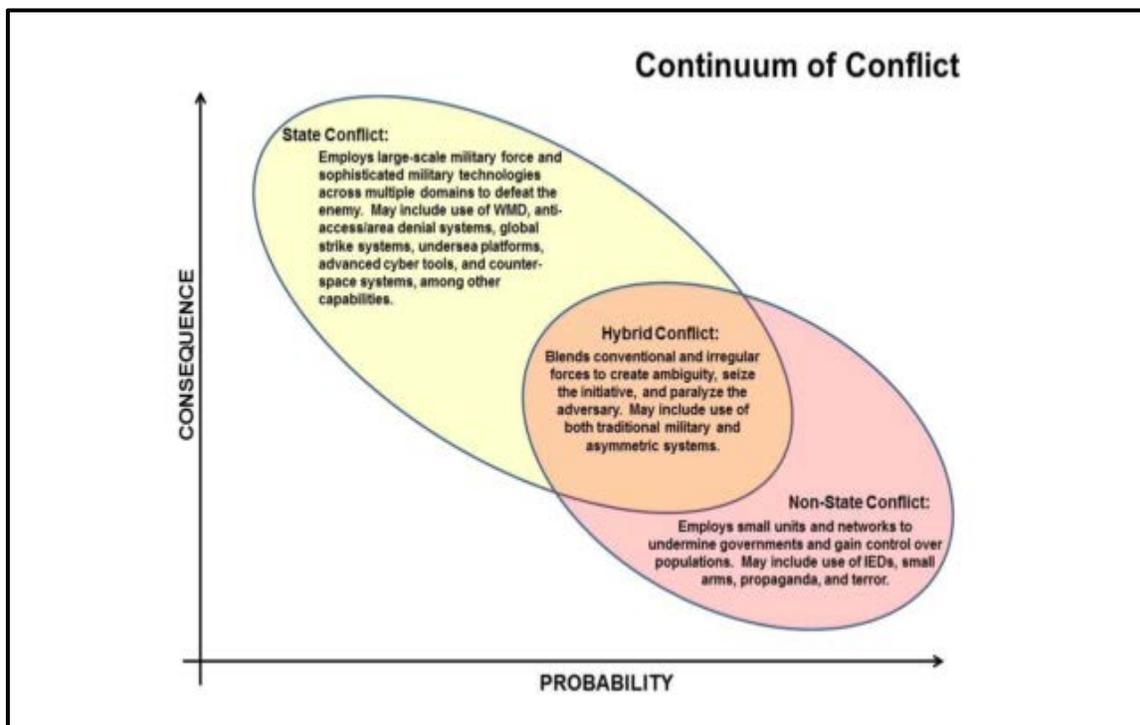


Figure 2. Continuum of Conflict

Source: Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, *National Military Strategy* (Washington, DC: Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, 2015), 4.

The NMS provides an integrated approach for the Department of Defense composed of three National Military Objectives: “to deter, deny, and defeat state adversaries; to disrupt, degrade, and defeat violent extremist organizations (VEOs); and to strengthen our global network of allies and partners.”⁴¹ “The US military pursues these objectives by conducting globally integrated operations, implementing institutional reforms at home, and sustaining the capabilities, capacity, and readiness required to prevail in conflicts that may differ significantly in scope, scale, and duration.”⁴²

Figure 3 below depicts the integrated approach where ARSOF will find themselves based on the peace agreement in Colombia. The probability that ARSOF will support outside of FID is highly unlikely. The assistance ARSOF will provide will continue in an indirect fashion through FID operations. These operations will assist partnered nation to deter, deny, or defeat threats. The integrated approach described in the NMS provides the national military framework in which ARSOF has to navigate to meet lines of effort nested in a theatre campaign plan.

⁴¹ US President, *National Security Strategy*, 10.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 6.

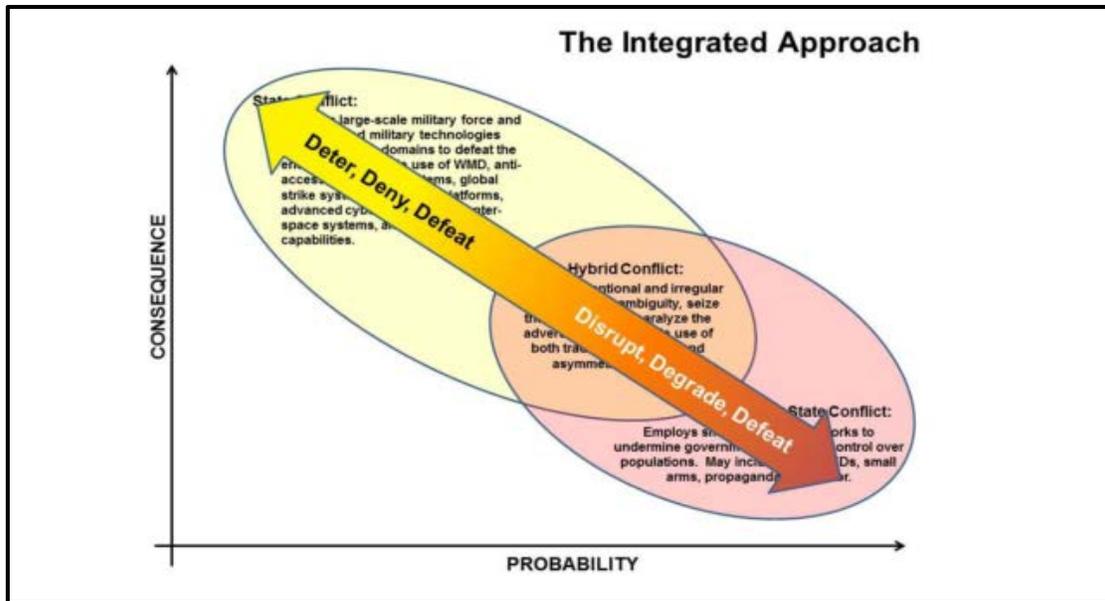


Figure 3. The Integrated Approach

Source: Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, *National Military Strategy* (Washington DC: Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, 2015), 6.

Unlike the NMS Continuum of Conflict and Integrated Approach, ARSOF will take a similar approach that is nested with the NMS. For example, in Colombia, ARSOF can support Colombian security forces. Peace Colombia is an approved authority that provides funding to building partnered nation capacity and support to operations. However, the potential for other non-state actors upon the FARC's departure can create vulnerable or destabilizing effects. Colombian security forces will rely on ARSOF to help maintain the status quo. Figure 4 below describes the means, ends, and ways to sustain stability in Colombia. ARSOF has maintained FID operations with Colombian security forces and it will be necessary to sustain those relationships in a post FARC transition.

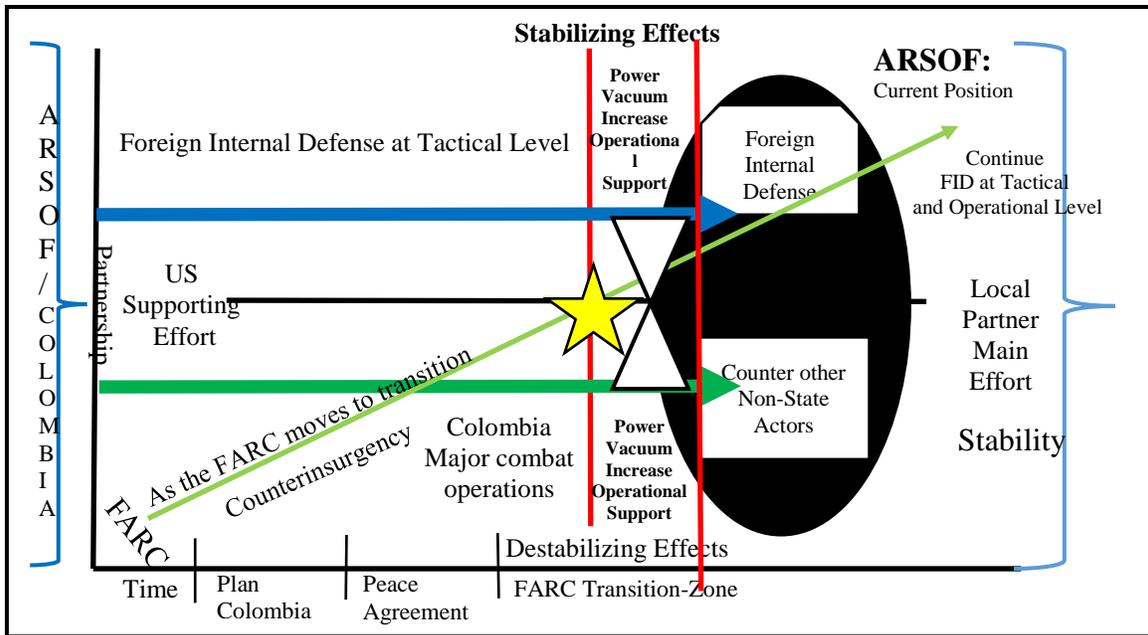


Figure 4. Stabilizing Effects

Source: Created by author. Developed from Dan Madden et al., *Toward Operational Art in Special Warfare* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2016), 15.

Methods in Addressing Strategic Issues

The strategically important issues of the Colombian peace accord can be derived from or influenced by historical events like the Salvadoran-FMLN Chapultepec Peace Accord of 1992. In solving security problems in Latin America, the US used an indirect approach when interacting with international partners. For example, Plan Colombia in the early 1990s was a strategic strategy where the US gained momentum by addressing such important strategic issues as instability, the growth of drug trade, and international relationships. The US and Colombia developed a strategy over a long period of time that supported Colombia and other Latin American counties in the form of financing, training and equipping partnered nation security forces that eventually countered increase

violence and drug trade in Colombia. This same indirect approach is in use in Colombia, where building partnered nation capacity could provide help to other nations in the form of training and assistance. To this point, the US has assisted the government of Colombia using methods like Plan Colombia, counter-narcotic training (CNT), and joint combined exercise training (JCET) events.

This would not be possible if there were no authorizations. Congressional approved authorizations and funding provides the continued backbone and support to partnered nations. It is necessary to understand the significance of authorities and how they relate to foreign internal defense. The authorizations are another part of the national framework that provides guidance for ARSOF to assist partnered nations. Many of the security cooperation engagements involve training, instructing, and mentoring foreign security forces.

Eventually an effective security cooperation plan is designed to evolve through a three prong phase approach that consist of building partnered nation capacity, institutionalizing those capacities, and shaping interoperability. ARSOF has taken the proper steps in Colombia since Plan Colombia to build partnered nation capacity. It is undetermined what level of institutionalizing those capacities ARSOF has exercised. Another aspect that is limited in research is the shaping of Colombian security forces interoperability. The ability for the Colombian security forces to synchronize warfighting functions along lines of effort adds leverage to counter other threats in Colombia. This approach will be necessary to counter any future threats that develop after the FARC transition. However, ARSOF has the ability to measure the Colombian security forces effects by conducting measures of effectiveness (MOE) and measures of performance

(MOP). The results will provide USSOCSOUTH and USSOUTHCOM leadership data that can assist in making decisions. Included in the decision making process is the consideration of authorizations. If the necessary measures are not taken into consideration a security cooperation plan becomes idle. The various approach plans need inability to produce effects will result in wasted ARSOF resources.

The National Defense Authorization Act

The National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) is the law that provides a summary of security cooperation and assistance programs for the security cooperation community. The NDAA of Fiscal Year 2016 (short title), P.L. 114-92, 25 November 2015 elaborates on seven new security cooperation programs authorized for FY 2016.⁴³ For the sake of this research, the focus will elaborate on relevant programs that affect Colombia and ARSOF.

The DISAM report identifies significant changes for FY 2016, this also includes Special Operations to Combat Terrorism. A major change was the increase of funding from \$75,000,000 to \$85,000,000.⁴⁴ Other financial support in Colombia falls under 1021, Unified Counter-Drug and Counterterrorism Campaign in Colombia. This program was also extended through FY 2017.⁴⁵ Humanitarian assistance is another important tool used by the US to support security cooperation with our allies. For example, Section

⁴³ Gregory W. Sutton, "The DISAM Annual: Building Partner Capacity," *Journal of International Security Cooperation Management Annual* 4, no. 31 (December 2015): 4.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 5.

1205, titled “Monitoring and Evaluation of Overseas Humanitarian, Disaster, and Civic Aid Programs of the Department of Defense Requires, In General, of the amounts authorized to be appropriated by this Act for Overseas Humanitarian, Disaster, and Civic Aid, the Secretary of Defense,”⁴⁶ is authorized to use up to 5 percent of such amounts to conduct monitoring and evaluation or programs that are funded using such amounts during the fiscal year 2016.⁴⁷ The DISAM report provides perspectives for understanding how strategy from the NSS correlates to individual country plans, including those of Colombia and El Salvador. ARSOF takes into consideration the policies and authorizations approved to help both the security cooperation workforce and other actors involved in the field enhance their general understanding of which documents should be considered in security cooperation planning and execution.⁴⁸

It is important to understand the financial aspects of conducting security cooperation in the Western Hemisphere, because geographical combatant commanders (GCCs) are competing for financial support to meet their security goals. However, the amount of funding that each GCC is allocated within the fiscal year is dependent on the Authorization Act approved by Congress. For the most part, security cooperation plans and funding, as stated above will extend into FY17, but they are also reevaluated during Presidential budget request.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 6.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 11.

Research of US Strategy and Funding Conclusion

The US strategy and policy measures take into consideration budget, humanitarian assistance, and threats in Latin America that threaten US interest. “Through humanitarian and civic assistance programs, defense institutions building efforts like the Defense Institution Reform Initiative, and the US Southern Command-sponsored Human Rights Initiative-helps partner nations strengthen governance and development, professionalize their militaries and security forces, and increase their ability to conduct peacekeeping, stability, and disaster relief operations.”⁴⁹ According to key US strategic documents, security concerns in Colombia require a flexible whole-of-government approach. ARSOF has been a tool for success in these kinds of approaches at the tactical level for over twenty years, where they have conducted FID to assist Colombian security forces. The new threat in Latin America are transnational organized crime (TOC). They pose a significant and growing threat to national and international security, with dire implications for public safety, public health, democratic institutions, and economic stability across the globe.⁵⁰ The NSS and the NMS will provide strategic guidance for future partnered nation assistance in El Salvador and Colombia. Based on the guidance provided by the NSS and NMS, SOUTHCOM will execute plans using the NSS as a guide and nested Campaign Plans provided by USSOCSOUTH to build relationships across Latin America.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 47.

⁵⁰ US President, *Strategy to Combat Transnational Organized Crime: Addressing Converging Threats to National Security Transnational Organized Crime, A Growing Threat to National and International Security* (Washington, DC: The White House, February 2011), 5.

Section 3: USSOUTHCOM Campaign Plan

USSOUTHCOM Vision

The grueling demands in the SOUTHCOM AOR are fluid and change frequently. If there is going to be continued progress in Colombia, the tactics used to assist partnered nations in accomplishing security and stability while building an economy also must change to shape the environment. One tool in the USSOUTHCOM vision is the use of USSOCSOUTH and ARSOF elements to assist in an indirect approach as it was proven in El Salvador. The USSOUTHCOM focus areas strive to seek Leahy vetted partnered security forces with the ability to counter transregional threat networks. This is important due to the changing operational environment ARSOF finds themselves in. The growing potential of hybrid threats pose that challenge for future security challenges.⁵¹

The partners of choice for ARSOF in Colombia have been both Leahy-vetted military and police security forces. This relationship can be considered successful due to the current conditions on the ground in Colombia. For example, the results of Plan Colombia are developed in a professional Colombian security force that has brought the FARC to the negotiations table and a peace agreement. As a result, ARSOF channels—especially Special Forces (SF) through USSOCSOUTH—will continue support efforts through the theater security cooperation plan. However, conditions are changing on the ground. The FARC, though already in the transition phase, poses less of a concern for

⁵¹ Admiral Kurt W. Tidd, “Posture Statement of Admiral Kurt W. Tidd Commander, United States Southern Command Before The 114th Congress Senate Armed Services Committee,” Southcom.mil, March 16, 2017, accessed March 22, 2017, http://www.southcom.mil/Portals/7/Documents/Posture%20Statements/SOUTHCOM_POSTURE_STATEMENT_FINAL_2016.pdf?ver=2017-01-04-094258-267.

Colombian security forces than that of other insurgent groups in the region such as ELN, EPN, or TOC and BACRIM.

How the US Supported El Salvador

The US supported El Salvador during the Civil War (1980-1992). The method of choice was mobile training teams or (MTTs). Another method that has been utilized to assist partnered nation forces is the subject matter exchange (SME) program. A SME is utilized to share ideas and it benefits both parties while an MTT does the same but they differ based on the authorizations they fall under. In El Salvador MTTs were advisers providing expertise in infantry tactics, artillery, and military intelligence. There were also service support adviser that assisted in logistics, and headquarters at all levels of operations. During this tenure ARSOF was engaged in MTTs because they had skills in small unit tactics, linguistic capabilities, and had prior service in Latin America. For the most part, US military advisers operating in MTTs to support the ESAF from joint headquarters to brigades. Additionally, MTTs were attached to the six ESAF infantry brigade headquarters in six geographical areas of the country. It is not understood why SMEs were not utilized in support of the ESAF. Further research is needed to determine if SMEs were limited by authorities or the MTT model was more adaptable to the conditions on the ground.⁵² If ARSOF is granted the proper authorities based on the mission it can accomplish an overwhelming amount of partnered nation capacity. For example, an integrated SF, CA, and MISO MTT or SME provides the partnered force a

⁵² José Ángel Moroni Bracamonte and David E. Spencer, *Strategy and Tactics of the Salvadoran FMLN Guerrillas. Last Battle of the Cold War, Blueprint for Future Conflicts* (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 1995), xiii.

large gambit of information from planning, MISO, civil affairs, and operational art and design. On the other hand, ARSOF can take the same model and rebrand it as a SME under different authorities it can support partnered nation forces but with a different approach. A good example of an MTT approach was the model used by ARSOF and conventional forces in El Salvador from (1980-1992). However, the current situation in Colombia has a different dynamic. The Colombian security forces are not at war with the FARC unlike in El Salvador. Therefore, in an effort to be proactive rather than reactive, ARSOF can reevaluate lessons learned as in the case of EL Salvador and take the lessons learned to create a template that will prepare ARSOF forces to better support the Colombian security forces.

José Ángel Moroni Bracamonte and David E. Spencer go on to state that, “in addition, new, irregular warfare doctrinal concepts were implemented in El Salvador, such as concentration and deconcentrating, attrition warfare, strategic dispersion, popular artillery, and so on.”⁵³ It is evident that the Salvadoran government, backed by US support, countered and brought to the table the FMLN after much struggle during the Civil War. The results US involvement assisted ESAF to bring the FMLN to the point that it searched for survivability and found it at the peace table where negotiations changed the evolution of the war in El Salvador. It is fitting to use this model—stemming from both the region’s history and the Chapultepec Peace Accord itself—as a template for what the current Colombian government has been developing with the FARC.

⁵³ Ibid., xiii.

ARSOF can also use the MTT model to assist Colombian security forces during the transition phase, as it was used previously in El Salvador.

Colombian FARC Hypothesis: Transition

If a peace accord in Colombia is to be achieved, there will necessarily be changes across a wide spectrum of diplomatic, informative, military, and economic (DIME) issues. However, there is a concern that with all of the insurgent groups in Colombia, the result of a peace deal with the FARC would be a power vacuum. Smaller insurgent groups in Colombia will likely cause instability through territorial disputes and efforts to fill the void left by the FARC. This situation could lead to several possible outcomes. First, the FARC gain legitimacy; second, other insurgent groups continue armed conflicts against the government of Colombia; and third, a hybrid threat could cultivate and prolong unstable operations. A hybrid threat could consist of TCOs and BACRIM negotiating together to fill the void of the FARC. On the other hand, this threat could be the EPN combining efforts with TCOs to mutually benefit each other and cause regional instability as described below in Table 1.

The USSOUTHCOM security strategy will need to be reevaluated and perhaps even reworked based on the emergence of new threats. These possible outcomes demonstrate that there will be continued power struggles amongst another insurgent groups, TOCs, and BACRIM organizations. Of these, the most dynamic threat could come from the TOCs and BACRIM, as these groups operate more frequently across international borders. In comparison, ELN and EPN, who do have relationships with international TOCs and BACRIM, but traditionally focus on territory inside the country.

As a result, ARSOF must manage FID operations that support the current TSCP in USSOUTHCOM. The countries of El Salvador and Colombia have some similarities, but differ in the implementation processes of Theater Security Cooperation Plans. ARSOF will play an intricate role in these interactions and will continue to assist the GoC security forces in applying pressure to other threats such as EPL, ELN, TOC, and BACRIM to prevent regional instability. As the NSS states, “we are now pursuing a more sustainable approach that prioritizes targeted counterterrorism operations, collective action with responsible partners, and increased efforts to prevent the growth of violent extremism and radicalization that drives increased threats.”⁵⁴ ARSOF may adapt to potential threats in the following ways:

Table 1. Colombian FARC Hypothesis: Transition			
	Hypothesis 1	Hypothesis 2	Hypothesis 3
	Gains Legitimacy	Other INS/TOC/BACRIM continue conflict-internal/external (power struggle)	INS/TOC/BACRIM convert to a Hybrid Threat
FARC	X		
ELN		X	
EPN		X	
TOC		X	X
BACRIM		X	X

Source: Created by author.

⁵⁴ Dan Madden et al., *Toward Operational Art in Special Warfare* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2016), 109.

USSOUTHCOM Campaign Plan in Colombia Conclusion

The USSOUTHCOM Campaign Plans in Colombia and El Salvador share some similarities, but differ significantly because they support different country plans and operational environments. The historical relationship between the US MTTs and ESAF in El Salvador exemplifies the indirect approach taken by the US by providing MTTs to support tactical and operational operations during the Civil War. This method proved to be a viable option that resulted in assisting the Government of El Salvador in bringing the FMLN to the negotiation table. A similar approach is currently in use in Colombia, where the US has employed FID to build partnered nation capacity to counter instability. Even though the FARC is transitioning through the peace process, a void remains that other insurgent groups could occupy.

A restructure in personnel and approach to conduct FID operations can benefit tactical levels of operations. It is also important to step into the operational level at an institution or operations level under the supervision of the Theatre Special Operations Command (TSOC). The benefit to the TSOC is a more robust, flexible, and ARSOF approach to counter future threats in Colombia. This approach will more than likely continue in the same indirect fashion that was utilized in El Salvador.

Section 4: ARSOF's Indirect Approach in El Salvador and Colombia

ARSOF Indirect Approach in El Salvador

The ARSOF Special Warfare campaign approach in El Salvador was directed at the tactical and operational levels of war. However, the approach angle at the strategic level was indirect. For example, a RAND report identified that “the special warfare

operational art in El Salvador and the critical requirements involved when the US was supporting El Salvador during the Civil War. The balance of power between the Government of El Salvador and the insurgency was shifting back and forth based on the ever-changing operational environment.”⁵⁵ The US gradually managed to become the hegemonic power in Latin America by using an indirect approach—rather than a direct one—to stop the spread of Communism.

Figure 5 describes the use of multiple agencies combined with advisers and trainers assisted in stopping the FMLN and other insurgent groups from metastasizing. Reflecting back at the power struggle during the Civil War in El Salvador, (Figure 5) illustrates a balanced theme in which some of the key components in US involvement to assist El Salvador were critical requirements (CR) s. In this case study, the CRs were US public support, material, and training. ARSOF are part of that CR and were actively involved in conducting FID to build partnered nation capacity. While on the other hand, the enemy operational (EO) center of gravity (COG) was supported by critical requirements from the Soviet Union. Therefore, breaking down and analyzing the Special Warfare Operational Art in El Salvador has provided research information about CRs that were key challenges and targeted by each party in an attempt to achieve success. This same tool can be utilized to analyze the post FARC transition to identify gaps where ARSOF can provide support.

⁵⁵ Madden et al., 109.

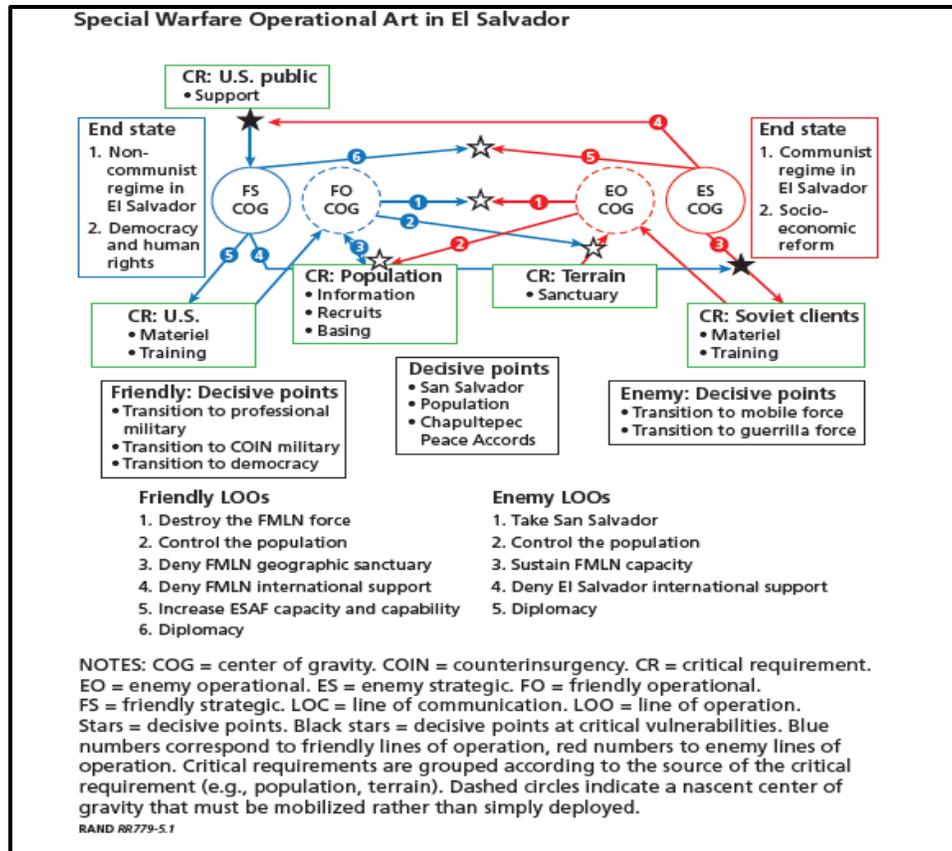


Figure 5. Special Warfare Operational Art in El Salvador

Source: Dan Madden et al., *Toward Operational Art in Special Warfare* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2016), 109.

ARSOF Indirect Approach in Colombia

If the US is serious about countering terrorism and drug trafficking in Colombia, strategic planners may benefit from reviewing the El Salvador archives and examining the model used there to create the necessary organizations and structures to counter a potential threat from the FARC's efforts to seek legitimacy. In Colombia, ARSOF has been providing support at the tactical level, while the Colombian Security Forces have been adapting and gaining strength to counter the FARC over the last twenty years.

Thomas Marks outlines these efforts in his writing on the Colombian Army Adaptation to the FARC insurgency. He argues that no one in the Colombian political establishment is directing the counterinsurgency war and that the Army has been left to conduct the fight by itself. He notes that, “recommendations range from the strategic to the operational levels. They argue the need for a coordinated and integrated national campaign plan; cogent and enforceable emergency laws and regulations; enhanced information warfare; and, an enhanced operational flexibility.”⁵⁶ ARSOF can thus take advantage of the FARC’s transition to better support the Colombian Security Forces, since enhanced operational flexibility (described above) and strategic-level approaches by ARSOF can put ARSOF operations in a better position to develop both internally and externally.

At present, the FARC is emerging as a social movement. Doug McAdam’s “political process model” is the most apt for describing this process. According to him, the process takes into account the opportunities that shape the actions of social movements, the variables internal to movements (such as organization, commitment, responsibility, beliefs, and values), and the external constraints upon their emergence. McAdam argues that

In order for a movement to successfully mobilize, not only do people need to harbor grievances of some kind, but (1) they also need to recognize that they share their grievances with others and that together they can do something about them (i.e., development of an insurgent consciousness); (2) they need to have access to sufficient resources (adequate financing, network of potential members and organizations, leaders, meeting places, etc.) in order to mobilize on their own without having to rely on external funding (i.e., mobilizing resources); and (3) the

⁵⁶ Thomas Marks, “Colombian Army Adaptation to FARC Insurgency,” The Strategic Studies Institute and the North-South Center, January 2002, accessed January 24, 2017, <http://www.strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/pdffiles/PUB18.pdf>.

broader political environment needs to become “open” to insurgency formation (i.e., political opportunities).⁵⁷

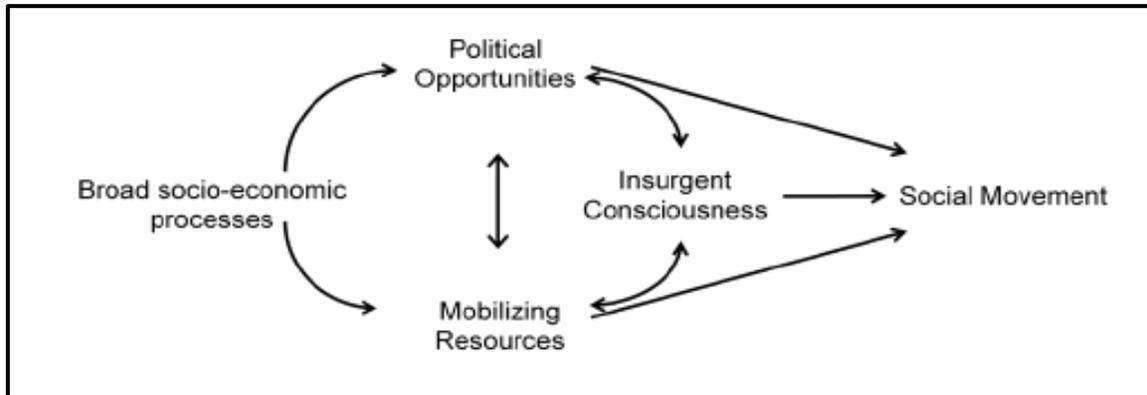


Figure 6. Social Movement Theory Model

Source: Michael Freeman, “Gangs and Guerrillas: Ideas from Counterinsurgency and Counterterrorism” (Master's thesis, Naval Postgraduate School, 2011), 47.

The diagram of the Social Movement Theory Model in (Figure 6) highlights the factors listed above in (Figure 6) that are, in turn, influenced by broad socio-economic forces including wars and economic crises, among others. In isolation, these factors are insufficient to generate and sustain an insurgency. When they converge, however, the emergence of a social movement becomes more likely. Specifically, when expanding political opportunities interact with strong indigenous organizations, they provide potential insurgents with the “structural potential” for collective action. This interaction

⁵⁷ Michael Freeman, “Gangs and Guerrillas: Ideas from Counterinsurgency and Counterterrorism” (Master's thesis, Naval Postgraduate School, 2011), 1-109.

in turn can then lead to the development of an insurgent consciousness that can transform the movement's "structural potential" into an actual insurgency.⁵⁸

This phenomenon was observed in the El Salvador 1992 Chapultepec Peace Accord, where the FMLN negotiated for political opportunities. It took over twenty years for then ex-guerrilla leader of the FMLN—current President Salvador Sanchez Ceren—to win the highest office in El Salvador. Expanding political opportunities manifest themselves in three broad forms:

1. political instability⁵⁹
2. enhanced political positions of the aggrieved populations⁶⁰
3. ideological openness.⁶¹

Of course, there are different conditions in Colombia. Despite this, they resemble the outcomes that occurred in El Salvador.

In *On War*, Carl von Clausewitz defines strategy as "the use of engagements for the object of war."⁶² In the period when Clausewitz presented his theory of kinetic operations, the Army was constantly engaged in battles and in wars. Today, this situation has changed tremendously, but Clausewitz's concept remains the same. *On War* did not describe other engagements like FID, HA, and UW, but instead focused more on

⁵⁸ Ibid., 47.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 38.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Carl Von Clausewitz, *On War*, ed. and trans. Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1976), 88.

conventional 19th Century wars. Nevertheless, the approach that the US is taking in establishing security cooperation with Colombia involves engagements not solely focused on one style but FID, but also with other types of engagements including MISO, CA, and CMO. The differentiating factor is that the US-defined definition of strategy for countering a threat involved a “whole of government” approach which requires not only military but also state department and interagency engagements.

Following limited success in counter-narcotic operations during the early 1990s, President Bill Clinton launched the Plan Colombia policy. “This indirect approach has been successfully applied over the past decade in Colombia and the Philippines, where small numbers of Army, Navy, Air Force and Marine special operators have worked with indigenous counterparts to greatly diminish the threats in both countries, as part of a multifaceted country assistance program.”⁶³ Currently, the forces trained by ARSOF are capable of full-spectrum special operations. The majority of ARSOF operations work alongside other partnered nation special operations forces and police units, on occasion ARSOF works with civilians.⁶⁴ The long-term FID engagements in Colombia have been indeterminate, somewhat as Clausewitz described, but without the object of war as it relates to the US since American involvement was in an indirect approach. Figure 7 provides an overview of the number of US Special Warfare Operations since World War II (WWII). Of note is the fact that FID engagements in Colombia and the Philippines are longer in duration and have been more prominent since WWII.

⁶³ Linda Robinson, “The Future of Special Operations,” *Council Special Report* no. 66 (April 2013): 3-4.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 12.

The data provided in (figure 7) clearly identifies the validity of US Special Warfare operations in parts of the world, organized by country and duration. With respect to Colombia, the FARC has been drawn to the negotiation table and the GoC has accepted. This current state could potentially become a FID win for the US by means of an indirect approach in the same manner as El Salvador over twenty years ago. Figure 7 illustrates and proves that foreign internal defense is a mechanism that has been utilize in a global context.

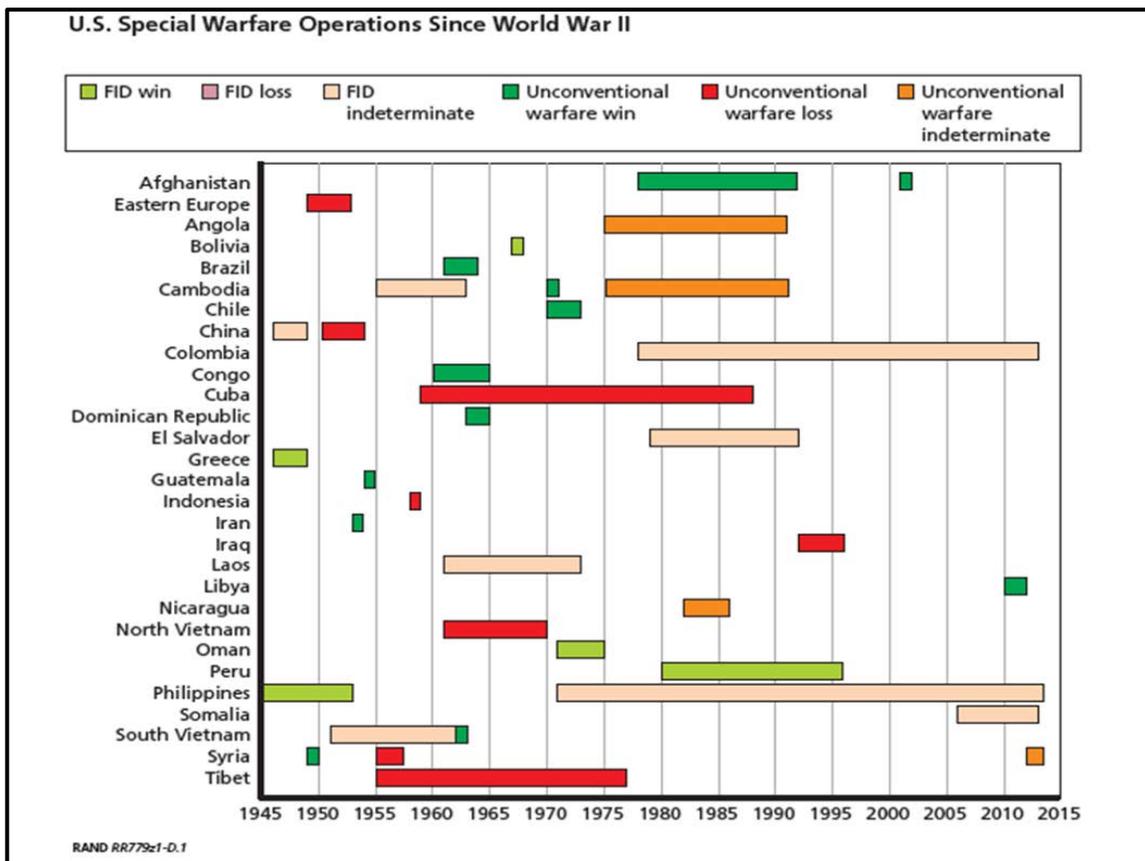


Figure 7. US Special Warfare Operations Since World War II

Source: Dan Madden et al., *Toward Operational Art in Special Warfare* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2016), 35.

ARSOF Transition to Operational and Strategic Level Support

ARSOF in Colombia and El Salvador have assisted in FID operations at the tactical level for quite some time. We need to consider ways to improve the professional development of ARSOF operators proficient at the operational and tactical levels. Growing problems like threat networks pose a direct challenge to stability in Colombia. If necessary, ARSOF roles will increase rather than outsourcing engagements to contractors, since ARSOF has not yet developed training and assistance programs at the operational and strategic levels. The question, then, is whether ARSOF can have a role in a post-FARC transition in Colombia. Overall, ARSOF has the unique capability to be flexible when transitioning to operational-and strategic-level efforts. Having the ability to operate at the tactical, operational, and strategic level of operations provides specialties, “that can be applied to existing problem sets to; help align guidance and resources; identify vulnerable nodes, protect those that are ours and exploit those that are not; and possibly develop a new way of orienting all elements of national power to countering the TOC threat.”⁶⁵ To ensure that viable and resource-effective ARSOF elements are prepared to operate at multiple levels in a post-FARC context, greater attention is necessary on both the part of the ARSOF community and of the partnered forces. One possible step toward better functioning is strengthening special warfare planning capabilities, as outlined in (Figure 8) below.

⁶⁵ William Mendel and Peter McCabe, *SOF Role in Combating Transnational Organized Crime* (MacDill Air Force Base, FL: JSOU University Press, 2016), 1-193.

Figure 8 describes an example how ARSOF can adjust for the future operating environment such as the FARC transition in Colombia. The framework identifies points described in this thesis, for example, policy guidance and strategy that touches a point the author elaborated in previous chapters that will need to be relooked during the post FARC transition. Next, ARSOF will need to obtain appropriate knowledge management, authorities, permissions, and funding which was also discussed by the author before achieving this framework. Built over time, as described in (Figure 8), ARSOF will need to relook their “ways and means” to develop deployable operational and tactical level forces proficient in special warfare, anticipate transitions i.e. the FARC, and sustain feasibility and operations assessments. “Partner capacity is very often in need of bolstering at the tactical, operational, and strategic levels of the relevant security institutions. A multi-echelon and multi-functional approach to building partner capacity will provide the most sustainable and effective capability. Creating CT units alone will provide little enduring capability if there are no capable “hold” forces, professional police able to conduct evidence-based operations and community policing, a functional judicial system, logistical capabilities, command structures with trained staff, or institutions capable of training, resourcing, and managing the array of forces needed.”⁶⁶ ARSOF can provide that capability to achieve the list of items listed above. ARSOF can do a fraction of the whole of government approach in a post FARC transition but is very capable of proving a combination of a whole of governmental approach with a whole of society approach where it involves functions of a society further complimenting the joint,

⁶⁶ Linda Robinson, “The SOF Experience in the Philippines and the Implications for Future Defense Strategy,” *Prism* 6, no. 3 (December 2016): 1-188.

interagency, intergovernmental, and multinational (JIIM) environment described in (Figure 8) of the framework for raising special warfare to the operational level.

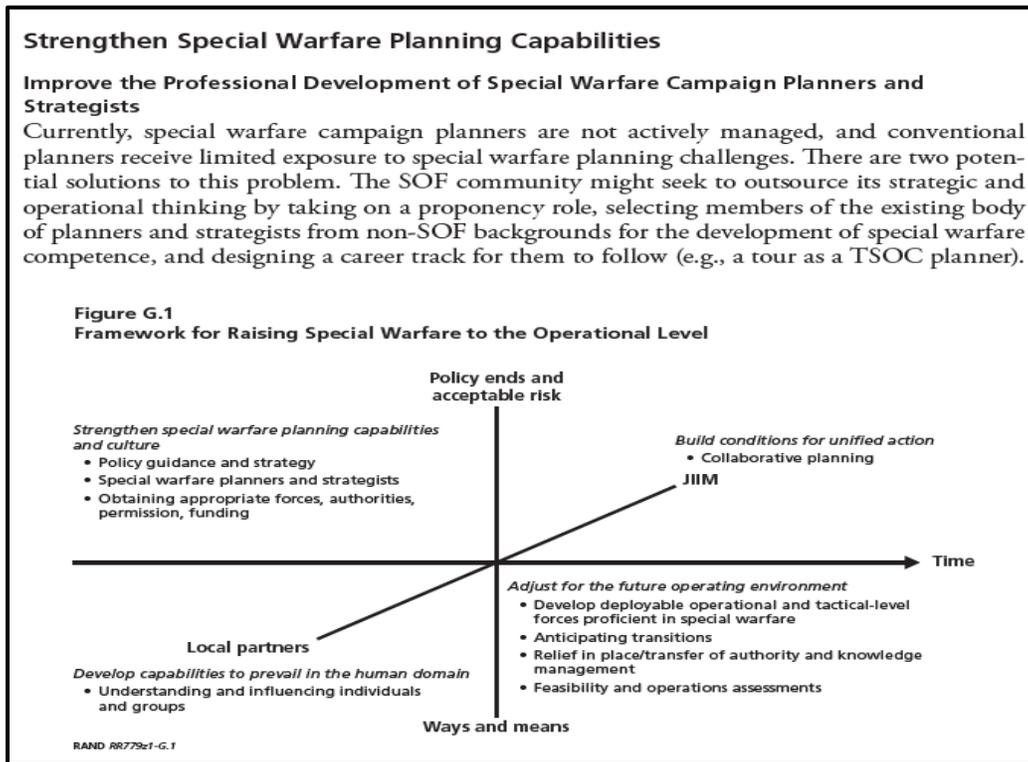


Figure 8. Framework for Raising Special Warfare to the Operational Level

Source: Developed from Dan Madden et al., *Toward Operational Art in Special Warfare* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2016), 59.

ARSOF Indirect Approach in El Salvador and Colombia Conclusion

The ARSOF indirect approach in El Salvador and Colombia are different due to the operational environments, dates, and means of each country. In El Salvador, for example, the operational environment is smaller due to the size of the country. On the

other hand, one striking similarity between the two situations is the number of insurgent groups operating in rural areas. In El Salvador, the FMLN and the government negotiated a peace accord after a long-fought civil war that lasted twelve years. In Colombia, the 53-year insurgency of the FARC was longer-lasting than in El Salvador, but the end result is the same: the FARC and the government are now engaged in peace talks. One final important similarity is the role that the US has played. In both countries, the US used an indirect approach to support the government by training, advising, and assisting security forces to counter insurgencies. The indirect approach conducted by the US has proven successful in El Salvador, and now it seems to be succeeding in Colombia as well.

Conclusion of Analysis

This thesis has analyzed the differences and similarities of the El Salvador and Colombian peace accords. These two situations share many similarities. Specifically, the strategy and funding used to support these peace processes were in line with national strategic guidance and authorities. Further, funding provided to ARSOF operations in Latin America drove transformations in building partnered nation capacity. ARSOF also enabled these states through executed campaign plans that assisted them in securing their borders. Finally, the ARSOF use of an indirect approach has been successful in both El Salvador and Colombia.

The US has an important role to play in ensuring that talks with the FARC move forward and that criminal networks and neo-paramilitary actors across the country do not fill the vacuum left by the FARC. US strategy and funding will affect the future ARSOF operations in Colombia. Based on the guidance provided by the NSS and NMS, USSOUTHCOM will execute plans using the TSCP strategy and by providing funding to

build relationships across Latin America. The USSOUTHCOM campaign plan will need to be reevaluated regularly since it is uncertain what type of threats will develop in the future. Other insurgent groups or TCOs will more than likely take advantage of the void left behind by the FARC. This change will require ARSOF to reconsider at their structure to better support FID in Colombia as the FARC moves to gain legitimacy. Analysis here has proved that an indirect approach conducted by the US has been successful in El Salvador, and now appears to have assisted Colombia by enabling government forces to build a security network that eventually led the FARC to the negotiation table.

Special warfare is an Army Special Operations Forces doctrinal term meaning that ARSOF operations can conduct full spectrum activities while combining lethal and nonlethal means with an operational understanding and foreign language aspect in a permissive or non-permissive environment.⁶⁷ It includes “special operations forces conducting combinations of unconventional warfare, foreign internal defense, and counterinsurgency through and with indigenous forces or personnel.”⁶⁸

The complexities of the contemporary operational environment, political, and military situations in Colombia have caused changes that require ARSOF leaders who can understand strategic implications of the missions they are supporting in Colombia and El Salvador. Although guided by USSOCSOUTH campaign plans nested within country-team plans, foreign internal defense missions will continue to have strategic implications. Therefore, policy makers, strategic leaders, and planners must be clear on

⁶⁷ U.S. Department of the Army, *Special Operations*, 9.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 9.

what a situation like a post-FARC transition will entail with regard to issues of regional stability.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusions

The primary research question for this thesis asks: How does ARSOF enhance Colombian Security Forces capability during the transition of the FARC in Colombia? Focusing on four distinct points of comparison, this study has engaged with the similarities and the differences between the peace accords in El Salvador and Colombia. It first examined the national-level strategy and funding, approved and subsidized through the Fiscal Year Defense Act that guides the execution of Theater Security Cooperation Plans. The following section elaborated the USSOUTHCOM vision and how it is nested within both national security strategy and national military strategy in USSOUTHCOM. Based on the execution of plans, section four covered the implementation of ARSOF in El Salvador and Colombia and discussed the indirect approach that ARSOF supports at higher levels plans to achieve stability in the greater region. This stability provides the central governments of El Salvador and Colombia with the ability to make political decisions that affect not only the country but also strategic international relations. Additionally, the security apparatuses in El Salvador and Colombia, while different, achieved stability through agreements to terms made at the negotiation table. The result in both cases was a vacancy for other smaller insurgent groups to bond with organizations like TCOs, BACRIM, and other known insurgent groups. The partnering of these smaller rebel organizations could potentially turn into hybrid threats, leading to further instability in the region and potentially delegitimizing the security gains that have been achieved to this point.

Recommendations

While the FARC move through the demobilization process, ARSOF forces have the opportunity to shift focus to the operational and strategic levels to enable a partnered force to degrade belligerent non-state actors and continue episodic training at the tactical level. The ARSOF decision to provide a whole-of-government approach in Colombia in support of the peace referendum will need to consider advisory and assistance roles outside of the tactical levels of war. As a result, military strategy in USSOUTHCOM and policy must be revised.

As described in chapter 4, this thesis synthesizes qualitative information from four sections with multiple supporting topics to generate intellectual reasoning. This work provides reasoning from a top to bottom nature by evaluating historical background such as the *foco theory* and how it affected Latin American culture. Furthermore, it compares the El Salvadoran peace accord with the Colombian peace accord. While at the same time it reviews US strategy and funding which authorizes ARSOF involvement to support Colombian security forces. It also reviews the USSOUTHCOM Campaign Plan and ARSOF's indirect approach taken in El Salvador and Colombia during their transition process of the FMLN and the FARC. In a sense, this thesis takes previous analysis and work that mutually support each other to meet national strategy goals through an ARSOF perspective. Ultimately, this work identifies and determines similarities between two peace accords and incorporates an ARSOF point of view to gain insight for potential problem sets in Colombia as a result of the FARC demobilization. Whenever possible, this investigation aimed to identify gaps where ARSOF can support Colombian security forces during the FARC demobilization.

Further recommendations are based on the analysis which leads to the understanding that this analysis can be applied to other insurgencies in Latin America. ARSOF can take the same analysis model and apply it to other states in the US Central Command (USCENTCOM) or US Pacific Command (USPACOM). This recommendation can carry over to other areas where states are challenged by insurgent groups. Even though the US has a strong relationship in Latin America with international partners the analysis potentially will benefit other TSOs.

The Colombian peace referendum will affect political, social, and economic factors in Colombia and influence other states in the region based on geography and existing relationships with the country. During the transition phase, “maintaining the status quo will perpetuate high costs and potential operational failings during critical periods and transition between peace and conflict operations.”⁶⁹

Hybrid threats in the USSOUTHCOM AOR have begun to transition due to government response. The way that future operations may threaten US and coalition force objectives is yet undetermined. Moving forward, Special Operations Forces’ campaign plans must anticipate hybrid threat evolutions. A hybrid threat in the USSOUTHCOM AOR can be compared to an insurgency or TCO combating efforts that will cause instability in the region. Future insurgencies and TCOs will develop or modify their strategy, operations, tactics, and organization based on outside variables. Emerging hybrid threats and activities that do not fit into traditional understandings of conventional and unconventional war will be influenced by indicators such as technology, cyber

⁶⁹ Ibid., 60.

capability, rural to urban transition, finances, and the rule of law. Hybrid threats will evolve in ways that will allow them to become more operationally organized and to fight with more capacity.

The concept of FID in USSOUTHCOM has changed because ARSOF has been enabling shifts from tactical level to the operational and strategic levels. These shifts are needed to counter an evolving potential HT. In many of the countries within the USSOUTHCOM AOR, the US continues to partner with local militaries with FID. However, Plan Colombia was a building block. ARSOF continues to train at the tactical level, and to sacrifice the potential to influence at the operational and strategic level. Likewise, it is currently transitioning from inner problems to outer problems such as border security, naval security, and border police security. In many cases, a combined force, which is a force that includes international forces to accomplish a mission, can degrade or deter a hybrid threat within the country. Rather than concentrating ARSOF with FID internal to Colombia, however, NSS and campaign plans can benefit from transitions to focus on the border areas of countries like Colombia. The Colombian Security Forces have proven they can control the core; now it is time to focus on the outer shell before hybrid threats develop in the form of BACRIM and other small insurgent groups combining with TCOs to seek control of operational spaces that will benefit them financially.

Areas for Further Study and Policy Recommendations

Areas for further study are determined by the capability of Colombian Security Forces to maintain an aggressive stance against future threats to stability in country.

Additionally, further study of the Colombian Strategy *Sword of Honor III* could potentially identify shortfalls in the GoC's strategy once the FARC demobilized. Due to the lack of time and the researcher staying inside of the scope of the investigation there was limited research on the GoC campaign plan *Sword of Honor III*. On the other hand, if the GoC security forces do not have sufficient resources available to manage the demobilization of the FARC it can potentially require USSOUTHCOM and USSOCSOUTH to be flexible and modify their campaign plan to support the GoC.⁷⁰

According to Phillip K. Abbott, "a larger number of FARC to be demobilized would create greater resource and logistical demands."⁷¹ The GoC security forces will be challenged with the demobilization process and may require assistance from the international community. Other significant data illustrates, "that the task of demobilizing combatants becomes increasingly more difficult when exceeding 50,000."⁷² On the other hand, there is concern that individually displaced personnel will, "add another complex variable to the reintegration process while at the same time, just as dismantling the paramilitaries led to the creation of splinter groups, some demobilized FARC may seek their future alongside other illegal groups."⁷³

The identification of relationships, links, and threat networks between TCOs, BACRIM, other insurgent groups like the ELN, and the general population of Colombia

⁷⁰ Abbott, "Colombian Peace Negotiations," 9.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Ibid.

will lead to a greater understanding of how ARSOF can build partnered capacity. The gaps identified in the *Sword of Honor III* plan will also provide USSOUTHCOM and USSOCCOUTH areas where they can modify strategies to support the GoC if requested. Possible areas of investigation include network analysis on the relationships that the ELN, BACRIM, and TCOs have in a post-FARC Peace Agreement with the government of Colombia. Additionally, it may be worthwhile to examine how the FARC transition model can be used as leverage to pull other insurgent groups such as the ELN or EPN into states of transition. Analysis of operational and strategic opportunities for ARSOF to engage with Colombian Security Forces in areas where gaps have been identified may also prove fruitful. Future study should focus on what security and public policies in these areas would promote in terms of development and reduction of security concerns during the FARC demobilization.

Furthermore, potential avenues of study that engage with how ARSOF can support the demobilization phase in Colombia are also possible. The research recommends a whole-of-government approach and a whole-of-society approach that can work together and learn from this transition and present a model for future states to utilize. This opportunity will give ARSOF a human domain perspective on the demobilization process. Additionally, ARSOF can gain a better understanding of the behavior, attitudes, and objectives of the FARC while gaining insight into other still-active insurgent groups in Latin America.

In summary, the direction in which the current peace agreement is moving demands that ARSOF redesign its approach to support Colombian security forces. Following more than fifty years of unrest, the void that is now being left behind by the

FARC is significant. ARSOF can meet these challenges and have continued success by collaborating with Colombian Security Forces. At the same time, however, decision makers will need to focus on new approaches, provide funding and authorities, and shift foreign internal defenses from the tactical level to the operational and strategic levels to gain effects.

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