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An Analysis of the Twenty-One Marine Corps Expeditionary Unit (pecial Operations Capable)

~~MEU(SOC) Missions~~

Major Lawrence D. Nicholson, USMC

U.S. Army Command and General Staff College  
ATTN: ATZL-SWD-GD  
Fort Leavenworth, Kansas 66027-6900

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This study examines and analyzes the current status of the Marine Expeditionary Unit Special Operations Capable, or MEU(SOC) program. A detailed analysis was conducted of each of the 21 missions for validity and relevance as MEU(SOC) missions. The methodology used in conducting the research included the issuing of 125 survey questionnaires to Marine Corps field grade officers. This survey asked the repondents to rank each mission in order of importance to the Marine Corps, and comment on its inclusion as a MEU(SOC) mission.

The study found that only four of the 21 missions warranted inclusion as truly "special" operations missions. The study recommended that the remaining 17 missions be deleted from the list of MEU(SOC) missions and be re-named as MAGTF capabilities. This recommendation was based upon their not meeting a series of four established criteria. The missions that were recommended to be retained as MEU(SOC) missions were: (1) in-extremis hostage rescue, (2) tactical and clandestine recovery operations, (3) maritime interdiction operations, and (4) gas and oil platform seizure operations.

Special Operations, Marine Expeditionary Unit Special Operations Capable (MEUSOC), Amphibious Raid

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AN ANALYSIS OF THE TWENTY-ONE MISSIONS  
OF THE MARINE CORPS EXPEDITIONARY UNIT  
(SPECIAL OPERATIONS CAPABLE)

A thesis presented to the Faculty of the U.S. Army  
Command and General Staff College in partial  
fulfillment of the requirements for the  
degree

MASTER OF MILITARY ART AND SCIENCE

by

LAWRENCE D. NICHOLSON, MAJ, USMC  
B.S., THE CITADEL, CHARLESTON, SOUTH CAROLINA, 1979

Fort Leavenworth, Kansas  
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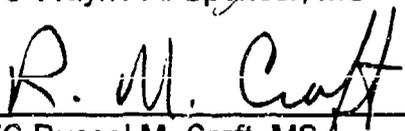
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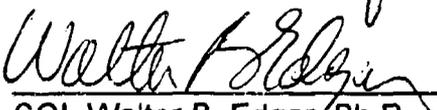
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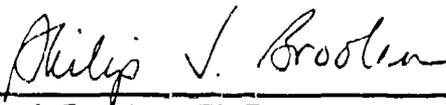
  
\_\_\_\_\_, Thesis Committee Chairman  
MAJ Michael L. Langley, MS

  
\_\_\_\_\_, Member  
LTC Wayne A. Spencer, MS

  
\_\_\_\_\_, Member  
LTC Russel M. Craft, MS

  
\_\_\_\_\_, Member, Consulting Faculty  
COL Walter B. Edgar, Ph.D.

Accepted this 3rd day of June 1994 by:

  
\_\_\_\_\_, Director, Graduate Degree Programs  
Philip J. Brookes, Ph.D.

The opinions and conclusions expressed herein are those of the student author and do not necessarily represent the views of the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College or any other governmental agency.

ABSTRACT

ARE THE TWENTY-ONE CURRENTLY ASSIGNED MISSIONS OF THE MARINE CORPS EXPEDITIONARY UNIT(SPECIAL OPERATIONS CAPABLE) STILL VALID IN THE MARINE CORPS? by MAJOR L.D. Nicholson, USMC, 130 pages.

This study examines and analyzes the current status of the Marine Expeditionary Unit Special Operations Capable, or MEU (SOC) program. A detailed analysis was conducted of each of the twenty-one missions for validity and relevance as MEU (SOC) missions. The methodology used in conducting the research included the issuing of one-hundred and twenty-five survey questionnaires to Marine Corps field-grade officers. This survey asked the respondents to rank each mission in order of importance to the Marine Corps and to comment on its inclusion as a MEU (SOC) mission.

The study found that only four of the twenty-one missions warranted inclusion as truly "special" operations missions. The study recommended that the remaining seventeen missions be deleted from the list of MEU (SOC) missions and be re-named as Marine Air Ground Task forces (MAGTF) capabilities. This recommendation was based upon their not meeting a series of four established criteria. The missions that were recommended to be retained as MEU (SOC) missions were: (1) in-extremis hostage rescue, (2) tactical and clandestine recovery operations, (3) maritime interdiction operations, and (4) gas and oil platform seizure operations.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

Background. During the earliest phase of any international crisis, the first two questions that are often asked by the civilian leaders of our country are "where are the aircraft carriers, and where are the Marines?" In 1986, a group of Muslim terrorists conducted a piratical seizure of the Greek cruise ship Achille Lauro off the coast of Egypt. The terrorists were members of an extremist right wing faction of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), and although the attack was not directed against the United States, an American citizen was killed. This act of terrorism and murder necessitated an immediate American response.

As is normally the case, both a Carrier Battle Group (CVBG), and an Amphibious Ready Group (ARG) were afloat in the Mediterranean Sea.<sup>1</sup> President Ronald Reagan asked then Commandant of the Marine Corps, General P. X. Kelly, what his embarked Marines could do to assist the beleaguered hostages. The Commandant replied that he could do very little because a ship takedown was not yet a capability in the repertoire of the Marine Corps. The Commandant did point out that the Marine Corps was working on fielding Marine Expeditionary Units (MEUs) with the ability to conduct special

operations missions in a maritime environment. This unfortunate incident dramatically underscored the need for the Marine Corps to join the other services in preparing for the myriad of missions likely to arise under the banner of Low Intensity Conflict (LIC). In 1986, this type of special operations mission was exclusively the domain of the Special Operations Forces (SOF). Such is not the case today.

In 1983, then Secretary of Defense, the Honorable Mr. Caspar M. Weinberger, directed that each military service review its existing special operations capabilities and develop a time-phased plan by March 1984. What Mr. Weinberger wanted was for each service to develop a plan for achieving a level of special operations expertise required to combat both current and future levels of low intensity conflict and terrorism.<sup>2</sup>

The Commandant of the Marine Corps responded by directing the Commanding General of Fleet Marine Forces Atlantic (FMFLANT) to undertake an assessment of Marine Corps special operations and to develop a plan which would enhance special operations capabilities within the Marine Corps.<sup>3</sup> In 1985, the Commanding General of FMFLANT, Lieutenant General Alfred M. Gray, briefed the Commandant of the Marine Corps on the results of the study. His assessment was that based upon the study, the Marine Corps was in a favorable position to participate and conduct special operations missions in a maritime environment because:

1. As a sea-based forward-deployed force, the Marine Corps offered the National Command Authorities unique capabilities for timely crisis response in essentially all theaters, with organic logistical, and command and control assets already in place.

2. The composite task-organized flexibility built into all sizes of Marine Air Ground Task Forces (MAGTF) is particularly well suited to these types of flexible response missions. Additionally, a MAGTF carries with it a formidable force which possesses substantial combat power.

3. Currently existing Marine Corps roles and missions were inherently adaptable to special operations missions.

4. A Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU) could, with additional training and equipment, perform certain previously clandestine and precision tactical missions in a hostile environment.<sup>4</sup>

5. "Of all of the military services, the Marine Corps offers the widest range of single source resources (air and ground), immediately available for use in special operations."<sup>5</sup> This includes a combined arms capability, under the control of a single command.

As a result of the tasking from the Secretary of Defense, and after a thorough review of existing MEU capabilities, the Marine Corps began instituting an aggressive special operations capable (SOC) training program. This program looked to build upon, and capitalize on, the inherent capability of our forward-deployed MEUs to conduct selected maritime special operations

missions. This program called for the introduction of eighteen selected special operations missions which the deployed MEU's would be both trained and evaluated on, during an intense twenty-six week pre-deployment workup. No MEU would be designated Special Operations Capable MEU (SOC) until it passed a rigorous battery of evaluations, certifying it competent and capable in each of the eighteen special operations missions. This ambitious program called for the progressive improvement of both individual and unit skills attained through the use of improved training and equipment. The introduction of this training and equipment was expensive for the Marine Corps, both in time and resources. Selected Marine Corps units still had to prepare for the full range of conventional tasks in addition to the eighteen new special operations tasks.<sup>6</sup>

Special operations is a widely used term which encompasses a broad variety of missions, but the key to its understanding lies in its definition as defined by the Joint Chiefs Of Staff (JCS) Publication 1-02.

Operations conducted by specially trained, equipped, and organized Department Of Defense (DOD) forces against strategic, operational, or tactical targets in pursuit of national, political, economic, or psychological objectives. These operations may be conducted during times of peace or hostilities. They may support conventional warfare operations or they may be prosecuted independently when the use of conventional forces is either inappropriate or unfeasible.<sup>7</sup>

Additionally, special operations activities are defined by Public Law 99-611 as:

1. Direct Action (JCS Pub 1-02): In special operations, a specified act involving operations of an overt, covert, clandestine, or low visibility nature

conducted primarily by a sponsoring power's special operations forces in hostile or denied areas.

2. Special Reconnaissance Operation (USSOCOM): Reconnaissance and surveillance actions conducted by special operations forces to obtain or verify, by visual observation or other collection methods, information concerning the capabilities, intentions, and activities of an actual or potential enemy or to secure data concerning the meteorological, hydrographic, geographic, or target acquisition, area assessment, and post-strike reconnaissance.

3. Unconventional Warfare (JCS PUB 1-02): A broad spectrum of military and paramilitary operations conducted in enemy-held, enemy-controlled or politically sensitive territory. Unconventional warfare includes, but is not limited to, guerilla warfare, evasion and escape, subversion, sabotage, and other operations of a low-visibility, covert, or clandestine nature. United States forces having an existing unconventional warfare capability, consist of Army Special Forces and certain Navy, Air Force, and Marine Corps units as assigned.

4. Foreign Internal Defense (JCS Pub 1-02): The participation by civilian and military agencies of a government in any of the action programs taken by another government to free and protect its society from subversion, lawlessness, and insurgency. The primary role of special operations forces in this interagency activity is to train, advise, and otherwise assist host nation military and paramilitary forces.

5. Counter-Terrorism (JCS Pub 1-02): Offensive measures taken to prevent, deter, and respond to terrorism.

6. Civil Affairs (JCS Pub 1-02): Those phases of the activities of a commander which embrace the relationship between the military forces and civil authorities and people in a friendly country or area, or occupied country or area, when military forces are present.

7. Psychological Operations (JCS Pub 1-02): Planned operations to convey selected information and indicators to foreign audiences to influence their emotions, motives, objective reasoning, and ultimately, the behavior of foreign governments, organizations groups, and individuals. The purpose of psychological operations is to induce or reinforce foreign attitudes and behavior favorable to the originator's objectives.

8. Humanitarian Assistance (JCS Pub 1-02): The process of rendering either direct or indirect life-saving assistance to foreign citizens, and/or governments, in either a permissive or non-permissive environment.

9. Theater Search and rescue (JCS Pub 1-02): The process of recovering downed crewmen, aircraft parts, or cargo, in both a hostile and permissive environment, anywhere in theater.

10. Other activities as may be specified by the National Command Authorities.

While conventional units in all services have the capabilities to perform one or more of these missions, special operations encompasses a broad array of

activities not normally considered appropriate for these units. Special operations would normally occur in an environment sensitive to external operational and political constraints. Additionally, special operations forces of all services are often used in an economy of force role, where the introduction of conventional forces would be considered escalatory, or politically unpalatable.<sup>8</sup>

The Marine Corps has historically considered special operations to be driven by the type of environment in which the forces are employed. These included desert, mountain, jungle, and cold weather environments. The Marine Corps also considered several variations of amphibious warfare as special operations, as evidenced in the 1981 edition of Fleet Marine Force Manual (FMFM) 8-1 which is entitled simply enough, Special Operations. This publication includes in its roster of special operations such amphibious warfare operations as raids, demonstrations, and withdrawals, and such conventional tasks as river crossings and bridging operations.<sup>9</sup>

In July of 1985, the first operational concept for what was then called the Marine Amphibious Unit Special Operations Capable (MAU) (SOC) was written by Lieutenant General Alfred M. Gray, then Commander of FMFLANT. In this document, General Gray became the first Marine to specifically identify the eighteen special operations missions which the Marine Corps would eventually adopt, and then train for, over the ensuing eight years.

This document stipulated that these missions were merely an enhancement of the existing traditional capabilities of the forward-deployed

Marine Amphibious Units. Additionally, the study emphasized that these new missions were neither intended to transform the conventional Fleet Marine Force units into dedicated special operations forces, nor replicate the national-level counter-terrorist forces. What was intended was to make the MEUs more capable, lethal, and, most of all, responsive to a wider variety of crises than before. With properly trained and equipped MEU (SOC) forces afloat worldwide, it provided the theater Commanders In Chiefs (CINCS), Joint Task Force (JTF) commanders, and the National Command Authority (NCA) with a greater range of crisis response flexibility than ever before.<sup>10</sup>

In April of 1987 Lieutenant General Gray presented an unpublished paper, which was the first truly definitive work on the utilization and implementation of MEU (SOC) forces, entitled: The Operational Concept For Marine Amphibious Units Being Special Operations Capable. In June of 1987 General Gray became the twenty-ninth Commandant of the Marine Corps, and took to his new position his great enthusiasm for a Marine Corps enhanced with special operations capable units.<sup>11</sup>

Marines have operated from ships since the founding of the Marine Corps, but it was not until 1947, with the myriad of troubles erupting throughout the Mediterranean Sea area, that the United States began the regular and continuous practice of keeping Marines on ship and forward deployed. The problems in the Mediterranean included a Communist insurgency in Greece, the problems associated with the establishment of the nation of Israel in 1948, and

the continuing consolidation of the Soviet controlled nations of Eastern Europe. These first deployments found Marines embarked aboard cruisers, battleships, and destroyers because there had not been any serious progress in building large sea-going amphibious platforms capable of delivering an integrated Marine Air Ground Task Force (MAGTF) to a hostile shore.<sup>12</sup>

Today, the United States Navy possesses a wide range of ships designed to perform as platforms from which the Marine Corps can perform the full spectrum of amphibious operations and selected maritime special operations. These ships include the Landing Helicopter Assault, Tarawa Class (LHA), and the Landing Helicopter Dock, Wasp class (LHD). These large ships act as the capital ships of the amphibious ready group (ARG), are in excess of 830 feet in length, and can carry over 1,900 Marines. These large ships also carry the composite helicopter squadron of the MEU (SOC), and are joined by two or three other ships to comprise the ARG.

Today, the Marine Corps routinely has three MEU (SOC) units forward deployed around the globe twenty-four hours a day. These units are assigned to modern amphibious platforms capable of delivering a highly lethal, credible, and capable force ashore from well over the horizon in support of national security and military objectives. While the Marine Corps has made enormous progress in this area during the past forty years, the process of who is sent and how they are trained and equipped continues to evolve.

The future of the entire MEU (SOC) program has arrived at a critical juncture in its evolution, and the Marine Corps may not even recognize it. For effective growth and evolution, the MEU (SOC) program requires a current and coherent policy codified by a common vision and doctrine. This doctrine must not only provide guidance, but must establish a baseline of capabilities and achievement standards. The most current published directive for the MEU (SOC) organization and training is Marine Corps Order 3120.8A, Policy For The Organization Of Fleet Marine Forces For Combat.<sup>13</sup> This order sets forth the policy and details the eighteen missions required of the forward-deployed MEU (SOC) units.

On the horizon is Marine Corps Order 3120.XX. Though still in draft form and not yet assigned a number, this order is being re-written due to the addition of three more MEU (SOC) missions. This now brings the total number of MEU (SOC) missions to twenty-one. Most of the special operations documents circulating around Headquarters Marine Corps, and the Warfighting Center at Quantico, Virginia, are working papers and remain only in draft form. The fate of these papers and the missions they detail rest largely in the yet-to-be-made decisions concerning the direction of the Marine Corps and MEU (SOC) program.

In today's current climate of downsizing, the United States Marine Corps must initiate a complete bottoms-up review of the entire force structure in

order to create and mold the Marine Corps of the next half century. The primary mission of the Marine Corps is to:

Organize, train, and equip to provide Fleet Marine Forces of combined arms, together with supporting air components, for service with the fleet in the seizure or defense of advanced naval bases and for the conduct of such land operations as may be essential to naval bases and for the conduct of such land operations as may be essential to the prosecution of a naval campaign.<sup>14</sup>

In addition, the Marine Corps must also be prepared to execute a specified list of special operations missions. The purpose of this study is to explore whether or not the Marine Corps is capable of performing all of the currently assigned twenty-one special operations missions while remaining capable of performing its assigned conventional roles.

The MEU (SOC) is a uniquely organized, equipped, and trained unit that provides the regional CINCs, and naval or JTF commanders with a credible sea-based amphibious capability optimized for forward presence and crisis response. This force provides the theater CINCs with an effective means of dealing with the uncertainties of future threats, by providing a self-sustainable, well trained, flexible, expandable, and capable combined arms team ready to perform both conventional and limited special operations missions.

The Twenty-one Current Missions (Capabilities) of the Marine Expeditionary Unit (Special Operations Capable)

1. Amphibious Raids. The capability to conduct amphibious raids via helicopter and/or surface means from extended ranges in order to inflict loss or

damage upon opposing forces, create diversions, capture and/or evacuate individuals and material by swift incursion into an objective area followed by a planned withdrawal. The amphibious raid provides the operational focus for the MEU (SOC).

2. Limited Objective Attacks. Conduct of amphibious assaults (surface and/or heliborne) for a specific purpose and of limited duration.

3. Non-Combatant Evacuation Operations (NEO). The capability to conduct Non-combatant Evacuation Operations (NEO) by evacuating and protecting noncombatants. Includes the capability to provide a security force, evacuation control center, recovery force, medical support, and transportation of evacuees.

4. Show of Force Operation. The capability to engage in any form of "show of force" operation to include amphibious demonstrations, presence of forces, or flyovers in support of U.S. interests.

5. Reinforcement Operations. The capability to conduct operations by helicopter and/or surface means to reinforce external national or international military forces. This includes the capability to conduct relief-in-place or a passage of lines.

6. Security Operations. The capability to conduct security operations to protect U.S. property and noncombatants, develop an integrated local security perimeter, screen for explosive devices, and provide personal protection to designated individuals.

7. Mobile Training Teams. The capability to provide training and assistance to foreign military forces permitted by U.S. law.

8. Civil Military Operations. The capability to conduct civil Military Operations for:

a. Humanitarian/Civil Assistance. To provide services such as medical and dental care, minor construction repair to civilian facilities, temporary assistance in the administration of local government, and prompt adjudication of foreign legal claims.

b. Disaster Relief. To provide humanitarian assistance and physical security to counter the devastation caused by man-made/ natural disaster.

9. Tactical Deception Operations. The capability to design and implement tactical deception operations plans in order to deceive the enemy through electronic means, feints, demonstrations, and ruses which cause the enemy to react or fail to react in a manner which assists in the accomplishment of the overall mission.

10. Fire Support Control. The capability to provide naval, air and fire support control measures and liaison to US/Allied services and/or armed forces. Normally provided by detachments from the Air Naval Gunfire Liaison Company (ANGLICO).

11. Counterintelligence Operations. The capability to conduct counterintelligence operations by identifying and counteracting the threat to

security posed by hostile intelligence services, organizations, or by individuals engaged in espionage, sabotage, or terrorism.

12. Initial Terminal Guidance (ITG). The capability to conduct initial terminal guidance by establishing and operating navigational, signal, and/or electronic devices for guiding helicopter and surface waves from a designated point to a landing zone or beach.

13. Signal Intelligence/Electronic Warfare Operations. The capability to conduct limited electronic warfare operations to provide protection to the organic communications and electronic emissions of the MAGTF, and to attack the enemy by listening, locating, and disrupting his communications and electronic systems.

14. Recovery Operations.

a. Clandestine recovery. The capability to conduct clandestine extraction of personnel or sensitive items from enemy controlled areas.

b. Tactical Recovery of Downed Aircraft and/or Personnel (TRAP). The capability to conduct recovery of downed aircraft and personnel, aircraft sanitization, and provide advanced trauma-life support in a benign or hostile environment. TRAP is limited to overland operations and must be able to be conducted in a hostile environment.

15. Military Operations on Urbanized Terrain (MOUT). The capability to conduct military operations in a built-up area.

16. Airfield Seizures. The capability to conduct airfield seizure operations to secure an airfield to support MAGTF missions or follow-on forces (may or may not be planned as a raid).

17. Specialized demolition Operation. The capability to conduct specialized breaching; to employ specialized demolitions entry capability to support close quarters battle/combat and dynamic assault tactics/techniques.

18. Clandestine Reconnaissance and Surveillance. The capability to conduct clandestine reconnaissance and surveillance, through entry into an objective area by air, surface, or subsurface means in order to perform information collection, target acquisition, and other reconnaissance and surveillance tasks.

19. Maritime Interdiction Operations (MIO). The capability to conduct Maritime Interdiction Operations in support of vessel boarding, search and seizure (VBSS) operations during day or night on a cooperative, uncooperative, or hostile contact of interest.

20. Gas and Oil Platform Operations (GOPLAT). The capability to conduct seizure and/or destruction of offshore gas and oil platforms.

21. In-extremis Hostage Recovery (IHR). The capability to conduct a recovery during an in-extremis or "Near death" situation by means of an emergency extraction of hostages and/or sensitive items, in a non-permissive environment, and expeditiously transport them to a designated safe haven. The IHR capability will only be employed when directed by appropriate authority and

when dedicated National assets have not arrived on scene or are unavailable. Emphasis is placed on isolation, containment, employment of reconnaissance assets, and preparation for "turnover" of the crisis site when/if National assets arrive. Should National assets not arrive, the MEU (SOC) will be prepared to conduct an emergency assault to resolve the situation and remove the hostages/sensitive items to a safehaven. The intent is not to duplicate National capability, but, as a forward deployed MAGTF, be prepared to provide the CINC with an adequate force, capable to respond to an emergency situation.<sup>15</sup>

#### Purpose

The purpose of this thesis is to present a current account of the Marine Corps MEU (SOC) program and assess each of the current twenty-one MEU (SOC) missions for validity, viability, and necessity. This study, along with its recommendations and conclusions, will be presented to the decision makers at Headquarters Marine Corps for their consideration. The Marine Corps, like all other services, is in a period of downsizing where everything is shrinking except for the commitments. This downsizing is characterized by fewer Marines, fewer resources, and smaller budgets.

Added into this equation is the shrinking of the United States Navy's amphibious fleet, which is expected to shrink from sixty to thirty-five ships by the end of fiscal year 1995.<sup>16</sup> Also creating a major problem for the Marine Corps is the ageing CH-46 medium-lift transport helicopter. This helicopter, which has

been the workhorse of the Marine Corps for over twenty years, is nearing the end of its service life. The current capabilities and maintenance requirements of the CH-46 do not match up well with today's operational requirements. This atrophy of assault support capability, coupled with the seemingly endless developmental phase of the MV-22 (OSPREY) aircraft, has reduced the speed at which combat power of our forward deployed MEUs can be established ashore. With these three major negative factors seriously impacting upon the operational readiness of the Marine Corps, the Marine Corps has recently added three more MEU (SOC) missions, for a total of twenty-one.

This study seeks to examine whether or not the Marine Corps MEU (SOC) force is being spread too thin by taking on too many missions. Today it would appear to be economic and political suicide for any of the service chiefs to turn down a potentially high visibility and high payoff mission for his service. A new mission means increased capabilities must be developed. This translates into additional revenues and manpower. It is not absurd to speculate, given today's fear of further force reductions, that each service is espousing an overly optimistic can-do attitude, potentially to its own detriment. How else can one explain the use of such high technology platforms as U.S. Navy submarines participating in the drug war?

Today, while each service may talk, train, and even fight as a joint team, they are funded, cut, and forced to individually justify their roles and functions. It cannot be overstated that each service jealously guards and

considers as a threat any proposed changes in service roles and functions. An excellent case in point is the call to arms by many Marine Corps supporters against the idea of the U.S. Army embarking on the previously heretofore Marine Corps role of launching a fleet of maritime pre-positioned ships (MPS).<sup>17</sup>

Is the Marine Corps scrambling for new missions in this post-Cold War drawdown, or is the itemized listing of these twenty-one missions merely an advertisement of capabilities? Maybe some of these missions are not "special" at all, and as such we should quit calling them that. Maybe some of the listed missions are already contained and found to be an element of amphibious warfare. While amphibious warfare is technically a special operation, it is not "special" to the Marine Corps and is the sole reason for its existence. Our nation demands and deserves a Marine Corps which must be ready, when called upon, to respond unflinching around the world whenever, and wherever a crisis erupts. Are one or any number of these special operations taskings going to inhibit the Marine Corps' ability to perform its primary conventional missions?

#### Research Question.

This thesis is intended to research and answer the following question:  
Are the twenty-one currently assigned missions of the Marine Expeditionary Units (Special Operations Capable) still valid in the Marine Corps?

The secondary questions are:

1. Should the Marine Corps, in consonance with the National Command Authorities, add to or delete from the currently existing MEU (SOC) missions?

2. Does the preparation for these twenty-one MEU (SOC) missions enhance or degrade the overall competence, combat readiness, and conventional warfare skills of the units assigned to execute them?

3. Should the MEU (SOC) work more closely with the forces of USSOCOM in preparing its forces for deployment?

These questions originated, and are derived from Marine Corps concerns over the re-assignment and re-alignment of service missions at the national level after the collapse of the Soviet Union and the ending of the Cold War. With the recent change of administrations, the instability caused by two new secretaries of defense, and yet-to-be felt impact of another bottoms-up review, there is an atmosphere of uncertainty for all of the services. Questions about service end strengths, which many observers thought to be answered just three months ago, have been rendered moot. They will most likely be chopped further in an effort to comply with a smaller than expected defense budget.

This state of uncertainty will most likely create new missions, roles, and assignments for the individual services. It can also be expected that missions and roles previously assigned to a specific branch or service will be redistributed and modified. It is safe to say that Single service warfare is out and that joint and combined operations are in. Within the context of this debate questions have often been asked whether the nation even needs a Marine

Corps, and what can it do that the United States Army cannot? These are not new questions, and ones with which the Marine Corps has wrestled for over two-hundred years. This is not however what my thesis seeks to address, although I expect it will remain on the periphery.

### Assumptions

In the preparation of this study, the following assumptions were made.

1. That the Marine Corps will continue to be provided the amphibious lift capability needed to simultaneously support three forward deployed MEU (SOC) organizations.
2. That rotary wing or MV-22 lift assets will be sufficient to support all assigned MEU (SOC) missions.
3. That the fundamental roles and functions assigned to the Marine Corps will remain constant over the next five years.
4. That over the next five years American national security interests will remain unchanged. These five basic interests are:
  - a. The security of the United States as a free and independent nation, and the protection of its fundamental values, institutions, and people.
  - b. Global and regional stability which encourage progress.
  - c. Open, democratic, and representative political systems worldwide.

d. An open international trading and economic system which benefits all.

e. An enduring faith in America, that it can and will lead in a collective response to the world's crises.<sup>18</sup>

5. That the collapse of the Soviet Union and the threat of Communism has not resulted in a safer new world, free of external threats to the safety and security of the United States.

#### Definitions

Definitions are included as appendix A.

#### Limitations

The following limitations were made:

1. Much of the material concerning actual Special Operations missions and forces remains classified. This creates a natural boundary to respect and adhere to in the collection of data. This study will remain unclassified by design. It is felt that the best use of the data collected and results reported will be its dissemination throughout the Marine Corps, and the other services. As an unclassified document it will be available to all interested parties for review, discussion and education.

2. This subject matter is literally on the cutting edge of what can best be described as emerging doctrine. I personally interviewed the doctrine writers in the Washington D.C. area who are grappling with this very same thesis

question. There is a high degree of general officer involvement in the MEU (SOC) program which General Carl E. Mundy, the Commandant of the Marine Corps, recently referred to as "The Jewel in the crown of the Marine Corps."<sup>19</sup> While there is a considerable amount of published material on the NEU(SOC) program, there is a scarcity of public work that impacts directly on my work. This is because I am dealing and working with emerging doctrine. A significant portion of my research model has been dependent upon the collection of yet unsigned draft documents which are currently being staffed and analyzed throughout the entire Marine Corps.

#### Delimitations

I have imposed several restraints upon this study so that the research would be possible.

1. This study will not seek to address or compare in any manner the missions, capabilities, methods or standards of training between the Marine Corps, and the forces assigned to the United States Special Operations Command (USSOCOM). Although a fascinating thesis in its own right, it would severely interfere with, and hinder, my ability to remain focused on my own thesis.

2. There were one-hundred and twenty-five survey questionnaires issued to a specifically targeted audience of Marine Corps field grade officers currently attending intermediate level school. This survey population represents

a wide variety of military occupational specialties (MOS), experiences, and backgrounds, but it is merely a fraction of the total population of field grade officers on active duty in the Marine Corps. While the survey could have been more widely distributed, this audience was chosen mainly because none of the respondents is currently in a billet where he is either writing or executing the MEU (SOC) doctrine. Each officer is in what should be a reflective year of analysis and study. Limiting the survey to this finite population has two distinct, albeit utilitarian, benefits to the study. First, these officers would not be deployed, or training in preparation to deploy and as such would increase the probability of their having time to complete and return the survey. Secondly, they are each in a position, as students, to critically assess the MEU (SOC) program as outsiders for perhaps the first time in their careers.

#### Significance of the Study

This study seeks to address and solve a practical military problem. Within the voluminous body of work that has been previously written on the topic of the MEU (SOC), research has uncovered little relevant published material which clearly addresses the thesis question. The goal of this study is to identify, from a published list of twenty-one MEU (SOC) missions, which missions are essential to the continued functioning of the MEU, and which ones are not. This will be accomplished by examining and clarifying the current list of missions in order to produce a coherent and effective product. This finished product will be

submitted to the Marine Corps doctrine writers for consideration and implementation as a possible course of action for the MEU (SOC) program. Short of that, this study will have contributed to the body of knowledge on this subject and attempted to remedy a perceived doctrinal shortfall.

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup>Christopher Dobson and Ronald Payne, The Never Ending War. (New York: Facts on File Press, 1987), 69.

<sup>2</sup>U.S. Marine Corps, "Marine Corps Order 3120.XX, Policy For Marine Expeditionary Units (Special Operations Capable)" Draft, (Washington: Department of the Navy, 1993), 1.

<sup>3</sup>MCO 3120.XX, Draft, (1993), 1.

<sup>4</sup>MCO 3120.XX, Draft, (1993), 2.

<sup>5</sup>MCO 3120.XX, Draft, (1993), 3.

<sup>6</sup>MCO 3120.XX, Draft, (1993), 4.

<sup>7</sup>Department Of Defense, Joint Chiefs Of Staff Publication 1, Dictionary Of Military and Associated Terms (Washington, D.C.: GPO 1984 ), 339.

<sup>8</sup>U.S. Marine Corps, Headquarters Marine Corps, Marine Corps Order P3000.16, Operational Policy For Marine Air-Ground Task Force (Special Operations Capable) (Washington D.C. Department of the Navy, 1991) 1-4.

<sup>9</sup>U.S. Marine Corps, FMFM 8-1, Special Operations, (Washington D.C.: Department of the Navy, 1981) f-1.

<sup>10</sup>MCO P3000.16 (1991), 1-6.

<sup>11</sup>US Marine Corps, "Operational Concept For Marine Amphibious Units Being Special Operations Capable" Draft, ( Norfolk: Fleet Marine Force Atlantic, 1987), 1-7.

<sup>12</sup>Allan R. Millett, Semper Fidelis: The History Of The United States Marine Corps, ( New York: The Macmillan Publishing Company, 1980) , 465.

<sup>13</sup>U.S. Marine Corps, Headquarters Marine Corps, Marine Corps Order 3120. 8A, Policy For The Organization Of Fleet Marine Forces For Combat (Washington D.C.: Department of the Navy, 1992) 1.

<sup>14</sup>Armed Forces Staff College, Pub 1, The Joint Staff Officers Guide 1993 ( Washington D.C.: GPO 1993), 1-15.

<sup>15</sup>U.S. Marine Corps, Marine Corps Capabilities Plan, Volume 1 (Washington D.C.: Department of the Navy, 1992), A-1.

<sup>16</sup>Chris A Lawson, "Gambling With The Gator Fleet," Navy Times (November 1, 1993): 12.

<sup>17</sup>James D. Hittle, "Beware of Soldiers Trying to Gut the Corps," Navy Times, (14 November 1993), 54.

<sup>18</sup>George H. Bush, National Security Strategy Of The United States, (Washington D.C.: GPO,1993), 3.

<sup>19</sup>Thomas W. Williams, "MEU (SOC): The Jewel In The Crown Of The Marine Corps," Marine Corps Gazette 3 (March 1994): 30.

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW AND RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The Marine Corps currently has in service an extensive and updated series of publications to include Fleet Marine Force Field Manuals (FMFMs), Marine Corps Orders (MCOs), Operational Handbooks (OHs), Fleet Marine Force Reference Publications (FMFRPs), and a variety of other instructional pamphlets and handbooks. These official publications serve to define and present established doctrine, as well as to articulate the vision of how the Marine Corps intends to fight and win the next war.

Additionally there are no shortages of books, articles, and essays detailing and chronicling the past achievements of the Marine Corps. There is an abundance of written work which details how the Marine Corps will, or should, look in the future. What is not available is an assessment and analysis of what the Marine Corps is doing today in regards to the MEU (SOC) program. This is because the role of the Marine Corps as a player in the special operations arena is still relatively new, and the doctrine from which the Marine Corps must operate is still emerging.

It is for this reason that this research is heavily grounded in a series of draft documents which were acquired from the Coalition and Special Warfare

Division, Marine Corps Combat Development Center (MCCDC), Quantico, Virginia, and from the Security and Law Enforcement Branch of Headquarters Marine Corps in Washington, DC. The action officers in these departments are charged with formulating the policies and writing the doctrine which will shape the future of Marine Corps MEU (SOC) program. The Published and emerging documents from which this research is based are:

1. Marine Corps Order 3120.8A, (Current standing document dated 26 June 1992).

2. Marine Corps Order 3120.XX, (the latest draft, dated 13 July 1993).

3. The Marine Corps Capabilities Plan (Not dated).

4. Marine Corps Order P3000.16, Operational Policy MAGTF(SOC), dated 18 June 1991.

5. The Marine Corps Operational Concept Number 8-1, For Marine Expeditionary Units(SOC).

6. The original MEU (SOC) publication, The Operational Concept for Marine Amphibious Units being Special Operations Capable (SOC), dated 2 April 1987.<sup>1</sup>

7. The Maritime Oriented Special Operations Planning Handbook, published by the Landing Force Training Command Pacific (LFTCPAC), dated 1988. (This is the consummate training document for a MEU (SOC) because it encompasses all of the training standards, checklists and standard operating procedures needed to prepare for the missions).

All of the published and draft documents are evolving rapidly, and it is clearly understood that today's plan may well become obsolete as new ideas and directions are formulated. Maintaining the very latest information on the status of these working drafts was a major part of the ongoing literature research.

### Historical Research

The history of United States Marines embarked aboard naval vessels goes back to the very founding of our nation's Navy in 1775, and is well detailed in both the Millett and the Little and Brown narrative histories of the United States Marine Corps. In 1948, embarked Marines were for the first time forward deployed with an eye towards maintaining a permanent forward presence as a force in readiness. It was not until April of 1987 that the first concept paper detailing the likely missions for the MEU (SOC) was published by FMFLANT. That document articulated the Marine Corps role on the special operations stage, as dictated in 1983 by then Secretary of Defense Weinberger. I was indeed fortunate to have been able to acquire a copy of this historic document from the SOC staff planners at Quantico, Virginia. Another valuable tool which benefitted this study were the after action reports located in the Joint Universal Lessons Learned System (JULLS), and the Marine Corps Lessons Learned System (MCLLS).

### Periodicals

Because this is such a new issue, and given the limited amount of time the Marine Corps has been involved in this program, it was apparent from the start that the best source of current information would rest with periodicals. This study sought to acquire background information from the pages of well respected professional military journals such as: The Marine Corps Gazette, Infantry Magazine, Parameters, U.S. Naval Institute's Proceedings, The Amphibious Warfare Review, and The Navy War College Review. There was no shortage of articles detailing the scope and benefits of the MEU (SOC) program.

Many of these articles provided the latest general information which was of great use in the preparation of the background information, and in the discussion of the organization of the MEU (SOC). However, there were only a few articles which were focused enough to have any significant bearing on the thesis question itself.

### Interviews

During the Christmas break I was afforded the rare opportunity to sit and interview the primary action officers and doctrine writers at the Coalition and Special Warfare Division, Marine Corps Combat Development Command at Quantico, Virginia. These Officers, and in particular Major Larry Myers, USMC, provided me with:

- a. personal contacts at all three division Special Operations Training Groups (SOTG)s;
- b. a series of working documents in draft form that address precisely my thesis questions; and
- c. the personal opinions, observations, and insights of the three officers working closest to the issue. As a result of these meetings, additional data was gathered from a number of military and civilian officials who have been involved in the design and implementation of the MEU (SOC) program. In total, seven Marine Corps, two Army and one U.S. Navy special Warfare officer (SEAL) were personally interviewed. These officers ranged in rank from major to major general.

#### Opinion Survey

Another major portion of the research was conducted through the use of a questionnaire, a sample of which is located in Appendix B. This questionnaire asked the respondent to do three things: (1) assign each of the twenty-one missions a letter grade of A through D depending on how he felt about the validity of each mission, (2) rank in order, the ten most important missions that a MEU (SOC) should be able to accomplish. These could be conventional or special, (3) answer five "yes/no" questions and include a summary of his opinions on the status of the MEU (SOC) program. One-hundred and twenty-five surveys were distributed to a target audience of Marine Corps field grade

officers attending intermediate level schooling at: (1) the Marine Corps Command and Staff College, (2) the School of Advanced Warfighting, Quantico, Virginia, (3) the Naval War College, College of Command and Staff, Newport, Rhode Island, (4) the Air Force Command and Staff College, Maxwell Air Force Base Alabama, and (5) the US. Army Command and General Staff College, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. This information has proved to be most enlightening, and in many cases, surprising. Many of the respondents are provocative and audacious in their analysis, while others embrace the status quo.

One-hundred and twenty-five surveys were issued, and eighty-two returned by the cutoff date of 1 March 1994, for a return percentage of 65.6%. Of that number, fifty-five were infantry officers, seventeen were aviators, ten were either combat or combat service support officers, fifty-five had MEU (SOC) experience, and of that particular group forty-one were infantrymen. Each returned questionnaire offered added opinions and insights from which this study has based its recommendations and, ultimately, its conclusions. A copy of the questionnaire is located in Appendix B. The results of the survey are discussed in Chapter Four. The majority of the computer-generated charts representing the survey data are located in appendix C.

## Methodology

This study utilized a three-tiered approach in conducting the research. The first tier of the model called for the examination and isolation of the body of written work on MEU (SOC) capabilities. The second tier consisted of the collection and analyses of the questionnaires. The third tier consisted of conducting ten interviews with a variety of officers who are each considered subject matter experts within the special operations community. The three elements of research upon which my research model was built are only as good as the analysis that must tie together the data and opinions into a coherent and logical summation.

The results of the survey were entered on a Lotus 1-2-3 data base, and run through a series of tabbings and cross- tabbings in accordance with the research model in the SPSS main frame program. The responses for each mission were given the Mantel Haenszel test for linear association, the Fishers' expected frequency test, and the continuity correction likelihood test. These tests examined and confirmed the reliability of the data and identified possible variants. In addition to the guidance of the research chairman and committee, I employed three other students to assist me in assessing the data independently. These students assisted this study by reviewing each of the returned surveys and then discussing with me their perception of trends and the opinions of the respondents.

### The Four Criteria for Being a MEU (SOC) Mission

The final filter which this study used to examine each MEU (SOC) mission was the establishment of a series of criteria based upon four principles:

1. Is the mission one that stands alone, or is it a part of another mission? A stand alone mission incorporates any number of capabilities, but those capabilities are not unto themselves missions; rather they are components of a larger common mission. For example, flying a helicopter utilizing night vision goggles, at sea, and in bad weather is an amazing capability. Much training has gone into the development of this capability by the helicopter crew, but it is not unto itself a mission. However, when those helicopters are loaded with Marines and headed towards an objective to be raided, attacked, or rescued, then it is a mission. How many of the twenty-one MEU (SOC) missions are merely enhanced capabilities that are mis-labeled as missions?

2. Is this a unique mission that only MEU (SOC) forces train for, or does every conventional battalion in the Marine Corps train for the same mission?

3. Are these missions distinctly maritime operations, capable of being executed primarily from naval platforms? This is, after all, the essence of, and the raison d'etre, of the MEU (SOC): maritime forward presence. This one of the unique qualities and capabilities of the MEU (SOC) that cannot be easily or adequately duplicated by the forces of USSOCOM.

4. Does the preparation and execution of this mission require highly specialized training, gear and equipment not ordinarily utilized by other U.S. Marine Corps Forces?

#### Individual Mission Examination

Each mission is examined and analyzed in Chapter Four. This time consuming and laborious process was more beneficial than reviewing only some of them, or reviewing them in groups. By dissecting each of the twenty-one MEU (SOC) missions, and running them through the survey, interview and criteria filters, a formal assessment could be made of the relative merits and weaknesses of each. There are some cases where the survey data points in a certain direction and the study's conclusions do not concur. While these cases are rare, they result from the fact that after considerable review and reflection, the author has placed more credence in the interviews, literature, or reader's comments. These conclusions are harder to quantify, and will be addressed specifically.

Endnote

<sup>1</sup>U.S. Marine Corps, "The Operational Concept For Marine Amphibious Units Being Special Operations Capable" (Norfolk, Virginia: Fleet Marine Force Atlantic, 1987) 1.

## CHAPTER 3

### THE MARINE EXPEDITIONARY UNIT (SPECIAL OPERATIONS CAPABLE)

The United States Marine Corps has always been highly dependent on the United States Navy for its existence, but those roles have recently been drastically reversed. Never before has the Navy been so dependent on, or so openly enthusiastic about, amphibious operations. During the Cold War amphibious warfare was just one of several important functions that the U.S. Navy was tasked to train, organize, and equip its forces to conduct under the charter of Department of Defense Directive 5100.1.<sup>1</sup> This directive details the roles and functions of each of the armed forces.

With the publication of the new maritime strategy . . . From the Sea in 1992, the Navy is placing a much greater emphasis on littoral (coastal) warfare. This publication details four key benefits associated with the introduction of Naval Expeditionary Forces (NEF) into a theater: (1) the ability to respond quickly to most future flash points because Navy/Marine forces are already forward deployed in theater, (2) the NEF is structured to quickly build combat power in the area of operations, providing a full range of capabilities provided by the organic sea-air-land forces of the NEF, (3) the NEF has the ability to remain on station for a lengthy period of time while sustaining itself, and (4) the NEF is

unobtrusive in that there is no need for overflight, basing, or landing rights in another nation. The NEF has a freedom of action guaranteed by the international adherence to the freedom of the seas resolution.<sup>2</sup>

This change in focus is a direct result of the collapse of the Soviet Union and the disintegration of the once formidable Soviet Navy. With the absence of any serious challenge for blue water supremacy, the United States Navy has turned its attention to being able to quickly respond to a host of potential international flash points.<sup>3</sup> The fundamental concepts of this new strategy details how the United States will use its command of the seas to operate forward as a flexible response force. This strategy seeks to arrive quickly at a trouble spot with an enabling force while massing larger forces as required for follow-on operations. These enabling forces can establish control over the littoral battlespace by controlling port facilities and airheads for the rapid introduction and buildup of heavier follow-on forces if necessary.<sup>4</sup>

### A History Of Sea Service

The Marine Corps has a tradition of assault from the sea. From the very beginning of American naval history, the United States Navy has sailed with embarked Marines. This tradition evolved from the English Royal Marines, who in 1644 formed two Regiments of Marines to sail with the fleet, as soldiers, under the direct control of the High Admiralty.<sup>5</sup> During the American Revolution, American leaders realized they would end up fighting a naval as well as a land

war, and called for the raising of two battalions of Marines.<sup>6</sup> From these humble beginnings, and through every conflict in our nations history, United States Marines have continued to serve on ships in service to our nation.

It was under former Commandant Major General John Lejeune that the Marine Corps evolved from a small and often largely ceremonial force, to a force capable of conducting large-scale offensive amphibious assaults. Visionaries like Lieutenant Colonel Earl Ellis were allowed, and in fact directed, to look towards the future and write a doctrine from which the Marine Corps could become capable of conducting large scale offensive amphibious operations. The great success enjoyed by the Marine Corps and the Army in conducting large-scale amphibious operations during World War II validated the extraordinary efforts of these men.<sup>7</sup>

Following World War II, the National Security Act of 1947 codified into law the strength, roles and functions of the United States Marine Corps. This act required that the Marine Corps be the lead developer, trainer, and practitioner of the art and doctrine of amphibious warfare.<sup>8</sup> In 1948, in addition to positioning Marine Corps units afloat in the Mediterranean Sea, the Marine Corps began, for the first time, to deploy embarked Marines to the western Pacific as a hedge against the spreading regional instability caused by the advent of the cold war. This forward deployment concept required flexibility and a new method of organizing and configuring combat units.<sup>9</sup>

## The Marine Air Ground Task Force (MAGTF) Concept

Each MAGTF is task organized and comprised of Marine ground combat, aviation combat, and combat service support elements, under a single command structured to accomplish a specific mission. The Marine Air-Ground Task Force provides the regional CINC or JTF commander unparalleled flexibility and versatility, by delivering a self-sustained combined arms task force.<sup>10</sup> These forces can loiter offshore near potential trouble spots as a show of force, and through the rapid staff planning sequence be ready to execute combat operations within six hours of receiving an alert order. There are three types of standard Marine Air-Ground Task Forces which can be task organized and tailored to suit any mission. They are the Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU), the Marine Expeditionary Brigade (MEB) (also now being called the MEF-forward), and the Marine Expeditionary Force (MEF). Additionally, there is the ability to compose a Special MAGTF (SPMAGTF), as was done in 1988 in order to provide safe escort to the re-flagged Kuwait oil tankers in the Persian Gulf. The Department of the Navy White Letter ". . . From the Sea" articulates the vision of MAGTFs participating as part of naval expeditionary forces (NEFs) operating in a forward deployed area.<sup>11</sup>

Marine Corps Order 3120.8A, The Policy for the Organization of Fleet Marine Force Units for Combat, details three combat capabilities required of all Marine Air Ground Task Forces (MAGTFs) :

1. The capability to conduct operational maneuver from the sea on short notice via air or surface means against distant inland targets:
  - a. Under adverse weather conditions.
  - b. From over the horizon.
  - c. In an emission controlled (EMCOM) environment.
2. The capability to locate and fix the enemy, to include finding and identifying these forces, maintaining surveillance once located, and assessing their capabilities and intentions.
3. The capability to engage, destroy, or capture the enemy in a rural or urban setting.<sup>12</sup>

#### The Composition of a MAGTF

There are four distinct elements common to every size of Marine Air-Ground Task Force:

1. Command Element (CE) of the MAGTF headquarters. A MEU is normally commanded by a colonel. A MEB or (MEF-FORWARD) is normally commanded by a brigadier general, and a MEF is normally commanded by a lieutenant general. The Special MAGTF will be commanded by an officer of rank commensurate with the size of the force and scope of the mission.
2. Aviation Combat Element (ACE). The MAGTF element that is task organized to provide all or a portion of the functions of Marine Corps aviation in varying degrees based on the tactical situation and the MAGTF mission and

size. These functions are air reconnaissance, anti air warfare, assault support, offensive air support, electronic warfare, and control of aircraft and missiles.

3. Ground Combat Element (GCE). The MAGTF element that is task organized to conduct ground operations. The GCE is constructed around an infantry unit and varies in size from a reinforced infantry battalion to one or more reinforced Marine division(s). The ground combat element also includes appropriate combat support and combat service support units.

4. Combat Service Support Element (CSSE). The MAGTF element that is task-organized to provide the full range of combat service support necessary to accomplish the MAGTF mission.<sup>13</sup>

### MAGTF ORGANIZATION

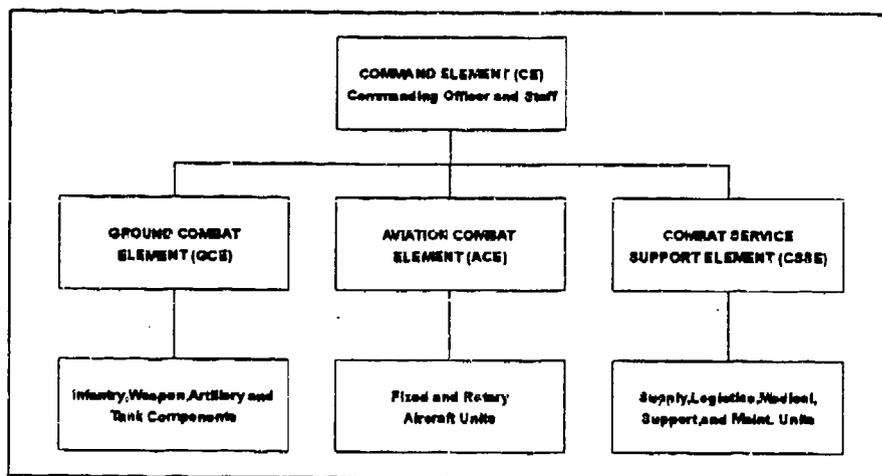


Figure 1.

## The Marine Expeditionary Unit Concept

A MEU is the smallest of the three types of traditional MAGTFs.

According to Marine Corps Order 3120.8a, The Policy for the Organization of Fleet Marine Forces for Combat, the basic mission of the MEU is to plan for and conduct those conventional and maritime operations assigned by a Theater CINC, a Fleet CINC, or a Joint Task Force Commander.<sup>14</sup> While there may still be an occasion to form a MEU that is not special operations capable, today all MEUs scheduled for regular overseas deployments train to become Special Operations Capable qualified. There is no major difference in the notional task organization between a MEU and a MEU (SOC). Forward deployed MEU (SOC)s are sea-based, expeditionary forces of combined arms that are task-organized, equipped and trained to conduct forward presence and crisis response missions while operating in the littoral areas of the world.<sup>15</sup> The conventional missions assigned to each MEU are :

1. To be able to perform the broad spectrum of amphibious operations from a demonstration to an amphibious assault, and remain sustainable for a period of no less than 15 days.
2. Act as an enabling force for follow-on Marine, joint, or combined forces.
3. Conduct amphibious operations in accordance with, and in support of, national or allied war plans as may be directed by the National Command Authorities.

4. Conduct operations ashore in support of national or allied objectives.
5. Perform contingency requirements in support of a unified command.<sup>16</sup>

### Organization of the MEU (SOC)

As is the case for any MAGTF, the MEU (SOC) is task-organized and comprised of four elements: Command element (CE), Air combat element (ACE), Ground combat element (GCE), Combat Service Support Element (CSSE). Figure 1 illustrates the notional task organization of a MEU (SOC)

### MEU(SOC) TASK ORGANIZATION

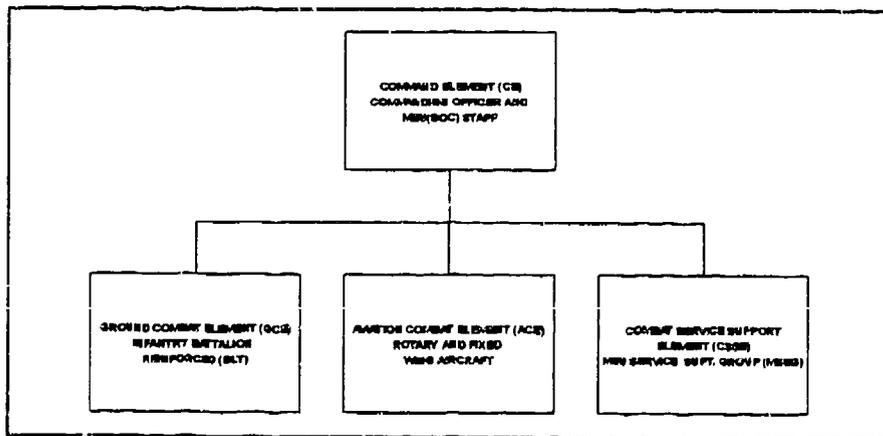


Figure 2.

The Command Element: The MEU (SOC) is commanded by a colonel, and supported by a staff capable of carrying command and control of MEU

(SOC) operations ashore. Additionally, this staff is well designed to support the theater CINC in joint or combined operations.

**The Ground Combat Element (GCE):** The GCE is built around an infantry battalion consisting of three rifle and one weapons companies. The battalion is augmented with a battery of artillery, a company of light armored vehicles (LAV) from the light armor infantry battalion (LAI). Also attached to the infantry battalion are platoon sized units of combat engineers, reconnaissance Marines, trucks, amphibious tractors (AMTRACS), and when the situation dictates, tanks. When all of these units have married up with the infantry battalion, it is then referred to as a Battalion Landing Team (BLT). In short, in a MEB or MEF there would be many BLTs comprising the GCE. In a MEU, the BLT is the GCE. The BLT/ GCE is commanded by the infantry battalion commander, who is usually a Lieutenant Colonel.

**The Air Combat Element (ACE):** The Ace of the MEU (SOC) is traditionally a reinforced medium helicopter squadron, reinforced with heavy, attack, and light helicopters. The ACE is commanded by the medium helicopter squadron commander who is usually a Lieutenant Colonel. In theater AV-8B Harrier attack jets are also assigned to the MEU (SOC), and will spend some time embarked on the ships during the six month MEU (SOC) deployment. When not embarked with the MEU (SOC), these jets are on standby, ready to join the MEU (SOC) within six hours. Additionally, KC-130 refuelers for fixed and rotary wing assets, and air-defense augmentation is available in theater.

The Combat Service Support Element (CSSE): The MEU Service Support Group (MSSG) is the CSSE of the MEU (SOC). It is commanded by a Lieutenant Colonel and responsible to the MEU (SOC) commander for the sustainment of the force. This command carries in it a myriad of specialists all designed to service the MEU (SOC), and keep it fully operational and capable of carrying out its assigned missions.

#### A Comparison Of Regular and Special Operations Capable Infantry Battalions.

There are currently twenty-four infantry battalions within the active Marine Corps. Of that number, exactly half are in the process of preparing for duty as MEU (SOC) battalions. The life cycle for a MEU (SOC) battalion is six months on deployment, followed by eighteen months in preparation for the next cruise. The twelve battalions not training for the MEU (SOC) mission are still training within the standard twenty-four month cycle. Instead of deploying on ship for six months, they are flown to Okinawa, Japan, where they are assigned to the Third Marine Division as part of III MEF. The conventional battalions will remain in the Western Pacific (WESTPAC) for six months before returning home. In this capacity these units are acting as a forward deployed presence as part of the Unit Deployment Program (UDP). From their home base in Okinawa, these battalions will travel throughout the region conducting training exercises like Team Spirit in Korea, and Cobra Gold in Thailand.

The training and evaluation received by both special and conventional battalions is identical when preparing for conventional skills, and missions. The difference occurs when the MEU (SOC) battalions prepare for their special operations missions. A considerable amount of time, money and resources, over what is spent on the UDP battalions, are spent preparing the MEU (SOC) battalions for their deployment.

The Marine Corps has a history of distrust and skepticism for any unit within the Marine Corps that considers itself special. There have been cries of elitism heard within the Marine Corps from Marines, not serving in MEU (SOC) units, who resent the extra attention and money spent on the MEU (SOC) program. An historical example of this type of institutional suspicion was caused by the formation of the Marine Raider battalions of World War II. Although these units were comprised of hand screened Marines organized under a system similar to that of the British Royal Marine Commandos, their existence was shortlived. These Raider battalions saw considerable action in the early portion of the war, and were moderately successful. However it was not the Japanese who caused their demise, but rather their fellow Marines who eventually caused the Raiders to be disbanded. The Marine Corps considers itself an elite organization and many Marines, then and now, feel there is no room for an elite within an elite.<sup>17</sup>

An indisputable benefit of the intense MEU (SOC) training program is the introduction of new ideas, training programs and standards. These new and

broadened opportunities for training can only serve to strengthen the entire institution. An often overlooked side benefit of the MEU (SOC) program occurs after a Marine has left the MEU (SOC) unit and taken his new skills, ideas, and standards with him to his new unit. This creates a cross pollination of fresh ideas and a distribution of highly skilled and trained Marines around the entire Marine Corps. Former MEU (SOC) Marines who arrive in UDP battalions pass on many of the learned skills to their fellow Marines. While there is no difference in the quality of Marines assigned to these two types of infantry battalions, a former MEU (SOC) Marine has been exposed to, and trained for, a wide variety of scenarios that his UDP counterpart has not. Selection for these battalions is normally random, although it is fair to say that a vast majority of Marines would prefer to be assigned to a MEU (SOC) battalion if given the choice. The reason is for the enhanced training, travel opportunities, and the chance to be in a unit trained to be the first on the scene of any international crisis. These factors contribute significantly to the units self-esteem and possibly even to feelings of superiority. Are not these the qualities every commander strives to imbue into his own force?

#### Training The MEU (SOC) Battalion

In order to be successfully designated as a special operations capable MEU by Headquarters Marine Corps, the MEU must pass a rigorous examination. This will occur roughly thirty days before the scheduled

deployment, and serves to examine the MEU's ability to successfully perform each of the assigned conventional and special operations capable missions. To prepare for these examinations, each MEU undergoes an arduous twenty-six week pre-deployment training cycle. The training syllabus is focused on performance related and standardized mission-essential task lists. This training plan follows an incremental and progressive building block approach to training. The training program begins with the training of the small unit leaders. No phase of training is more important to the success of the MEU (SOC) program than the training of the non-commissioned officers and junior officers. In an environment of centralized planning and decentralized execution, the process of instilling into each leader the tactical expertise he will need to accomplish his mission, coupled with the reasoning and discretionary skills needed to operate in the absence of orders, is critical.

Once the small unit leaders are trained and assigned, the process of focusing on individual skills and small unit training begins in earnest. All of the training is done to pre-established standards, and each individual and unit is monitored and evaluated along the way.

This twenty-six week training cycle is not just for the members of the BLT. The ACE, and the MSSG are also preparing for the SOC evaluations, and the forthcoming deployment. The MEU staff is busily coordinating training between the elements of the MEU, and ensuring that the various components are working together as often as the operational tempo will allow.

The training program also necessitates that the MEU staff begin to look externally by integrating with the Navy's Amphibious Squadron (PHIBRON) staff. These two staffs will be co-located and dependent upon each other throughout the six month deployment. In addition, the MEU staff must become acquainted with and understand the capabilities, complexities, and limitations associated with the Carrier Battle Groups. In addition, a MEU (SOC) may know ahead of time that it will be working in a joint or combined environment, and will need to prepare for specific future operations.

The keys to a successful training cycle for a MEU are: early personnel stabilization, the sharpening of individual and unit skills through enhanced and repetitive training, an extensive training package designed to train the trainers, and the continuous evaluations of all units in the MEU. This methodology allows the MEU (SOC) to prepare for and execute a full range of capabilities. The training program builds on base line capabilities, culminating in a certification exercise called the Special Operations Capable Exercise (SOCEX). This process evaluates the MEU's warfighting, general purpose expeditionary skills, and maritime special operations capabilities.

Prior to entering into the final phase of training, where the focus is almost exclusively the special operations capable missions, the MEU units must first pass their conventional skill-based Marine Corps Combat Readiness Evaluation System (MCCRES) tests. These are the same tests that each conventional unit must pass before going overseas on its six month

deployments. The MCCRES standards measure each unit in a series of exercises which evaluate all aspects of how a unit performs under combat-like conditions. For an infantry battalion this will range from the individual soldiering skills of the squads to the staff coordination during a battalion night attack.<sup>18</sup>

### Certification Process

This process is continuous in nature and encompasses training events/evaluations throughout the entire predeployment training program. Only MEUs which have undergone the SOC training program, and have clearly demonstrated proficiency in each of the twenty-one special operations skills and capabilities contained in Marine Corps Order 3120.8A, and have successfully completed the SOCEX shall be certified and designated as MEU (SOC). All MEU (SOC) designated units shall be capable of concurrently executing all warfighting and general purpose expeditionary capabilities required of all MAGTFs.<sup>19</sup> The SOCEX is the final exam for the MEU in each of the twenty-one missions. The MEU will be tested for proficiency in all missions, e.s.: NEO, TRAP, GOPLAT, Raids, and IHR. These missions must be able to be performed at night, under (EMCON) conditions, and each mission will be retested until the unit meets the prescribed standard.<sup>20</sup> In addition to the previously listed twenty-one special operations missions, each MEU (SOC) is evaluated for proficiency in the six warfighting and general purpose expeditionary or conventional capabilities:

1. Amphibious Operations. Paramount in importance to the MEU (SOC)'s forward presence and crisis response mission is the requirement to conduct the full range of conventional amphibious operations. These operations could, if necessary, call for the MEU (SOC) to act as an enabling force which would allow the introduction of follow-on forces (either MEF and/or joint/combined forces). Former Marine Commandant, General Robert Barrows was once asked by a young officer, who had recently trained for several types of missions in several types of climates, "How can we become experts in any type of warfare when we are constantly training in so many?" Commandant Barrows replied that the Marine Corps must be the jack-of-all trades, and the master of one: amphibious operations. And so it is here that we must keep our greatest focus and expertise.

2. Command, Control, Computers and Intelligence (C4I). The integration of communications, computers and intelligence technologies and procedures into a functional, cohesive system that supports the commander. C4I permits entry into national, theater, joint and combined systems to support all-source intelligence fusion, and to permit MEU rapid planning decision, dissemination and execution.

3. Joint/Combined Force Interoperability. MAGTFs will normally be employed in conjunction with Joint or Combined Task Force (J/CTF) operations. Force interoperability is a shared responsibility of the J/CTF commander and subordinate elements. The MEU (SOC)'s unique crisis response requirements

necessitate increased attention to interoperability issues relative to Special Operations Forces (SOF) within the other services. MEU (SOC) forces need to be able to communicate with all of the CINC's assets with whom we may be tasked to work. In today's joint climate, all Marine Corps forces must be prepared to work with and for theater CINC's, JTF commanders, and perhaps even allied (combined) forces.

4. Battle Area Ingress/Egress. The capability to enter and exit a battle area at night under adverse weather conditions, from over the horizon in EMCON, by both surface and air platform

5. Locate and Fix the Enemy. The capability to locate and fix the enemy, detecting and then identifying enemy forces, maintaining surveillance on the enemy, assessing its capabilities and intentions, and reporting these findings to higher headquarters.

6. Rapid Staff Planning. The capability to rapidly plan and be prepared to commence execution of operation within six hours of receipt of the warning order. Commencement of operations is signified by the launch of forces by air and/or surface means. This may range from the insertion of reconnaissance and surveillance assets in support of the mission to the actual launch of an assault force.

### Current MEU (SOC) Dispositions

Today, there are seven MEU (SOC) headquarters organizations in active service, three in California and North Carolina, and one in Okinawa, Japan. Based out of Camp Pendleton, California are, the 11th, 13th and 15th MEUs. These MEUs are comprised from units in I MEF. Based out of Camp Lejeune, North Carolina, are the 22nd, 24th, and the 26th MEU (SOC)s. These MEU (SOC)s are comprised of units from II MEF. There is normally one MEU (SOC) forward deployed in the Mediterranean Sea region, the Western Pacific region, and the Indian Ocean/ Persian Gulf region at all times.

The infantry battalion of the Okinawa-based 31st MEU is always a member of the Fifth Marine Regiment of I MEF. Unlike any of the other MEU (SOC) units, this battalion is flown to Okinawa to begin their six-month rotation. Once arrived in Okinawa, the infantry battalion links up with the other elements of the MEU, and the Amphibious Ready Group (ARG) to begin training for the SOCEX. Currently the BLT will undergo the first three months of the training syllabus in California, and the last three months in Okinawa before taking the SOCEX certification examinations. This system allows the MEU, if successful in the SOCEX, to be a certified MEU (SOC) unit for only three months before returning to California. This particular MEU is a hybrid between the UDP and MEU (SOC) program. In reality, this MEU will only be ready to respond as a MEU (SOC) qualified battalion fifty percent of the time. However, this unit has

passed its MCCRES before flying to Okinawa, and possesses the full range of conventional skills.

There is no prescribed standard load for a MEU (SOC). The MEU (SOC) commander will outfit his unit based on probable mission employment, and the shipboard space available. Some commanders feel that they will need tanks; others are willing to give up some sustainability for more artillery or engineer equipment. These are extremely difficult and potentially dangerous trade-offs being made by the MEU (SOC) commanders. This problem exists because of the early retirement of the Landing Ship Tanks (LSTs), and the general reduction of the amphibious fleet. The retirement of the LST fleet meant that fifteen dedicated amphibious ships, with irreplaceable and invaluable cargo spaces, were lost to the Marine Corps. Traditionally each MEU (SOC) had an LST in the ARG. The LST is a flat bottom ship which has an unduplicated beaching capability, and capable of carrying a reinforced rifle company and their accompanying AMTRACKS.<sup>21</sup>

The area where most commanders feel they can accept being shortchanged today is sustainability. Traditionally, a MEU (SOC) sails with either a four or five ship Amphibious Ready Group (ARG), and carries with it 15 days of sustainability. There have been some recent experiments conducted where the ARG is reduced to three ships augmented by a rifle company and a small detachment of helicopters aboard an Aircraft Carrier. This carrier is

normally in close proximity to the ARG, and, in theory, can quickly transfer the Marines back aboard ship if needed.

Originally Marines were placed on carriers as an experiment in adaptive force packaging. These small Marine detachments were called Special MAGTFs (SPMAGTF). They were supposed to be small, but capable, multi-mission forces, able to conduct limited objective attacks, small level amphibious raids, and if trained sufficiently, Maritime Interdiction Operations, and Gas and Oil Platform Takedowns. The preliminary reports indicate that the experiments will probably not be repeated for two reasons. First, by removing a rifle company from the MEU (SOC) commander, one third of his combat and maneuver capabilities are lost, as well as the special operations capabilities which that company had trained for. Since no one unit could be proficient in more than a few of the MEU (SOC) twenty-one special operations missions, responsibility for the missions is spread across all the units in the MEU (SOC). If the MEU (SOC) NEO company is not with the ARG, but aboard an aircraft carrier, and the MEU (SOC) is called upon to execute a NEO mission within six hours, there will be some extraordinary coordination problems. This arrangement creates severe organizational command and control problems when planning operations. Another problem encountered was the difficulty in rapidly cross-decking all Marines and their gear from one platform to another while underway.

A real life example of the problems associated with the adaptive force packaging concept occurred on October 18 1993, with the 22nd MEU (SOC)

under the command of Colonel Jan Huly. Instead of leaving Norfolk, Virginia with the traditional five ship ARG, the 22nd MEU (SOC) sailed with only three ships, and was ordered to transfer two-hundred and fifty Marines and four CH-46 helicopters to the aircraft carrier USS America. What resulted was that when the 22nd MEU (SOC) was called to reinforce the U.S. forces already in Somalia after the ill-fated Mogadishu raid, Colonel Huly did not have any of the Landing Craft Air Cushion (LCACs) that he needed. Additionally he had left half of his artillery at home, and had far fewer vehicles and supplies than needed to be effective.<sup>22</sup> Newly selected Chief of Naval Operations, Admiral Michael Boorda has gone on record as saying that while the adaptive force packaging concept was a useful experiment, the overall concept was flawed. This is good news for the Marine Corps.<sup>23</sup>

### Conclusions

The MEU (SOC) is a superbly trained and tactically organized MAGTF designed to provide the CINC or JTF commander with a multitude of options. Whether the crisis situation dictates the use of special or conventional capabilities, the MEU (SOC) is a force in readiness prepared to carry out a wide variety of missions. Whether acting alone or as an enabling force for follow-on forces, the MEU (SOC) comes equipped with organic air support, fire support, and built in sustainability all designed to be employed within six hours notice. MEU (SOC) units are on duty around the world, twenty-four hours a day, every

day of the year. These forces epitomize American forward presence and are an essential link in the national security strategy of this nation.

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup>Armed Forces Staff College, Pub 1: The Joint Staff Officers Guide 1993, Washington D.C. : GPO, 1993) 1-13. ( Cited hereafter as AFSC1.)

<sup>2</sup>U.S. Department of the Navy, . . . From The Sea, Preparing the Naval Service for the 21st Century, ( Washington D.C.: Department of the Navy, 1992) 3.

<sup>3</sup>United States Navy, U.S. Navy White Letter: From The Sea, (Washington D.C. : GPO, 1993), 4.

<sup>4</sup>U.S. Marine Corps, Marine Corps Capabilities Plan (MCP) Volume 1, (Washington D.C. : Department of the Navy , 1992), 3. (Cited hereafter as MCP.)

<sup>5</sup>Allan R. Millett, Semper Fidelis (New York ,NY: MacMillan Books, 1980), 3.

<sup>6</sup>*Ibid.*, 7.

<sup>7</sup>Victor H. Krulak, First To Fight : An Inside View of the United States Marine Corps. ( Annapolis: U.S. Naval Institute Press, 1984), 82.

<sup>8</sup>AFSC1, (1993), 1-15.

<sup>9</sup>Millett, 466.

<sup>10</sup>MCP, (1992), 7.

<sup>11</sup>U.S. Marine Corps, Headquarters Marine Corps, Marine Corps Order 3120.8A: Policy For The Organization Of Fleet Marine Forces For Combat (Washington D.C.: Department of the Navy, 1992), 2.

<sup>12</sup>MCO 3120.8A (1992), 5.

<sup>13</sup>*Ibid*, 4.

<sup>14</sup>US. Marine Corps," Marine Corps Order 3120.XX," Unpublished Draft, (Department of the Navy: Washington D.C., July 1993), 2.

<sup>15</sup>MCO 3120.XX, Draft, ( 1993), 2.

<sup>16</sup>MCO 3120.8A, (1992), 5.

<sup>17</sup>J. Robert Moskin, The U.S. Marine Corps Story, ( Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1992), 276.

<sup>18</sup>MCO 3120.8A, (1992) 5.

<sup>19</sup>U.S. Marine Corps, "Marine Corps Order 3120.AA," Draft, (Washington D.C.: Department of the Navy, 1993) 6.

<sup>20</sup>*ibid.*

<sup>21</sup>"Amphibious Forces in Transition," The Marine Corps Gazette 12 (December 1993): 4. [Unsigned journal article]

<sup>22</sup>Bruce B. Auster, "Diplomacy's Gunboat," U.S. News and World Report 8, (28 February 1994): 44.

<sup>23</sup>Patrick Pexton, "Admiral Boorda Goes To Washington : It Likes Him," Navy Times, 29 (25 April, 1994): 6.

## CHAPTER 4

### ANALYSIS

Introduction. Each mission will be examined in order, from mission one through mission twenty-one. Included in the discussion of each mission will be the results of the survey, the results of the interviews, an occasional explanatory note and the most current information available regarding each mission. This will include an examination of several of the missions that have been recently executed by MEU (SOC) forces. While each mission will be discussed, there will be no conclusions drawn in this chapter. All conclusions and recommendations will be provided in Chapter Five.

Included at the end of the discussion of each mission is a graph which depicts the results of the opinion survey. This graph reflects the opinion of all eighty-two respondents. Of these, fifty-five were infantry officers, seventeen were aviators, and ten were either combat service or combat service support officers. Fifty-five of the eighty-two respondents were officers who had served previously in a MEU (SOC) unit and of that fifty-five, forty-two were infantrymen. The results of the survey were analyzed and tabulated into a series of graphs depicting not only the opinion of the total survey population, but also the opinion

results of each of the five survey sub-groups. The survey is enclosed as Appendix B, and the graphs and figures are enclosed as Appendix C.

Each respondent was asked to grade each mission by assigning it a letter grade of A, B, C, or D. The assignment of an "A" indicated that the respondent thought the mission was an appropriate MEU (SOC) mission. The assignment of a "B" indicated that the respondent felt the mission was not inherently special, but still necessary for any MAGTF, to include the MEU (SOC), to be able to accomplish. The assignment of a "C" indicated that the respondent felt this mission belonged to USSOCOM and not the Marine Corps. Assignment of a "D" indicated that the respondent felt the mission was too costly in terms of money, time and resources for the MEU (SOC) to conduct. Additionally, the survey asked the respondent to answer five "yes/no" questions, and to list in order of importance the top ten missions a MEU (SOC) unit should be able to perform. These top ten missions could be either conventional or "special" missions which the respondent felt were critical to the success of the MEU (SOC). The overall ranking of each mission is given at the end of the discussion for that particular mission, and the results of the five questions are listed at the end of this chapter.

A point that may need clarification before reviewing the analysis of each mission is that many of the missions selected by the majority of respondents to be included in the top ten poll, were also found by the respondents to be not exclusively MEU (SOC) or "special" missions. The respondents were not asked

to pick what they considered to be the top ten "special" missions, but rather the top ten most important missions for a forward deployed MEU (SOC) to be able to accomplish. There are several instances where after the majority of respondents found a mission to be conventional, they selected it as one of the top ten overall missions most important to the MEU (SOC). This is not an aberration, and reflects the fact that the MEU (SOC) is not a unit performing exclusively "special" missions. It is a unit that provides for the execution of a wide range of conventional and maritime special operations in support of the national security and military strategies of our nation.

The results of the survey continue to point out what appears to be a problem of education and perception amongst nearly one-quarter of the respondents. Many of the comments returned with the surveys contained well-founded and rational arguments either in support of, or against the MEU (SOC) program. A rather disturbing and altogether unexpected finding was the large percentage of respondents who were so poorly informed about even the most basic tenets of the MEU (SOC) program. Several offered eloquent but completely erroneous editorials detailing how the Marine Corps is mortgaging its future as an effective combat organization in an attempt to duplicate the role of the Special Operating Forces of USSOCOM. This is not true now, and was not the reason for the establishment of the MEU (SOC) program. Marine Corps Order 3120.XX (draft) specifically states that "The Marine Corps does not possess special operations forces."<sup>1</sup> It goes on to state in a discussion of the

IHR mission that "Emphasis is on isolation, containment and reconnaissance of the objective while awaiting the arrival of national assets."<sup>2</sup> Perhaps most interesting was the fact that when respondents who had submitted surveys that saw the MEU (SOC) program in a negative light, were read the stated mission definitions and program objectives, most changed their opinions.

This points out several problems. Primarily, it indicates that many Marine Corps officers are forming their opinions without possessing all of the facts in either their support or condemnation of the program. Secondly, it also points out that the Marine Corps has not done as good a job as is necessary in educating its officer corps on what may be the single most important program in its inventory.

### Mission Analysis

Mission 1: Amphibious Raids. The amphibious raid provides the operational focus for the MEU (SOC). The cornerstone document of amphibious warfare, to which all services subscribe, is published under a variety of names. In the U.S. Army it is Field Manual 31-11; in the Marine Corps it is Landing Force Manual 01; the U.S. Navy publishes it as Naval Warfare Publication (NWP) 22(B); and the U.S. Air Force has this document published as Air Force Manual (AFM) 2-53. Different covers notwithstanding, the documents are identical, and each details the four basic types of amphibious operations, which are: (1) the

amphibious assault, (2) the amphibious withdrawal, (3) the amphibious demonstration, and (4) the amphibious raid.<sup>3</sup>

The amphibious raid is characterized by detailed and centralized planning, and decentralized execution. The planning for operations ashore is much the same as it would be for capturing an enemy position during the early stages of an amphibious assault, except for the planned withdrawal.<sup>4</sup> Historical examples of successful amphibious raids abound, ranging from the Revolutionary War raid on New Providence and the sacking of Fort Nassau in 1778, to the Makin Island raid led by Lt. Col Evans Carlson in August of 1942.<sup>5</sup> The Marine Corps did not consider the amphibious raid to be a special operations mission, accomplished by only "specialists" when it wrote the doctrine on amphibious operations in 1934 and published it as The Tentative Manual for Landing Operations. This document was revised and republished in 1940 as Fleet Training Publication Number 167, and details the same basic four missions as its successor, LFM 02, does today.

The survey results indicate a difference of opinion among the respondents as to whether or not this mission should be labeled either a special or conventional operation. Interestingly enough, while most of the military occupational specialty groups were split on the issue, those Marines with MEU (SOC) experience considered this to be a conventional capability. The interviews conducted expressed a trend of almost unanimous support for the

removal of this mission from rolls of the special operations missions, and for its inclusion as a baseline of performance for every infantry battalion.

The difference between the survey results and the interviews stem from two problems. First, the incorrect assumption exists that only units at sea can execute these missions, and since it is normally only the MEU (SOC) at sea, then they alone will handle this mission. This line of reasoning is flawed and dangerous because all infantry battalions are forward deployed on a regular basis. Each infantry battalion in the Marine Corps not involved in the MEU (SOC) program is part of the Unit Deployment Program (UDP). These units are on a twenty-four month rotation (eighteen for the third Marine Regiment stationed in Hawaii) of which the final six are spent forward deployed in Okinawa. Upon arrival in Okinawa as members of III MEF, the unit will be at its highest state of readiness, and able to respond to crises around the world. In the event of a crisis, these conventional units may deploy on ships or aircraft, and regardless of their platform or their means of insertion, they may be called upon to execute an amphibious raid. The second problem stems from the first. The Marine Corps has put so much effort into the fielding and evaluation of the MEU (SOC) battalions that we no longer evaluate the conventional battalions on their capability to conduct amphibious raids. That in itself may be the most important message that is erroneously being sent to the conventional battalions and the reason why so many Marine Corps field grade officers have lost sight of the amphibious raid as one of the most basic and viable missions within the

Marine Corps" inventory. There was universal acceptance among all respondents that the capability to perform this mission must be maintained by the MEU (SOC). The amphibious raid was ranked second in importance of the twenty-one MEU (SOC) missions by the respondents.

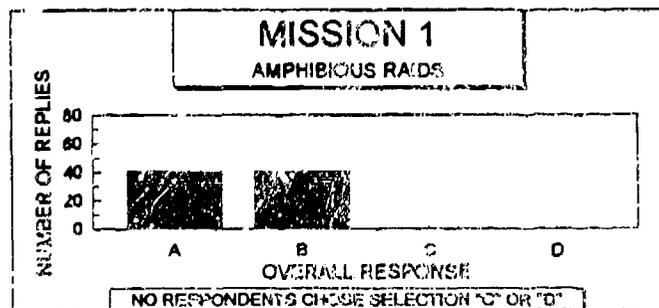


Figure 3.

Mission Two: Limited Objective Attacks. The most probable use of a MEU (SOC) for limited objective attacks would be in the conduct of a delaying action while awaiting a larger force to reinforce the MEU. This operation can be conducted with platoon to battalion-sized forces, in an economy of force, delaying action or spoiling attack role. This is also an operation in which a force under pressure trades space for time by slowing down the enemy momentum and inflicting maximum damage on the enemy without becoming decisively engaged.<sup>6</sup> As the MEU (SOC) is delaying, a smaller force could conduct a spoiling attack in an economy of force role. The successful execution of this

operation calls for detailed analysis of enemy strength and mobility, terrain, required delay time, sustainability, and friendly fire support available.<sup>7</sup>

The survey results indicate that an overwhelming majority of respondents feel that this mission is one that all Marine infantry battalions should be able to accomplish. If you accept the basic premise that the forward deployed MEU (SOC) must be able to fight outnumbered while awaiting reinforcements, then this mission is an important one. The interviews conducted were in agreement with the opinions reflected in the survey. Overall, this mission was selected as being the sixth most important for the MEU (SOC) to be able to perform even though it was not considered by the majority of respondents to be an exclusively MEU (SOC) mission.

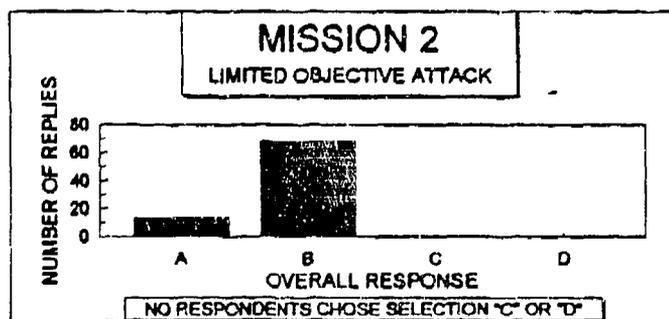


Figure 4.

Mission three: Non-Combatant Evacuation Operations (NEO). The NEO is the most frequently executed of all the MEU (SOC) missions. The capability to conduct Non-Combatant Evacuation Operations by evacuating and

protecting noncombatants, includes the capability to provide a security force, evacuation control center, recovery force, medical support, and transportation of evacuees. Recent examples of Marine Corps participation in NEOs include: Operation SHARP EDGE in Liberia in 1990-91, and Operation EASTERN EXIT in Mogadishu, Somalia, in January of 1991. Operation EASTERN EXIT was conducted by MEU (SOC) forces located in the Arabian Sea during Operation DESERT SHIELD. These Marines flew non-stop from the Persian Gulf to Mogadishu, Somalia in Marine Corps CH-53E helicopters, refueling in flight. As these forces arrived in Mogadishu, the ARG was steaming to join them in order to accommodate the more than three thousand American and international civilians who would eventually be evacuated. As a forward deployed force in an increasingly unstable world, there is a continued likelihood that this mission will continue to be popular.

A NEO is a politically sensitive operation where there will be a large degree of interaction with the Department of State, the Ambassador and his staff, and quite often the belligerents who are causing the instability. There are two distinct types of NEO's: permissive and non-permissive. A permissive NEO is characterized by some level of host-nation support, no armed opposition from any faction, ease of entry and exit into the nation, and a safe place to process and screen the evacuees. A non-permissive NEO means that one or more of the preceding criteria does not exist. It should be noted that a permissive NEO can digress into a non-permissive NEO instantly and this is where a large part of the

training for this mission is focused. In this environment, the establishment and enforcement of the rules of engagement (ROE) are critical to any chance for success. This operation is characterized by both centralized planning and execution, and requires an intense and realistic training workup prior to deployment. The NEO is an example of a MEU (SOC) mission where the CSSE of the MEU (SOC) play an extremely active and vital role. Normally, the infantry forces will provide the security while the CSSE Marines conduct the searches, processing, interviews, and coordinate the evacuation of the subjects.

The results of the survey found the NEO to be the top-ranked and most popular mission for a MEU (SOC) to be able to accomplish, yet there was sharp division in opinion as to whether this was a Special Operations, or conventional mission. The results may reflect the fact that our last two NEO's have been conducted by MEU (SOC) battalions. The erroneous assumption here is that, like the question of amphibious raids, there will always be a MEU (SOC) battalion available to conduct these types of missions. Fully one-third of the Marine Corps' combat power is forward deployed in Okinawa, in the western Pacific, and most of those battalions are not MEU (SOC). Over half of the respondents do not think it necessary for the conventional battalions to be able to perform this mission. The interviews conflicted with the survey, where 90% of all officers supported all conventional battalions training for this mission.

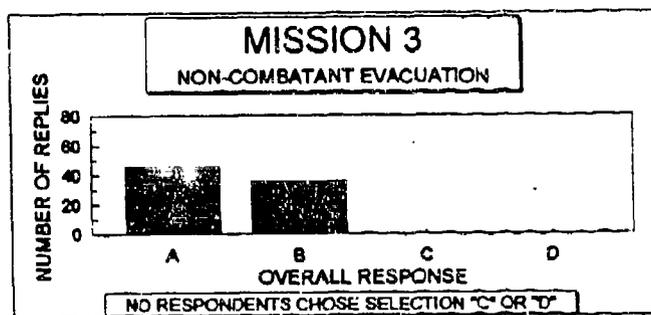


Figure 5.

Mission Four: Show of Force Operation. The initial stages of this type of operation involve the massing of U.S. Navy warships, to include both surface combatants, aircraft carriers and amphibious platforms off a potentially hostile shore. The next stage of development, if needed, would be the use of an amphibious demonstration. This could be conducted as a turn-away operation, or there could be an actual landing and a combined operation with friendly indigenous forces. A show of force, or demonstration operation, is one of the four types of amphibious operations as specified by LFM 01.

The results of the survey found that nearly 90% of the respondents support the elimination of this capability as a MEU (SOC) mission and the re-establishment of this mission as a conventional task. There was no general difference of opinion between those officers surveyed and those interviewed.

This mission/capability was chosen as the thirteenth most important for the MEU (SOC) to be able to accomplish.

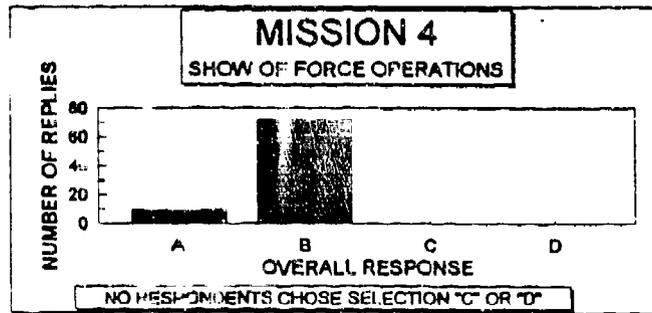


Figure 6.

Mission Five: Reinforcement Operations. In essence, this type of operation becomes a link-up operation. These types of operations are important to all Marine Corps ground units, and whether they are conducted by special or conventional capable forces does not matter. As an enabling force for follow-on elements, each MEU (SOC) must have the requisite skills needed to expertly perform this mission. Successful execution of this mission means being able to adeptly conduct a relief-in-place, and/or passage of lines. Some of the characteristics of this operation require the need to designate a common commander, to establish C4I compatibility with the other forces, and if at all possible, the exchanging of liaison officers. There is also a need for a common set of well-defined routes and graphics so as to avoid any chance of fratricide.

The results of the survey and the interviews point out very strongly that while reinforcement operations are a very important capability for any ground unit to possess, they are not inherently special. This mission/capability was ranked fourteenth of twenty-one overall in order of importance for the MEU (SOC) to be able to accomplish.

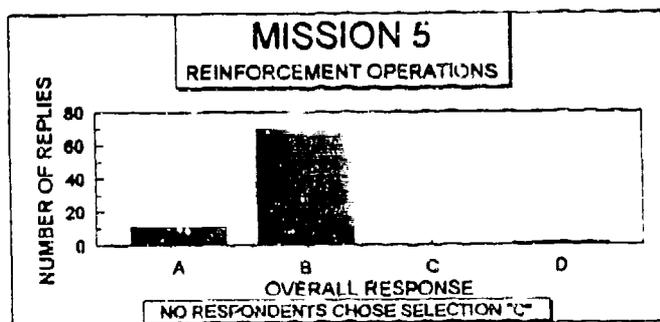


Figure 7.

Mission Six: Security Operations. This type of operation is historically one which any MAGTF could be required to perform. From its earliest days the Marine Corps has been tasked with providing security to naval bases and installations worldwide. Today the Marine Corps is still responsible for the guarding of the U.S. Navy's weapons and ordnance at naval weapons stations across the nation. The Marine Corps is also tasked by the state department with providing Marine Security Guard Detachments (MSG) at American embassies and consulates around the world.

A security operation is often one of the elements of a larger operation like a NEO, TRAP, or an amphibious raid. During the execution of virtually any

military operation, the requirement to maintain security is both a protective measure and force multiplier, and essential to success.

The results of the survey and interviews support this mission as one which every MAGTF in the Marine Corps needs to be able to accomplish. While the respondents did not consider it "special," it was ranked as the ninth most important for a MEU (SOC) to be able to perform. This high ranking is, in my opinion, based upon the fact that while security operations are not often regarded as a stand-alone mission, they are an extremely vital component of every other mission, and one which every Marine unit needs to be able to perform.

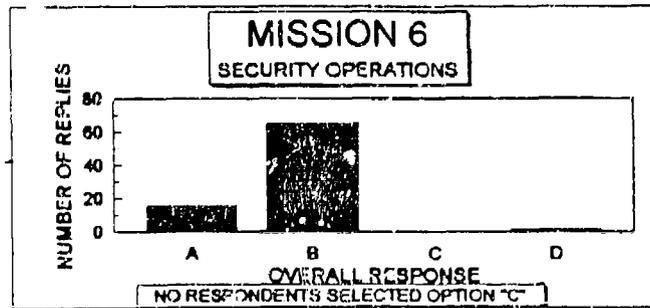


Figure 8.

Mission Seven: Mobile Training Teams. Each MEU (SOC) must have the capability to provide training and assistance to foreign military forces as permitted by U.S. law. One of the primary missions of the United States Army Special Operations Forces is Foreign Internal Defense (FID). The Army Special

Forces have an enormous and well-developed capability to provide MTTs worldwide in support of national military objectives. The Marine Corps does not seek to duplicate that capability. The Marine Corps MTT capability centers on working with nations who have special needs within their own Marine Corps, or in the application of amphibious doctrine for their army. Additionally, because the U.S. Marine Corps is so often conducting training exercises in other countries, it will often take some time to train the hosts on a variety of skills from small arms weapons training to high-level staff planning. While some of these low-level visitations and exchanges are technically MTTs, they are more realistically concerned with building goodwill, and are oftentimes an extension of military courtesy from the United States to the host nation.

The results of the survey and interviews indicate a wide variance of opinion. Although more than 50% of the respondents felt that this mission is not special, and should be able to be performed by all MAGTFs. More than 20% of the returned surveys indicate an undercurrent of opinion that the Marine Corps should not be involved in MTTs at all. This response may be as a result of Marine Corps participation with the department of defenses in providing MTTs for the war on drugs in Latin America, or it may stem from a feeling expressed by several respondents that these MTTs are a distinctly special forces mission best performed by the U.S. Army. One other respondent complained that his unit was routinely tasked with providing the best staff non-commissioned officers in the unit for this line of duty, resulting in a leadership shortfall.

While the Marine Corps is involved with the fielding of MTTs that travel around the world under the auspices of national agencies, that is not the focus for the MTTs of the MEU (SOC). These teams are focused on providing training and assistance to nations where the MEU (SOC) is working and training. This is not a new or novel concept, as the Marine Corps has been involved in the fielding of MTTs for over fifty years. There was a general lack of understanding concerning this mission at the MEU (SOC) level on the part of many respondents. This is oftentimes for the Marine Corps a mission of opportunity and courtesy, not a matter of direction and policy. This mission was deemed to be the nineteenth most important for the MEU (SOC) to be able to accomplish.

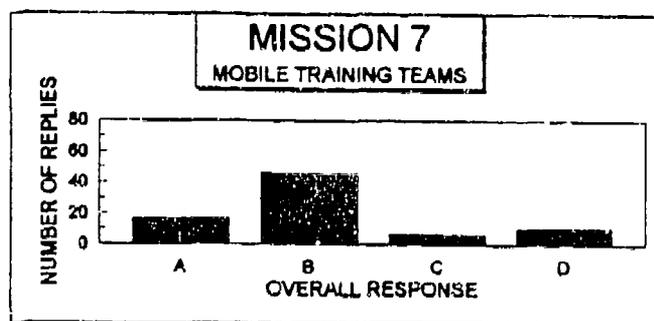


Figure 9.

Mission Eight: Civil Military Operations. The capability to conduct civil Military Operations for:

- a. Humanitarian/Civil Assistance. To provide services such as medical and dental care, minor construction repair to civilian facilities, temporary

assistance in the administration of local government, and prompt adjudication of foreign legal claims.

b. Disaster Relief. To provide humanitarian assistance and physical security to counter the devastation caused by man-made/natural disasters.

Also known now as Operations Other Than War (OOTW), these missions/capabilities are at the forefront of controversy, and a major item of debate within all of the armed services. A growing fear exists that training for these and other similar missions will negatively affect the readiness and warfighting capabilities of our forces. To underscore this point, a highly controversial article appeared in the winter edition of the 1992 Army War College Quarterly publication, Parameters, titled "The Origins Of The Military Coup of 2012" by Lt. Col Charles Dunlap, USAF. In this futuristic treatise, Lt. Col Dunlap details how after years of performing nothing but humanitarian and social functions, the armed forces are woefully unprepared for an Iranian invasion of the Gulf states in 2010, where the American force is trounced. This leads to a military coup in the United States during the year 2012. While highly outrageous in its implications, the article does call attention to the need to keep these OOTW missions in their proper perspective.

The Marine Corps has participated in several Humanitarian/Civil Military Operations (CMO) during this decade to include Operations: (1) FIERY VIGIL, Philippines, 1991, (2) PROVIDE COMFORT, Northern Iraq, 1991. (3) SEA ANGEL, Bangladesh 1991, (4) RESTORE HOPE, Somalia, 1992-93 and (5) The

Los Angeles Riots, 1992. These operations were accomplished by both special and conventional forces from all services.

The results of the survey and interviews indicate that most of the respondents felt that these types of operations are not special, and are essential for all MAGTFs to be able to accomplish. This mission was ranked as the seventh most critical for a MEU (SOC). In my opinion, the reason for the high ranking of this mission is because it is one which MEU (SOC) forces have been called upon in the past, and will most certainly be called upon in the future to perform.

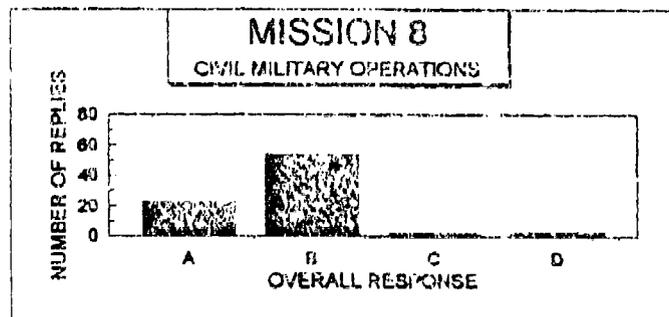


Figure 10.

Mission Nine: Tactical Deception Operations. The greatest military weapon available to any commander, short of overwhelming combat power, is one of the principles of war: surprise. History is replete with examples of smaller forces gaining great victories over larger ones through the prudent use of deception operations. Stonewall Jackson's flanking attack into General

Howard's Eleventh Corps at the Battle of Chancellorsville provides a good example of how a commander, whose force was greatly outnumbered on the battlefield, was ultimately victorious through the prudent use of surprise and deception. The MEU (SOC), like any other Marine Corps unit, should study and understand well these principles as it will not normally have the luxury of numerical superiority at the outset of an engagement. A MEU (SOC) must be able to fight smart as they will almost certainly always fight outnumbered. It must design and conduct missions that provoke a desired response from the enemy. This may include inducing the adversary to prematurely react to what he perceives as a threat, thereby revealing his force dispositions.

The results of the survey indicate agreement that this is not an operation whose utility is limited to the MEU (SOC) units. This mission did not inspire much debate in the questionnaires and those subjects interviewed did not understand its inclusion amongst the special operations capable missions. The prevailing sentiment among the respondents was to question what is so special about adherence to the principle of surprise. Is this not one of the principles of war for any force of any nation? This mission is a highly useful tool that all commanders utilize. The only detectable difference between its application with the MEU (SOC) and the conventional forces could be the amphibious nature of the deception itself. Sea-based feints and ruses would be inherently different than those projected by a land-based force. This mission was ranked as being the twentieth most important for a MEU (SOC) to be able to accomplish.

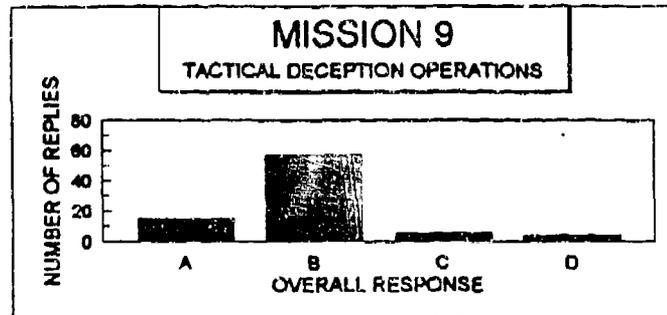


Figure 11.

Mission Ten: Fire Support Control. The capability to provide positive air and naval gun fire ( NGF) support control measures and liaison teams to all joint and combined forces. This is normally accomplished by providing detachments acting in liaison from the Air Naval Gunfire Liaison Company (ANGLICO). The requirements of this mission are not new and have led to the establishment of habitual relationships over the years between the members of ANGLICO, and such units as the U.S. Army Ranger battalions and the 82nd Airborne Division. This support function is the stated mission for the ANGLICO companies in the Marine Corps. There is one ANGLICO company in each of the three Marine Expeditionary Force structures. These units are manned by highly trained, airborne-qualified experts in the effective planning and application of supporting arms. Each of the ANGLICO companies is commanded by a Marine Corps lieutenant colonel and contains over three hundred personnel. The

company task organizes its teams to the mission. These teams are called Supporting Arms Liaison Teams (SALTs), and Firepower Control Teams (FCTs). Each SALT is normally headed by a Marine aviator captain, and includes a U.S. Navy lieutenant (JG) surface warfare officer, enlisted fire support assistants, and several communications specialists. Each FCT is headed by a Marine Corps first lieutenant and is attached directly to a supported maneuver unit. Any time the U.S. Army or a combined allied force is within range of U.S. fleet support, they should have SALT and FCT teams attached. These teams also possess laser guidance capability.<sup>9</sup>

The capability to perform this mission is needed in each of the forward deployed MEU (SOC)s so that when needed, these liaison teams can be dispatched to joint and combined forces, co-located in the theater. This is an important capability, and one which each MAGTF should have, but due to the lack of these specialized teams, most likely will not.

The results of the survey indicate a unanimous acceptance of this capability as an important mission for each MAGTF to be able to accomplish. The majority of respondents saw this mission to be conventional. This finding was echoed by those subjects who were interviewed. This mission was ranked as being the eighteenth most important for the MEU (SOC) to be able to accomplish.

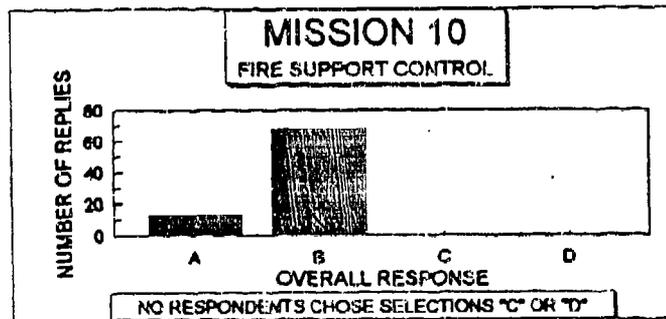


Figure 12.

Mission Eleven: Counterintelligence Operations. Within the confines of the MEU these missions are conducted by the Counterintelligence Team (CIT). Each MEF currently has three CITs. These teams can be assigned area coverage or unit responsibilities. When deployed with a MEU (SOC), these teams are involved in providing area coverage. These teams advise the commander on countermeasures to potential sabotage, espionage, terrorism, and subversion by preparing CI estimates and plans. These teams are also trained to identify enemy collection activities, and provide briefs for embarked Marines on enemy collection activities at future liberty ports.<sup>9</sup>

The results of the survey may indicate a lack of understanding of the mission of the CIT. Based upon many of the comments in the survey, there is a perception amongst many respondents that the MEU (SOC) units are actively engaging in large-scale CIT activities which is not the case. When briefed as to

the small, yet important, role these teams perform for the MEUs, all of the subjects interviewed agreed that this is a vital role for every forward deployed conventional MAGTF. This one mission illustrates the classic misunderstanding that so many of our Marine Corps field grade officers have about these 21 "missions." The shared perception that the MEU (SOC) program is seeking to be all things to all people is an erroneous assumption and completely unfounded. The reason that the CIT mission fared so poorly in the survey is twofold. First, it is not in the mainstream of the Marine Corps, it exists in that nether world of secrets and highly classified materials where few Marines are ever comfortable. Secondly, most, if not all, of the respondents have never been involved in these types of missions and would not be expected to support them without more knowledge of what they actually entail. It was no surprise that this mission finished last of twenty-one appraised for importance to the MEU (SOC).

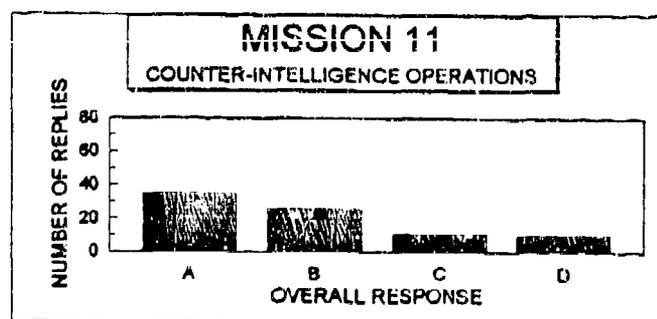


Figure 13.

Mission Twelve: Initial Terminal Guidance (ITG). This mission is normally accomplished by members of the MEU (SOC) reconnaissance units, Landing Zone Control Team (LZCT), or by specially trained members of the infantry companies. This capability is used and needed by both conventional and MEU (SOC) units. Whether utilizing a Glidepath Approach Indicator Light (GAIL), homing beacons, or infrared and colored lights, these teams must be specially trained. This mission is an enabling mission for many of the other listed MEU (SOC) missions. This is because the MEU (SOC) is so dependent on its ability to conduct operations by air at night, under emissions control (EMCCM) conditions and that without a solid ITG capability, the combat effectiveness of the entire unit is severely degraded.

The results of the survey indicate a recognition of the need for all Marine units to be able to accomplish this mission, with special emphasis for those in the MEU (SOC). The respondents judged this capability to be the seventeenth most important for a MEU (SOC) to be able to accomplish. This low ranking can be attributed to the general opinion of the interviewed subjects who believe that all conventional and special operations units have always realized the importance of this mission.

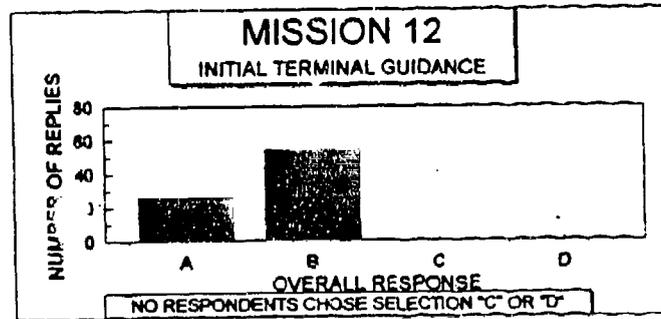


Figure 14.

Mission Thirteen: Signal Intelligence/Electronic Warfare Operations (SIGINT-EW). The characteristics of this mission call for the control of the electromagnetic spectrum by SIGINT elements attached to the MEU (SOC). These forces are provided to the MEU (SOC) from the Marine Corps Radio Battalions. These detachments are tasked with providing the MEU (SOC) commander support through the application of electronic support measures (ESM), electronic counter measures (ECM), and electronic counter-counter measures (ECCM). SIGINT planning for an amphibious operation requires a great deal of operational security (OPSEC). These detachments from the Radio Battalion work closely with the CIT of the MEU (SOC) in the preparation and maintenance of secure communications for the MEU, while trying to detect, mislead, and defeat the electronic signal of the enemy. There is no question that this is a vital mission for all MAGTFs to possess, and one which the Marine

Corps has sought to improve through realistic training and increased technology.

The results of both the survey and the interviews concur that this is an important mission for the MEU (SOC) units to possess. What was surprising was that by a two-to-one margin, the respondents thought this to be more of a MEU (SOC) mission than a conventional one. This was an unexpected result because all Marine units, regardless of branch, practice and train in these SIGINT-EW procedures. Additionally, twenty-two respondents indicated that the Marine Corps should not be involved in this type of mission at all. The reason for this variance must be similar to the reasons for the poor showing of the CIT mission: a lack of awareness on the part of the officer corps as to what these SIGINT forces actually do. Another reason for the poor showing may be attributed to the fact that since the majority of the respondents are operators, there is a reluctance to fully accept and appreciate an electronic mission as being the equal of one in which they are involved. This mission is conducted by a small handful of Marines who perform their missions with radios and computer systems behind closed doors. Very few Marine Corps combat arms officers have ever served in or around this highly technical environment, and as a result, this mission did not fare well in the survey. There is also a perception by a small percentage of respondents that covert cloak and dagger operations are being conducted by the MEU (SOC). This mission was rated as being the sixteenth most critical for the MEU (SOC) to be able to perform.

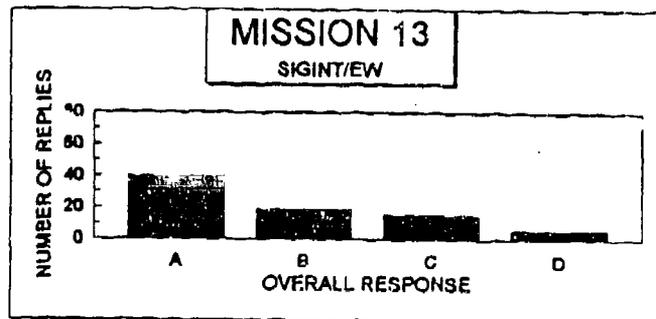


Figure 15.

Mission Fourteen: Recovery Operations.

- a. Clandestine Recovery: The capability to conduct clandestine extraction of personnel or sensitive items from enemy controlled areas.
- b. Tactical Recovery of Downed Aircraft and/or Personnel (TRAP): The capability to conduct recovery of downed aircraft and personnel, aircraft sanitization, and provide advanced trauma-life support in a benign or hostile environment. TRAP is limited to overland operations and must be able to be conducted in a hostile environment under conditions of darkness and in EMCON.

Depending on what documents are referred to, this mission is either listed as one or two distinct missions. The July 1993 draft copy of Marine Corps Order (MCO) 3120.XX, which is still being staffed at Headquarters Marine Corps, considers these to be two separate MEU (SOC) missions. The Marine

Corps Order still in effect, MCO 3120.8A, June 1992, lists only the TRAP as a MEU (SOC) mission. For simplicity they have been listed together, but each will be addressed separately.

The TRAP mission in the MEU (SOC) is normally conducted by one of the three reinforced rifle companies. This is one of the few MEU (SOC) missions that Marines are called upon to perform with some degree of regularity; the other being a NEO.

In July of 1992, the Marine Corps conducted a successful TRAP mission into Bosnia Herzegovina. TRAPS fulfill a role that standard Navy and Air Force Combat Search and Rescue (CSAR) units cannot. That role is the clandestine introduction of a specially-trained and tailored combat force for the express purpose of recovering, by force if necessary, downed personnel and/or equipment. This capability is built into modules of forces based upon the threat scenario. Each MEU (SOC) is prepared to dispatch a force, ranging from a reinforced rifle squad to two full rifle companies, to accomplish the mission. These modules include area specialists and medical personnel, as needed. The MEU (SOC) performs these tasks in support of the fleet commander. This mission is actually a hybrid of many of the others. It can take the shape of an amphibious raid, a direct action mission, or a special demolitions mission where the mission is to destroy unrecoverable sensitive equipment. Additionally, successful completion of this mission incorporates a host of other capabilities

also listed as special operations, to include ITG, SIGINT, security operations and tactical deception.

The new draft version of MCO 3120. XX seems to indicate that the only real difference between these two missions is that, for the mission to be considered clandestine reconnaissance, the extraction must take place in enemy held territory. In this same order, it states that a TRAP can be conducted in either a hostile or a friendly environment. The current order is confusing and that confusion was not lost on the respondents or the subjects interviewed.

The results of the survey indicate that nearly 75% of the respondents feel that recovery operations, in either form, are exclusively MEU (SOC) missions. This feeling of specialty was endorsed by a majority of the subjects interviewed. Based probably upon the applications of this mission, recovery operations were thought to be the fourth most important mission for the MEU (SOC). In my opinion, these findings are caused by the fact that these missions are most likely to be conducted by a forward deployed MEU, utilizing an assortment of specialized gear and equipment not normally associated with a conventional land-based unit.

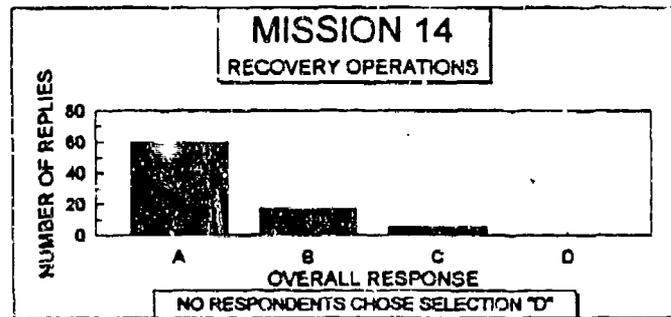


Figure 16.

Mission Fifteen: Military Operations on Urbanized Terrain (MOUT).

The Marine Corps starts training young Marines how to fight in a MOUT environment whilst still in basic training. Every conventional and MEU (SOC) infantry battalion in the Marine Corps, and its combat support attachments, trains diligently to maintain the highly perishable skills required for MOUT. While many of the MEU (SOC) missions could be found under the banner of Operations Other Than War (OOTW), MOUT is traditionally not thought to be one of them. Yet it may well be, as in the operations in Somalia, where the two ends of the conflict spectrum collided while executing MOUT operations in the middle of a humanitarian mission. The need for well trained MOUT forces has never been greater than it is now. Normally avoided in large-scale continental land wars, the future dictates that all Marines be accomplished street fighters.

As opposed to many other forms of warfare, MOUT is characterized by centralized planning and centralized execution. This is because the slow methodical process of maneuvering a force through a city requires far more centralized coordination and control than an attack in open terrain. The ability to prudently apply and maximize the modified tenets of fire support coordination, while integrating available combat support units like armor and combat engineers, significantly increases combat power. It is tough and realistic training that is the most important ingredient of all. While deployed on ships, MEU (SOC) units spend time rehearsing MOUT by clearing rooms and spaces, under the watchful eye of their commanders, and to the bewilderment of the Navy sailors. The finely-honed skills of these units will atrophy unless exercised routinely.

The results of the survey conclude almost unanimously that this mission is not a specifically MEU (SOC) mission, and should be in the repertoire of every MAGTF. There was some outright indignation at the suggestion that MOUT was ever thought to be a SOC mission. There is no question that this is another one of those missions whose inclusion as a SOC mission has further confused the issue. The Marine Corps never stripped this capability away from the conventional battalions. Each conventional battalion is still evaluated on MOUT during the rigorous pre-deployment MCCRES examinations. What the Marine Corps did not articulate very well in the MCO was that it expected the MEU (SOC) to have a highly skilled and developed MOUT capability while operating

under the hardships of a severely restrictive time line. This means that the MEU (SOC) has just six hours from receipt of the warning order to the time of execution. There were other such constraints placed on the MEU (SOC) battalions which the units had to negotiate before they could become fully certified as SOC qualified prior to deployment. The special emphasis placed on passing the SOCEX evaluation tests made the testing environment special, but not the mission. This mission was considered to be the eleventh most essential for the MEU (SOC) to be able to conduct. The results of the interviews coincided with those subjects surveyed.

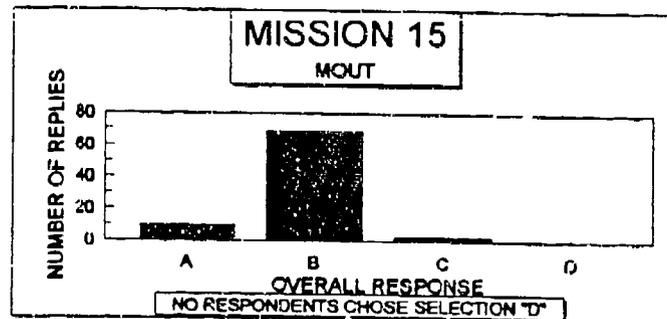


Figure 17.

Mission Sixteen: Airfield Seizures. This mission is characterized by the insertion of a security force large enough to secure an airfield, while waiting for the arrival and introduction of the main body. What the Marine Corps' definition does not state is that an airfield could also be seized for the express purpose of

destroying it and its fuel reserves, thereby denying its use to the enemy. Similar to the TRAP mission previously discussed, this mission is a hybrid of many, yet it possesses some characteristics all its own. Basic decisions which must be made when planning an airfield seizure include: (1) the method of insertion of the security element, and if necessary, its reinforcement and extraction, (2) the establishment of objectives for all elements, and (3) the inter-operability and compatibility of communications gear between the security and the follow-on elements. This mission is most closely aligned with that of an amphibious raid or a limited objective attack.

The airfield seizure was not one of the original eighteen MEU (SOC) missions and is not even included in the current edition of MCO 3120.8A. It is listed in the new draft document, MCO 3120.XX, as having been recommended during the MEU (SOC) planning conference held in January 1992.<sup>10</sup> The nationally-recognized experts in this mission are the three ranger battalions of the 75th Ranger Regiment. These units have cooperated with the Marine Corps in the sharing of training standards, techniques and procedures. The Marine Corps also needs to become experts in this area as it is one of the most likely missions it will be called upon to accomplish while forward deployed. Airfield seizures are a logical extension to the time honored and traditional Marine Corps mission of seizing advanced naval bases.

The results of the survey indicate a difference of opinion as to whether or not this is a specialized mission, but leaves no doubt as to whether or not a

MEU (SOC) should be able to accomplish this task. The results of the interview indicated that more than 50% of the respondents thought this to be a conventional capability, while nearly 45% thought this to be exclusively a MEU (SOC) mission. Many of the respondents who supported this mission as a conventional capability compared it to that of an amphibious raid. The ability to execute this mission further underscores the MEU (SOC)'s role as an enabling force for follow-on forces. This mission was rated as being the third most important mission for the MEU (SOC) to be able to accomplish by the respondents. This high ranking brings up an interesting point. Why was a mission that is deemed to be so critical today shunned as a mission in 1986? Perhaps this mission was considered to be a capability listed under amphibious raids, and perhaps it still should be.

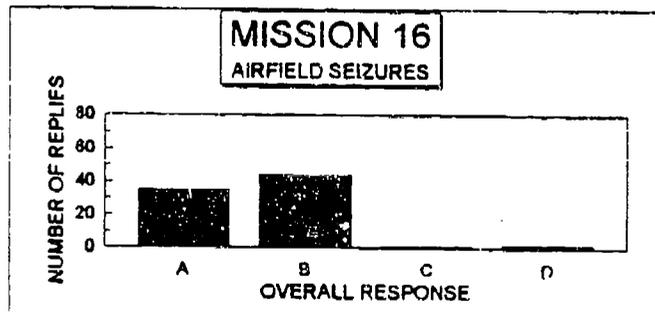


Figure 18.

Mission Seventeen: Specialized Demolition Operation. The capability to conduct specialized breaching and effectively employ specialized demolitions

entry capability in support of close quarters battle and amphibious raids. The units tasked with supplying the duty breachers, and the expertise in all demolitions operations for MAGTFs are the Marines from the division combat engineer battalions. Normally, a platoon-size engineer unit, commanded by a Marine Corps first lieutenant, is deployed with each MEU (SOC). The engineer platoon commander is responsible for advising the commanding officer of the MEU in the effective employment of all engineering assets. The platoons of the division combat engineer battalion routinely work with all the infantry battalions. Minefield breaching, bunker and obstacle reduction, and mobility and counter-mobility operations are the missions most frequently performed by engineer units in the support of both conventional and MEU (SOC) battalions.

The term "specialized" demolitions means using only the minimum amount of demolitions needed to effect a specific breach, for a specific purpose, thus enabling friendly forces to gain an entrance or foothold. "Specialized" demolitions differ from "conventional" demolitions in that the charges are often non-standard and must be calculated on the move. Additionally, these charges must be set while keeping the close proximity of friendly forces in mind.<sup>11</sup> In essence, specialized demolitions is nothing more than the employment of conventional demolitions by highly-trained engineers in the accomplishment of a special operations task. This mission does not appear to be special unto itself, but rather a critical sub-task supporting the overall mission. Based on the Marine Corps' definition of this mission, it would not be illogical to surmise that

all communications, conducted during a SOC mission, could be considered "special communications." Is this specialized breaching just an added capability carried by our MEU (SOC) forces, or is it a special mission in its own right?

The results of the survey were consistent with an earlier assessment that nearly 20% of the respondents did not fully understand the true nature of many of the individual missions. More than 70% of the respondents thought this mission should belong exclusively to the MEU (SOC). Those interviewed felt that this was not a real stand alone mission, but simply a capability that has been poorly defined, and once again, poorly understood by the officer corps. This mission was ranked as the fifteenth most important of twenty-one for the MEU (SOC) to be able to accomplish.

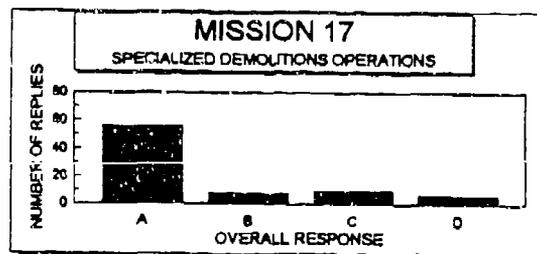


Figure 19.

Mission Eighteen: Clandestine Reconnaissance and Surveillance. The term "clandestine" is defined in the DOD dictionary as "an activity designed to accomplish intelligence, counterintelligence, and other similar activities

sponsored or conducted by governmental departments or agencies, in such a way as to assure secrecy or concealment. It differs from covert operations in that emphasis is placed on concealment of the operation rather than on the concealment of the identity of the sponsor."<sup>12</sup>

Within each MEU (SOC) there are a number of units capable of performing reconnaissance and surveillance missions. However, based on the insertion requirements imposed by the definition, only one unit has the broad range of qualifications required to conduct this mission. Each MEU (SOC) has one Force Reconnaissance Platoon (FRP) attached. The primary mission of the Force Reconnaissance Platoon is deep reconnaissance operations in support of the MAGTF objectives. Each member of this platoon is airborne and combat diver qualified. Although there are no more direct action platoons in the FRP, these platoons still train to conduct direct action missions in support of MEU (SOC) operations. In addition to the FRP, there is a Naval Special Warfare Sea-Air-Land (SEAL) platoon attached to the ARG. This platoon, consisting of sixteen personnel (two officers and fourteen enlisted), is also trained to perform the mission of clandestine reconnaissance and surveillance. While this SEAL platoon doctrinally works for the Navy Commander of the Amphibious Task Force (CATF), and not the Commander of the Marine Corps Landing Force (CLF), the FRP and the SEALs routinely train and are employed together to conduct surveillance, reconnaissance and direct action missions.

Currently, in each of the three MEFs, there is an organization called the Surveillance, Reconnaissance, and Intelligence Group (SRIG). This unit is comprised of all the intelligence gathering units and organizations that support the MEF. These units work in concert towards the common goal of presenting the commanders in the field with the most recent, useable, and reliable information available. Within the MEU (SOC)s there is no prescribed organization which combines the collective capabilities of the available surveillance and reconnaissance assets. All of these agencies work with the MEU (SOC) and ARG intelligence officers to support the MEU (SOC) commander.

The results of the survey continue to indicate that a large percentage of Marine Corps field grade officers lack a solid understanding of what these missions are, and perhaps even more importantly, what they are not. There is no other way to explain the unexpected results from a quarter of the respondents who believe the Marine Corps should no longer conduct this mission. Does this mean that the MEU (SOC) should no longer insert deep reconnaissance assets to be the eyes and ears of the commander? Or, is the varied response to this mission simply an example of incorrect labeling by the Marine Corps? Maybe this is not a mission at all, but simply a capability to be employed when conducting a mission? Clandestine surveillance and reconnaissance of an objective are not new concepts, and their successful execution is a tremendous

combat multiplier. This capability is critical to the success of nearly every mission executed by nearly every MAGTF.

While nearly 60% of the respondents thought that this was a MEU (SOC) mission, nearly a quarter of the respondents favored the elimination of this mission from the Marine Corps entirely. Of those interviewed, most favored its deletion as an official mission and recommended that it be simply acknowledged as an inherent capability of any MAGTF. This may be partly because the subjects were read the definitions and understood the anticipated methods of employment. This mission was ranked as the eighth most important by the respondents for the MEU (SOC) to be able to accomplish, which is unusual when you consider how many respondents favored its elimination altogether. This is yet another example of how one of the stated twenty-one missions of the MEU (SOC) program was not clearly understood by a large portion of the officer corps.

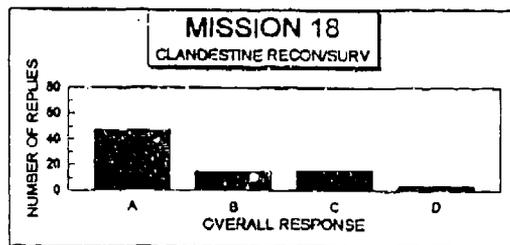


Figure 20.

Mission Nineteen: Maritime Interdiction Operations (MIO). This was not one of the original eighteen MEU (SOC) missions. It was recommended to be added as a mission at the January 1992 planning conference at Headquarters Marine Corps, but was not included as a mission in the June 1992 edition of MCO 3120.8A. This mission calls for the MEU (SOC) to be able to conduct operations in support of Vessel Boarding, Search and Seizures (VBSS) operations day or night, under either permissive or non-permissive environments. The first time this mission is seen listed anywhere as a MEU (SOC) mission is in an unpublished information paper circulated at HQMC dated 20 August 1993. This mission is currently listed in the draft version of MCO 3120.XX, which will, when signed, be assigned a number and supersede MCO 3120.8A.

In 1988, the United States escorted re-flagged Kuwait oil tankers in and out of the Persian Gulf as a protective measure during the Iran-Iraq war. Proper execution of this mission required Marines to be able to conduct vessel boarding, search and seizures, and close-in defensive firing aboard a ship. Two-hundred years ago this was one of the fortes of the Marine Corps. Today, this type of work requires an enormous amount of realistic training. The United States Coast Guard is considered the subject matter expert in VBSS, and has conducted a significant number of these operations both before, during, and after the Gulf War.

The United States Marine Corps was also involved in executing MIO operations in the Persian Gulf in November of 1990, in an effort to enforce the United Nation's trade embargo, and sanctions placed upon Iraq prior to the Gulf War. There is little opportunity for conventional MAGTFs to practice these types of operations, but there is a historical precedent for conventional forces having to perform this type of mission. When the Marine Corps was ordered to the Persian Gulf in 1988 to assist in the escorting of Kuwait oil tankers, it was not a MEU (SOC) unit that was chosen, but a conventional force built around a reenforced rifle company and a composite helicopter squadron. This force, which was designated Contingency MAGTF 88-1, was a SPMAGTF, and was formed and deployed in less than thirty days. The majority of the training that these Marines received was conducted while at sea while en-route to the Persian Gulf. This unit performed admirably and conducted multiple MIOs, and a Gas and Oil Platform Operations (GOPLAT)s during Operation PRAYING MANTIS in April 1988.

The results of the survey indicate broad level support for this capability to be retained as a MEU (SOC) mission. There was little support to expand this capability to the conventional forces. Those Officers who were interviewed concurred with the majority of respondents and saw this as Strictly a MEU (SOC) mission. This mission was ranked sixth overall as being most important for the MEU (SOC) to be able to accomplish.

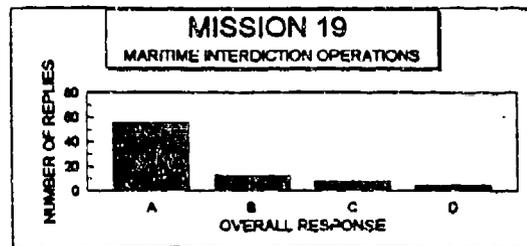


Figure 21.

Mission Twenty: Gas and Oil Platform Operations (GOPLAT). As mentioned previously in the discussion on MIOs (mission 19), a GOPLAT operation was conducted in April 1988 in the Persian Gulf by the conventional Contingency MAGTF 88-1. The execution of this mission is extremely difficult and the training requirements extensive. This mission calls for the capability to conduct seizure and/or destruction of off-shore gas and oil platforms. This mission has some similarities to MOUT in that a GOPLAT is characterized by the steady and methodical seizure of a structure one compartment, or section at a time.

This was not one of the original eighteen MEU (SOC) missions, but was added with the publication of MCO 3120.8A in June 1992. The importance of

this mission was derived from the success enjoyed by Contingency MAGTF 88-1, and in the operations conducted during the Gulf War. Enemy forces operating from these platforms posed a considerable danger to both commercial and naval shipping in the gulf. The capability to seize and/or destroy these platforms with highly-skilled organic naval forces offers the ARG commander considerable leverage.

The results of the survey indicated an overall feeling amongst the respondents that this is a MEU (SOC) mission. One-quarter of the respondents opposed the Marine Corps' performing these missions at all. The results of the interview found most officers in agreement with the survey respondents in that the mission should be performed only by MEU (SOC) units. This mission was ranked the tenth most important by the respondents for the MEU (SOC) to be able to accomplish.

An important point that must be considered by those who oppose this mission is that this mission, more than most of the others, epitomizes the essence of what the Marine Corps is all about; soldiers from the sea attacking an objective. This is a distinctly maritime mission incapable of being performed as effectively by any other service. This mission should be embraced as one the MEU (SOC) is uniquely trained and equipped to perform. While there are some missions where the MEU (SOC) will not be the first force of choice, this should not be one of them.

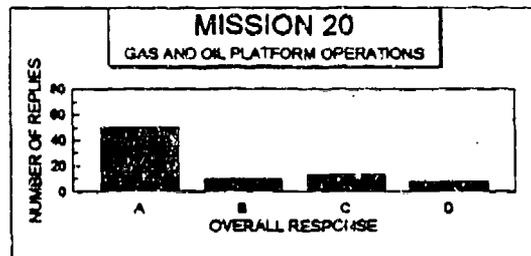


Figure 22.

Mission Twenty-one: In-Extremis Hostage Recovery (IHR). The IHR capability will only be employed when directed by appropriate authority and when dedicated National or theater assets have not arrived on scene or are unavailable. Emphasis is placed on isolation, containment, employment of reconnaissance assets, and the preparation for "turnover" of the crisis site when/if national assets arrive. Should national assets not arrive, the MEU (SOC) must be prepared to conduct an emergency assault to resolve the situation and remove the hostages/sensitive items to a safe-haven.

The Maritime Oriented Special Operations Handbook states that:

The purpose of the MEU (SOC) is not to usurp the mission of the national counter-terrorist agencies assigned this mission. Rather, the MEU (SOC) has as its mission the task of supplementing these forces and conducting these operations only when time distance factors prohibit the participation of the national agencies, and when the primary force needs augmentation."<sup>13</sup>

The mission itself would be conducted by the members of the Force Reconnaissance Platoon (FRP) attached to the MEU (SOC). The Marine Corps' IHR capability is the third-level choice of the NCA. That should in no way be taken as a slight or insult to the Marine Corps. The FRP units are superbly trained, exceptionally motivated, and if given the execute order to conduct a mission, would probably acquit themselves with distinction. The problem with the FRP units is that they are also performing Marine missions like surveillance and reconnaissance in support of the MEU (SOC) commander. This means that they are not living and breathing the IHR mission fulltime like the national asset forces. The average FRP Marine, like most other Marines, is on his first enlistment. He is a volunteer, highly intelligent and has been hand-picked and thoroughly screened through a combination of tough schools and difficult training. He is still, however, a young man in his first enlistment, with minimal experience. Additionally, like any other Marine Corps unit, the FRP is working on a deployment cycle where personnel turbulence is natural, and the life-cycle of a unit is usually no more than eighteen months long. The national asset forces are manned exclusively with professionals in the field, all with many years of experience in the field. Many of these members have spent the last decade in the same unit preparing for only one mission. There is no way that the Marine Corps could now, or in the future, compete on a equal footing with those agencies.

If the entire concept of the Marine Corps participating in the special operations environment is controversial, and it is, then this mission sits squarely in the eye of the storm. None of the previous twenty missions elicited more of an emotional outpouring of opinion than the IHR. Perhaps it is because this mission is considered to be the paradigm of special operations missions. There is a cloak-and-dagger aura surrounding this mission that makes even MEU (SOC) veterans uncomfortable. The U.S. government does not even acknowledge the existence of a force trained to accomplish this mission, but the Marine Corps does. What seems to offend or frighten the large majority of Marines about this mission is that it smacks of elitism; the same elitism that was drummed out of the Marine Corps with the death of the World War II Marine raider battalions.

The results of the survey narrowly support discarding this mission. This is the only mission to have been so recommended by the respondents. The initial responses of the subjects interviewed were similarly negative. Once the subject was made aware of the fact that the Marine Corps considers itself to be an augmentation and enabling force, and not a rival to the national agencies, then the respondents viewed this mission more favorably. Still, many respondents felt strongly that to claim even moderate capability in this mission required more time and resources than should be made available. Despite the controversy surrounding this mission, it was rated as the twelfth most important mission overall by the respondents. Knowing how many respondents would not

have included IHR in their top ten list, it must have been rated very highly by a sizeable number of respondents.

What seems to have been lost in all of the debate over the IHR mission is the fact that this is the very mission that precipitated the entire MEU (SOC) program. In 1986, after the Achille Lauro hijacking, it was the Commandant of the Marine Corps himself, General P.X. Kelly, who sought to equip the forward deployed MAUs with limited hostage rescue capability. This was thought necessary at the time because of the escalating incidents of global terrorist activities directed at America and its allies. There was a perceived need to have forward deployed forces on station around the world ready to perform this mission.

The Marine Corps' role as the third team in the national IHR hierarchy is not well known by the vast majority of Marines. This is a concept which every Marine officer should understand. This is where the MEU (SOC) is so uniquely equipped as a forward deployed maritime force. The MEU (SOC) can assist in resolving a potential hostage crisis in a variety of ways through: (1) isolating the objectives and keeping eyes on target for the follow-on national asset forces, (2) conducting the attack themselves if ordered so by the NCA, or (3) providing the national asset forces with a variety of support i.e., amphibious platforms to operate from in-theater, a comprehensive and inter-operable C4I system, a TRAP capability, and Marine combat units on standby.

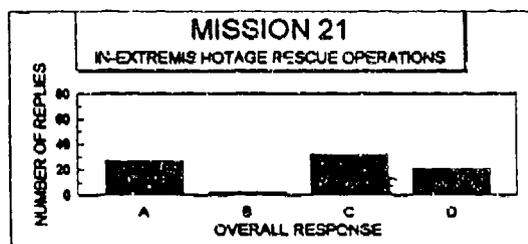


Figure 23.

### The Top Ten Missions

Of the twenty-one currently listed missions, the top ten most important missions that the MEU (SOC) should be able to accomplish according to all respondents are listed below. The number of points assigned was based upon each respondent selecting ten missions, and assigning his first choice ten points, and his tenth choice one point. There were eighty-two respondents. The maximum possible score is 820 points. The results of the top-ten lists have been calculated for the sub-groups of infantry officers, aviators, combat support and combat service support officers. In addition, top-ten lists have been formulated for all respondents who have served with a MEU (SOC), and for only infantry officers who have served in a MEU (SOC). The results of these sub-groups are listed in appendix B. The respondents were asked to select missions

based solely upon their importance for the MEU (SOC) to be able to accomplish, without regard to whether the mission is "special" or "conventional."

| <u>MISSIONS</u>                                | <u>POINTS</u> |
|--|---------------|
| 1. NON-COMBATANT EVACUATIONS (NEO)             | 589           |
| 2. AMPHIBIOUS RAIDS                            | 515           |
| 3. AIRFIELD SEIZURES                           | 317           |
| 4. RECOVERY OPERATIONS                         | 312           |
| 5. LIMITED OBJECTIVE ATTACKS                   | 227           |
| 6. MARITIME INTERDICTION OPERATIONS (MIO)      | 224           |
| 7. CIVIL MILITARY OPERATIONS                   | 217           |
| 8. CLANDESTINE RECONNAISSANCE AND SURVEILLANCE | 195           |
| 9. SECURITY OPERATIONS                         | 194           |
| 10. GAS AND OIL PLATFORM OPERATIONS (GOPLAT)   | 160           |
| 11. MILITARY OPERATIONS URBAN TERRAIN (MOUT)   | 151           |
| 12. IN-EXTREMIS HOSTAGE RESCUE (IHR)           | 139           |
| 13. SHOW OF FORCE OPERATIONS                   | 134           |
| 14. REINFORCEMENT OPERATIONS                   | 132           |
| 15. CLANDESTINE RECON AND SURVEILLANCE         | 102           |
| 16. SIGNAL INTELLIGENCE-EW OPERATIONS          | 79            |
| 17. INITIAL TERMINAL GUIDANCE OPERATIONS       | 74            |
| 18. FIRE SUPPORT CONTROL OPERATIONS            | 73            |

|                                    |    |
|------------------------------------|----|
| 19. MOBILE TRAINING TEAMS          | 55 |
| 20. TACTICAL DECEPTION OPERATIONS  | 45 |
| 21. COUNTERINTELLIGENCE OPERATIONS | 3  |

### Additional Questions

In addition to the rating of all missions, and the listing of the top-ten capabilities a MEU (SOC) should possess, each respondent was also asked to answer five yes/no questions.

Question One. Should any additional missions be added to the existing twenty-one. The large majority, 74 of 82 respondents answered "no," and the only missions nominated to be added to the mix were: Forward Arming and Refueling Point (FARP), and Close Quarter Combat (CQB). The establishment of a FARP site is used to give added legs to aircraft, lessening their dependence on having to go back to the ship for fuel and ammo. The establishment of a FARP is neither new nor special, although it is highly beneficial. CQB is the technique of firing used in the execution of an IHR mission, and is not inherently special unto itself but rather a capability of a larger mission.

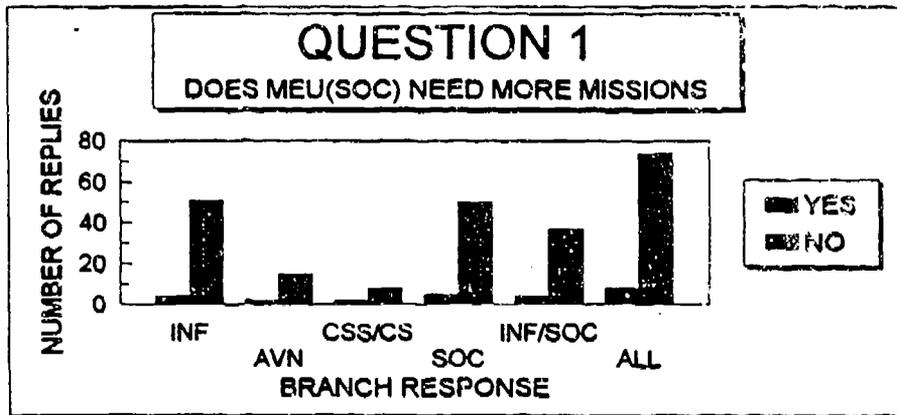


Figure 24.

Question Two. This question asked the respondents whether or not the MEU (SOC) program is beneficial to the entire Marine Corps? An overwhelming majority, 78 of 82 respondents, replied that it is beneficial. Many of the respondents spoke of the cross-pollination effect, which holds that the superior training received by the MEU (SOC) Marines cannot help but collectively raise the standards of all Marines. Further, these MEU (SOC) Marines will take with them to other units, training ideas, techniques and procedures that will eventually benefit the entire Marine Corps. Several respondents spoke of the validation of the MEU (SOC) concept over the last eight years by citing examples of successful MEU (SOC) employment. Based on the information gathered, there is little debate about the fact that the MEU (SOC) program is highly beneficial to the Marine Corps.

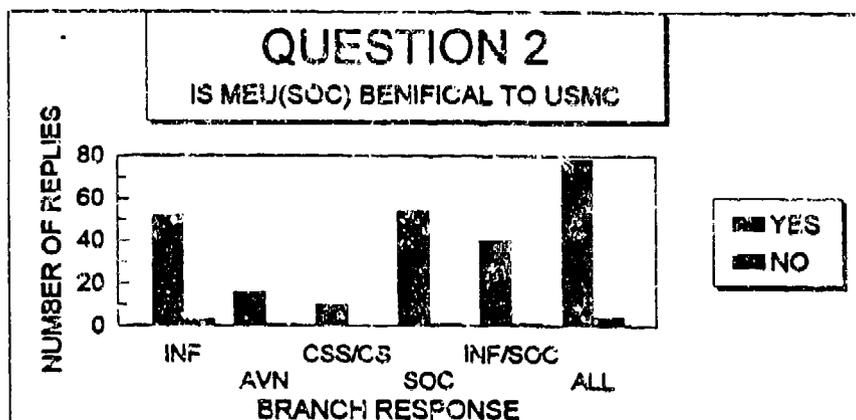


Figure 25.

Question Three. This question asked the respondents whether or not the MEU (SOC) should be more closely aligned with USSOCOM? The answers here were split right down the middle. The Marine Corps, specifically the MEU (SOC) and USSOCOM, already cooperate and work together far more than advertised.<sup>14</sup> Checklists, training standards and lessons learned are exchanged. As far as the MEU (SOC) becoming much closer to USSOCOM, or even as an assigned unit to USSOCOM while on deployment, the responses were not very favorable. The feeling is that the Marine Corps would lose a large degree of independence by the establishment of any command relationship between the MEU (SOC) and USSOCOM. An unfortunate side effect for the Marine Corps, is that by not having any Marine Corps forces in USSOCOM, the SEALs are experiencing unprecedented growth in the assumption of many of the duties which would better fit the job description of a Marine than a SEAL.<sup>15</sup>

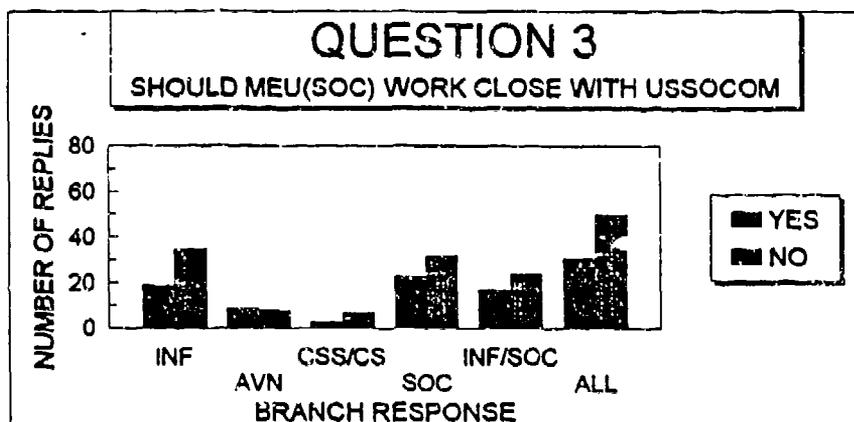


Figure 26.

Question four. This question asked whether or not MEU (SOC) program degrades or enhances the conventional capabilities of the Marine Corps. Most respondents, 65 of 82, felt that this program was beneficial to everyone. Again, many officers spoke of the cross-pollination benefit especially with the non-commissioned officers. Secondly, it is a fact that after eight-plus years of fielding and training SOC battalions, the Marine Corps has seen the competence and proficiency level of all of its infantry battalions go up dramatically. Whether this is a result of the cross-pollination from the MEU (SOC) program, or the conventional battalions working harder to keep up with the SOC battalions is unknown. What is agreed upon is that this program has helped the entire Marine Corps achieve a higher level of readiness and training.

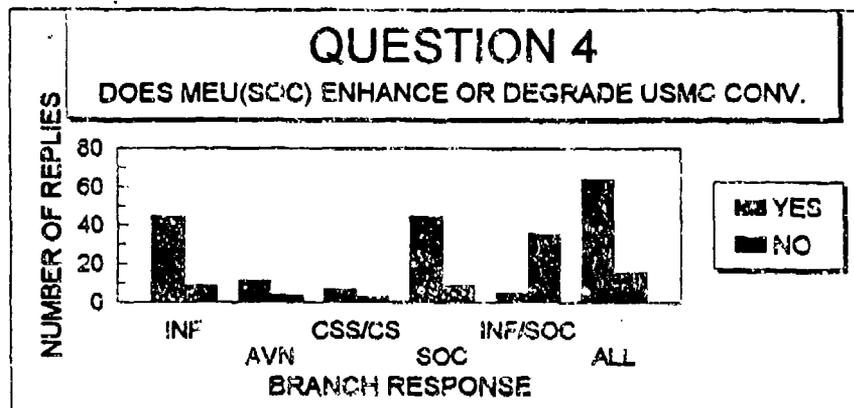


Figure 27.

Question Five. This Question asked whether or not one infantry regiment per MEF should be tasked with the fielding and training of the infantry battalions prior to their deployment as part of a MEU (SOC)? If the respondent answered yes, he was asked whether or not a Regimental Enhanced Training System (RETS) be established? RETS is an unofficial organization of officers and non-commissioned officers who have been successful in previous MEU (SOC)s, and have been tasked with passing on their collective knowledge and experience by helping to train the units preparing to deploy. The members of RETS are hand-picked and work directly for the regimental commander. The respondent answers to these questions were quite predictable because the Marine Corps sources and trains its MEU (SOC)s both ways. On the west coast, of the three infantry regiments, only the First Marine Regiment organizes, trains and supervises, with the cooperation of the MEU (SOC) staffs, the preparation of each of its four infantry battalions for deployment as the GCE of the MEU (SOC).

On the east coast, each of the three infantry regiments alternate turns at providing battalions to participate in the MEU (SOC) program. That is a major difference in the way the two MEFs source their MEU (SOC)s. Additionally, while the west coast utilizes and is dependent upon the RETS program to train their MEU (SOC) battalions, the east coast has no such program. The east coast method is dependent upon a MEF level organization, the Special Operations Training Group (SOTG), to provide SOC training to its infantry battalions. The west coast MEF also has an SOTG, but there it is utilized more in the large scale exercising and evaluation of the MEUs, rather than in the training of the infantry battalions.

The responses from the survey were 40 to 39 in favor of the one regimental sourcing system with 3 abstentions. The primary arguments for the one regimental system are that the establishment of a base of knowledge in one regiment is highly advantageous to the user, the infantry battalion. The regiment can track and pass on new developments and lessons learned more readily, because they are continuously involved in the training process. The tasking of each regiment to provide every third MEU (SOC) battalion would cause the re-invention of many hard lessons learned, and decrease the effectiveness of the pre-deployment training cycle.

Arguments against the one regimental system are based upon the "share the wealth" mentality. While credible on the surface, it seems that the advantages of having a repository of knowledge and stability located with one

regiment per MEF, far outweigh the desire to make everybody feel "special"

In summary, the three MEFs source, train and quite often equip their MEU (SOC)s differently. Perhaps these disparities account for, and are yet another contributing factor of, the many misperceptions that persist about the entire MEU (SOC) program.

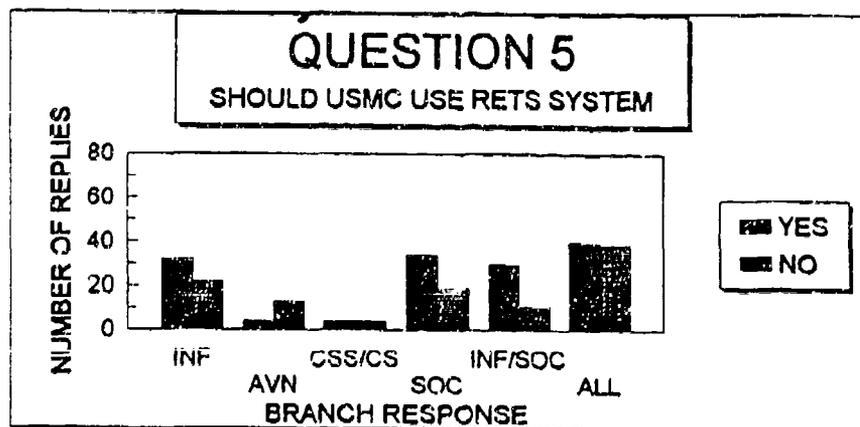


Figure 28.

### Conclusions

While the results of the survey produced some unexpected findings that will be discussed in Chapter Five, it is worth noting again that of the 82 returned surveys, 55 had served in a MEU (SOC) unit. This was a far larger number than anticipated, and it underscores two important points. First, it indicates that service in a MEU (SOC) unit should be considered mainstream and not in any way elitist or separate from the norm. Secondly, it underscores the point that was made earlier in the analysis of several of the individual missions, that many

members of the officer corps are not in sync with the MEU (SOC) program either as it is written, or as it is intended to be executed by the Commandant of the Marine Corps. This lack of understanding of the commanders intent was obvious early on in the analysis phase of this study. The survey sought to provide each respondent with an open forum of non-attribution for voicing their concerns and differences with the MEU (SOC) program. While the majority of respondents did just that, a sizeable minority raised questions and made statements that indicated to me they had grievously missed the essence and intent of the entire MEU (SOC) program. There were many legitimate concerns voiced and some truly insightful comments and suggestions made by a large number of respondents. It is my opinion that having only seven or eight out of ten Marine Corps officers knowledgeable on being fluent in this topic is not nearly sufficient. This lack of understanding needs to be quickly resolved.

## Endnotes

### Figure 16. Mission 14.--

<sup>1</sup>U.S. Marine Corps, "Marine Corps Order 3120.XX," Draft, (Washington: Department of the Navy, 1993), 6.

<sup>2</sup>"MCO 3120.XX " Draft, (1993), 7.

<sup>3</sup>U.S. Marine Corps, LFM 0-1, Doctrine For Amphibious Operations. (Washington: Department of the Navy, 1986), 19-3.

<sup>4</sup>LFM-01 (1986), 19-3.

<sup>5</sup>Robert J. Moskin, The U.S. Marine Corps Story, (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1992), 31.

<sup>6</sup>Joint Chiefs of Staff , JCS Publication 1: Department of Defense Dictionary of associated terms. (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1984), 108.

<sup>7</sup>U.S. Marine Corps, Landing Force Training Command Pacific: Maritime Oriented Special Operations Planning Handbook, (Coronado, CA.: Department of the Navy, 1988), G-1. (cited hereafter as LFTCPAC)

<sup>8</sup>LFTCPAC, (1988), 0-8.

<sup>9</sup>LFTCPAC, (1988), P-8.

<sup>10</sup>"MCO 3120. XX " (1993), 6.

<sup>11</sup>LFTCPAC, (1988), U-8.

<sup>12</sup>JCS Pub.1, (1984), 68.

<sup>13</sup>LFTCPAC, (1988), S-1.

<sup>14</sup>Maj. Lawrence Myers, interview by author, Personal Notation, Quantico, VA., 23 December 1993.

<sup>15</sup>James B. Laster, "The Marine Corps Role In Joint Special Operations," the Marine Corps Gazette 78 (January 1994): 53.

## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSIONS

#### Answer to the Thesis Question

From the data gathered on this study it is apparent that the Marine Corps has only four special operations missions, not twenty-one. These four missions are: (1) in-extremis hostage rescue operations (IHR), (2) maritime interdiction operations (MIO), (3) gas and oil platform operations (GOPLAT), and (4) recovery operations, which include both clandestine recovery operations and the tactical recovery of aircraft and personnel (TRAP).

Each of these missions is a bona fide MEU (SOC) mission because it meets the four criteria established and discussed on page thirty-five of this study: (1) distinctly maritime operations missions which could be best executed by forward deployed forces, (2) missions that require extensive training time with non-standard gear, mock-ups and training aids, (3) missions that are not currently being taught to, or practiced by conventional units, and (4) missions that are more than just single-track capabilities. A MEU (SOC) mission is the necessary combination and compositing of several organic MEU (SOC) capabilities toward a common objective.

The remaining seventeen current missions should be renamed appropriately as MAGTF capabilities and no longer listed as individual SOC missions. These capabilities are important to the success of the MEU (SOC), but they do not meet the criteria of a mission as established by this study or the criteria as defined in JCS PUB 1-02 which states "The task, together with the purpose, that clearly indicates the action to be taken and the reason therefor."<sup>1</sup> They are mostly either variations of the amphibious raid, long-standing conventional tasks like MOUT, or are single-track capabilities. While critical to the success of any MEU (SOC) or conventional missions, they are not missions unto themselves. For example, a MEU (SOC) commander would never gather his staff in preparation of the receipt of a warning order from the theater CINC for the execution of an ITG mission.

#### Answers to the Secondary Questions

This study also sought to answer four secondary questions. The findings concluded that the MEU (SOC) does not need any more missions assigned to it and, as previously discussed, seventeen of the currently designated missions should be re-named as MAGTF capabilities. The study also found that while it would be very beneficial for the MEU (SOC) to work more closely with the forces of USSOCOM, it should not in any way seek to become part of that organization. Finally, it is apparent from the research that this program is important for, and beneficial to, the entire Marine Corps.

### Unexpected Finding

There were two unexpected findings resulting from this study. The first dealt with the percentage of the population of officers who have at one time served in a MEU (SOC) unit. Of the eighty-two officers surveyed during this project, fifty-five had prior MEU (SOC) service for a surprisingly high MEU (SOC) service rate of 67%. If this figure is even close to being accurate, then it is clear that this program is very much a mainstream and not at all elitist. As such it is incumbent upon every officer to be well versed and educated on the specifics of the program.

The second finding was a bit more sobering. As expected, there were both supporters and opponents of the MEU (SOC) program amongst the respondents. Many put forth well-founded and rational reasons explaining either their support or apprehensions regarding the program. What was not expected however, was the somewhat unsettling realization that nearly one-quarter of the eighty-two respondents were misinformed as to what the role and purpose of the MEU (SOC) program really is, and perhaps even more importantly, what it is not. This segment of respondents argued flawed and incorrect assertions that were often startling in that they were so blatantly incorrect.

Examples of this include several officers who are convinced that the whole MEU (SOC) program is designed to rival and compete with the forces of USSOCOM for prestige and money. Another officer called the entire program a public relations ploy designed to publicly display a select few "gold plated" units

while the remainder of the Marine Corps muddles in mediocrity. Detractors of the program by no means had a monopoly on incorrect ideas about the program. Many ardent supporters called for and applauded applications of the MEU (SOC) which do not exist. There is a particularly high degree of confusion over the inclusion of the words "special operations capable" in the MEU (SOC) title. While the latest Marine Corps directive on the program states that the Marine Corps has no special operations forces, the program title suggests otherwise. If this point causes confusion within the Marine Corps, and it does, how does that bode for the other services understanding it?

#### The Need For Education

There are really only two ways to eliminate this confusion. Eliminate SOC from the program title, or make a concerted effort to thoroughly educate every Marine Corps officer on the program. This program is far too valuable to the Marine Corps for it to suffer the fate of being misunderstood because of misunderstandings related to its title, or because the officer corps is not adequately versed on its details. According to the Commandant of the Marine Corps, General Mundy, this is the preeminent program in the Marine Corps. Whether or not the MEU (SOC) program is the jewel in every Marine's crown is not important, it is the established policy of the Marine Corps and as such, must be better understood than it is. The frightening question that begs to be asked is: if so many Marine majors, currently attending intermediate level schools, are

so poorly informed about the specifics of the MEU (SOC) program, what chance is there that the rest of the Marine Corps has it right?

Perhaps one method to achieve a better understanding of the MEU (SOC) program within the officer corps, would be for the leadership of the Marine Corps to clearly articulate a vision for the future of the program. This articulation could come in the form of a Commandant Marine Corps White Letter, a Marine Corps Gazette article, or the widespread distribution of the soon-to-be published Marine Corps Order (MCO 32120. XX). The key to resolving this problem is in educating the officer corps on the details of the program.

#### Program Direction

All Marine officers involved in the MEU (SOC) program know that the number of MEU( SOC) missions has been and still is a moving target. While the current number of missions is now at twenty-one, current proposals and discussions could see that number jump as high as twenty-eight, or drop down to a more reasonable level of six to eight. This causes the perception that the leadership has lost its sense of direction on the topic and is in need of a re-focussing on these missions. In OOTW there is a concern about the danger of "mission creep." In the MEU (SOC) program it could very well be called "mission sprint." Quite often the addition of new missions seems to be in name only and not in substance. For example, one of the contemplated "new" missions being studied is Close Quarter Battle (CQB). While this would be a new name for

MEU (SOC) mission twenty-two, it is not a new task to prepare for. Each MEU (SOC) already conducts CQB as part of its IHR training program, only now it is currently considered a capability needed to conduct the IHR mission, rather than a mission in its own right. It is hoped that the MEU (SOC) planning conference being held in April of 1994 will help alleviate many of these questions.

One possible explanation for the Marine Corps labeling so many of these capabilities as missions may be political. During this period of force and budget reductions, it may be ill-advised and risky for the Marine Corps to publicly decrease the number of advertised MEU (SOC) missions that it trains for. While an internal Marine Corps re-classification of these missions to capabilities would be little more than cosmetic, this change might inadvertently and incorrectly signal an overall decline of capabilities provided to the national defense by the Marine Corps. This could give reason for the Congress to cast an unwelcome eye toward the Marine Corps budget. By re-designating capabilities as missions, the Marine Corps may appear to be even more lethal, and an even better bargain.

Another issue which adds to the confusion is the fact that the Marine Corps sources, and trains its MEU (SOC)s differently on each coast. This bi-coastal methodology of running the program was identified by many of the respondents as one of the reasons that the program is seen as still not fully matured. Nobody would dispute the MEF commander's right to equip his MEU (SOC) units as he sees fit based on the host of potential contingencies they may

encounter. That, however, does not explain why in the eighth year of the MEU (SOC) program the Marine Corps has not developed a Marine Corps wide methodology of fielding, training and evaluating all MEU (SOC) units. It should be directed and supervised by Headquarters Marine Corps, and not as an ad-hoc arrangement decided upon by the MEF commanders. This appears amateurish and does not present the MEU (SOC) program in the highly professional image which it deserves.

Further compounding the stabilization of the program are the myriad of problems associated with the emergence of the adaptive force packaging concept. Based upon the published results of that program, and the comments of the newly selected Chief of Naval Operations, it is hoped that this distractive and ill-advised experiment will soon be over.

When combined, these issues and problems only detract from the manner in which the MEU (SOC) program is perceived. These examples underscore the need for the leadership of the Marine Corps to establish a well-publicized and coherent MEU (SOC) policy that each of its officers is educated on and to educate each of its officers on this policy.

#### Significance of the Thesis

This thesis is significant because it details a possible change in the direction of the MEU (SOC) program. The reduction of missions for the MEU (SOC) would signify a fundamental change in the way both Marines and

outsiders view the MEU (SOC) program. This change would better underscore the role of the MEU (SOC) as an enabling force, and eliminate the incorrect perception that they are a competitor of USSOCOM.

This thesis should be read by all Marine Corps officers, and by officers from other services who might be associated with a MEU (SOC). It is hoped that this thesis will effect real and dramatic change in the MEU (SOC) program. While that goal may appear to be overly optimistic, it may already have had some impact. I have been asked to send all the survey data and findings to both the policy and doctrine writers in Washington and Quantico. Additionally, I have received requests for the completed project and the findings from more than twenty of the survey respondents. It is hoped that this document will have a positive impact on the difficult decisions yet to be made about this program. This thesis has led to an increased awareness on my part, and on the part of my contemporaries, about the problems currently existing in the MEU (SOC) program. In that context this thesis has already significantly contributed to the body of professional study in this field.

#### Relationship to Previous Studies

There is no evidence to indicate that a thesis level document has been written about this topic before. What is occurring today in Washington, are the on-going discussions and writing of point and position papers concerning this topic. This study was built upon the many drafts and unpublished information

papers that circulate at Headquarters Marine Corps in Washington, and the Warfighting Center at Quantico, Virginia.

### Suggestions for Further Study

It seemed that at every step of the project, new questions arose that would make excellent research topics. I offer these suggestions in the MEU (SOC) arena:

1. The relationship between the MEU (SOC) and USSOCOM. Should they be more closely aligned? What impact would that have on the Marine Corps? Should the MEU (SOC)s be part of USSOCOM when they are forward deployed? In the in-extremis hostage mission for example, how much do these two organizations currently share resources? And how much should they? Are the two forces presently adhering to the same training standards for the IHR mission?

2. How should the MEU (SOC) missions be assigned within the MEU itself. Are the most capable units executing the most logical missions? Could the combat support, and combat service support units play a larger role in the assumption of the MEU (SOC) mission load?

3. What is the effect of the adaptive force packaging concept going to have on the MEU (SOC)s ability to execute their missions? What is the near term future of amphibious shipping for the MEUs?

## Summary

This study evaluated the twenty-one separate missions of the United States Marine Corps MEU (SOC). A three-tiered level of analysis was used to include eighty-two surveys and ten personal interviews. An analysis of the responses indicated that the Marine Corps is currently including single-track and conventional capabilities as part of the advertised twenty-one MEU (SOC) missions. The results of the study support the retention of only four of the current twenty-one missions as being SOC, and the redesignation of the remaining seventeen as MAGTF capabilities. The results also concluded that while the great majority of Marine officers support the MEU (SOC) program, it needs to be better-educated and better-informed about the specifics of the program. Nearly twenty-five percent of the respondents were operating on erroneous assumptions concerning the MEU (SOC) program based on half-truths and bad information. The largest problems resulted from mis-perceptions amongst Marine officers that the Marine Corps intends to compete with USSOCOM. This has never been the case.

The Marine Corps MEU (SOC) program provides the NCA with an omnipresent forward deployed force that can act as an enabling force for follow-on forces if needed. In addition, the MEU (SOC) is capable of conducting a wide variety of conventional tasks and a limited number of special operations in support of national military objectives. While there are always multiple military options available to the NCA, perhaps one of the more attractive features of the

MEU (SOC) is the inherent loiter capability of the force. Former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Colin Powell, once remarked to Congress, when asked if our nation still needed a Marine Corps, that; "When somebody figures out how we can loiter plane loads of the 82nd Airborne Division on station for weeks or months at a time near a crisis point, then we will no longer need the Marine Corps, but until then, we had better hang on to them."<sup>2</sup>

Reducing the number of missions from twenty-one to four will not immediately eliminate all of the existing confusion about the MEU (SOC) program, but it is a good first step in that direction. Reducing the number of missions will also not lessen the work load of the Marines in the MEU (SOC) units. Be they missions or capabilities, the Marines in these units will have to prepare for each of them just as before. Although the term special operations would no longer be associated with many of the capabilities, the requirements to expertly execute them would not change. These capabilities should still be evaluated as part of the final MEU( SOC) evaluations during the SOCEX, and remain every bit as important as before. By making these relatively minor changes, and undertaking a vigorous re-education program of its officer corps, the Marine Corps would significantly eliminate nearly all of the confusion, opposition, and ignorance concerning the MEU (SOC) program. The Commandant is correct when he says that the MEU (SOC) program is the jewel in the crown of the Marine Corps, and with a little cleaning and polishing, this jewel will shine even more brilliantly than before.

## Endnotes

1. Joint Chiefs of Staff, Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms, ( Washington: GPO 1984), 237.
2. Powell, Colin L., Testimony Before Congress on 14 March 1990.

APPENDIX A  
DEFINITIONS

## DEFINITIONS

Amphibious Lift. The total capacity of assault shipping utilized in an amphibious operation, expressed in terms of personnel, vehicles, and measurement or weight tons of supplies. ( JCS Pub 1-02).

Amphibious Objective Area (AOA). A geographical area, delineated in the initiating directive for purposes of command and control, within which is located the objective(s) to be secured by the amphibious task force. The amphibious objective area must be of sufficient size to ensure accomplishment of the amphibious task force's mission, and must provide sufficient area for conducting necessary sea, air and land operations.

Amphibious raid. A type of amphibious operation involving swift incursion into or a temporary occupation of an objective followed by a planned withdrawal. (JCS Pub 1-02)

Amphibious Squadron (PHIBRON). A tactical and administrative organization composed of amphibious assault shipping to transport troops and their equipment for an amphibious assault operation.

Amphibious Task Force (ATF). The task organization formed for the purpose of conducting an amphibious operation. The amphibious task force always includes Navy forces and a landing force with their organic aviation, and may include MSC-provided ships and Air Force forces when appropriate. (FMFRP 0-14).

Assault support. The use of aircraft to provide tactical mobility and logistic support for ground combat elements, the movement of high priority cargo and personnel within the immediate area of operations, in-flight refueling for fixed-wing aircraft, and the evacuation of personnel and cargo. (FMFRP 0-14).

Aviation Combat Element (ACE). The aviation component of a Marine air-ground task force that provides all aspects of aviation support to the MAGTF and plays a key role in the combined arms concept of MAGTF employment. The size and composition of the ACE varies depending on the type of MAGTF and its mission. The ACE for a MEU is centered around a reinforced helicopter squadron; and for a MEB, the ACE is made up of a provisional air group; and for

a MEF, the ACE is made up of an aircraft wing. The ACE has its own command element as well as several aviation support detachments.

Battalion landing team (BLT). In an amphibious operation, an infantry battalion normally reinforced by necessary combat and service elements; the basic unit for planning an assault landing. The ground combat element of a MEU.

Civil Affairs (CA). Those phases of the activities of a commander which embrace the relationship between the military forces and civil authorities and people in a friendly country or area, or occupied country or area when military forces are present. (JCS Pub 1-02)

Combatant commander. A Commander in Chief of one of the unified or specified combatant commands established by the President. (JCS Pub 1-02).

Commander, amphibious task force (CATF). The Navy officer designated in the initiating directive as commander of an amphibious task force. (JCS Pub 3-02)

Commander, landing force (CLF). The officer designated in the initiating directive to command the landing force. (JCS Pub 3-02)

Counterterrorism (CT). Offensive measures taken to prevent, deter, and respond to terrorism. (JCS Pub 1-02)

Carrier Battle Group (CVBG). The tactical grouping of ships that normally includes cruisers, destroyers, frigates, an aircraft carrier, submarines and associated support ships. The CVBG trains and operates as a unit to project power, protect sea lines of communication, and to respond to crises around the globe.

Direct Action Mission. In special operations, a specified act involving operations of an overt, covert, clandestine, or low visibility nature conducted primarily by a sponsoring power's special operation forces in hostile or denied areas. (JCS Pub 1-02).

Direct Action (DA) operations. Short-duration strikes and other small scale offensive actions by Special Operations Forces to seize, destroy, or inflict damage on a specified target; or destroy, capture, or recover designated personnel or material. In the conduct of these operations, Special Operations Forces may employ raid, ambush, or direct assault tactics; emplace mines and other munitions; conduct standoff attacks by fire from air, ground, or maritime platforms; provide terminal guidance for precision guided munitions; and conduct independent sabotage.

**Electronic Warfare (EW).** Military action involving the use of electromagnetic energy to determine, exploit, reduce, or prevent hostile use of the electromagnetic spectrum and action which retains friendly use of the electromagnetic spectrum. (JCS Pub 1-02)

**Fleet Marine Force (FMF).** A balanced force of combined arms comprising land, air, and service elements of the U.S. Marine Corps. A Fleet Marine Force is an integral part of a U.S. Fleet and has the status of a type command. (JCS Pub 1-02).

**Foreign Internal Defense (FID).** The participation by civilian and military agencies of a government in any of the action programs taken by another government to free and protect its society from subversion, lawlessness, and insurgency. The primary role of Special Operations Forces in this interagency activity is to train, advise, and otherwise assist host nation military and paramilitary forces. (JCS Pub 1-02)

**Ground Combat Element (GCE).** The ground component of a Marine Air-Ground Task Force. The size and composition of the GCE varies depending on the type of MAGTF and its mission. The GCE for a MEU is centered around a reinforced infantry battalion; for MEB, the GCE is made up a regimental landing team; and for a MEF, the GCE is formed around a division. The GCE has its own command element as well as several combat support and combat service detachments.

**In-Extremis (Near death).** As related to hostage rescue operations (at the point of death) or amid the final things.

**Joint Task Force (JTF).** A force composed of assigned or attached elements of the Army, the Navy or the Marine Corps, and the Air Force, or two or more of these Services, which is constituted and so designated by the Secretary of Defense or by the commander of unified command, a specified command, or an existing joint task force. (JCS Pub 1-02)

**Littorals.** The area from the open ocean to the shore which must be controlled in order to control operations ashore. The area inland from the shore that can be controlled, supported or attacked from the sea. All land within two-hundred miles of the ocean, is considered to be in the littoral zone.

**Low-intensity Conflict (LIC).** A limited politico-military struggle to achieve political, social, economic, or psychological objectives. It is often protracted and ranges from diplomatic, economic, and psychosocial pressures through terrorism and insurgency. Low-intensity conflict is generally confined to a geographic

area and is often characterized by constraints on the weaponry, tactics, and the level of violence. (JCS Pub 1-02).

**Marine Air Ground Task Force (MAGTF).** A (MAGTF) is the task organization of Marine forces (division, aircraft wing and service support groups) under a single command and structured to accomplish a specific mission. The Marine Air-Ground Task Force components will normally include command, aviation combat, ground combat, and combat service support elements (including Navy Support Elements). Four types of Marine Air-Ground Task Forces which can be task organized and tailored for any mission are the Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU), Marine Expeditionary Brigade (MEB) (also now being called MEF-forward, and the Marine Expeditionary Force (MEF), and the Special MAGTF (SPMAGTF). The four elements of a Marine Air-Ground Task Force are:

- a. Command Element (CE) The MAGTF headquarters.
- b. Aviation Combat Element (ACE).
- c. Ground Combat Element (GCE)
- d. Combat Service Support Element (CSSE).

**Marine Detachment Afloat (MARDET).** Refers to Marine security forces aboard an Aircraft Carrier. Normally a 50-70 man detachment tasked with providing internal weapons security and close in external small arms security to the carrier. Commanded by a Marine Captain.

**Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU).** The smallest of the three traditional sized MAGTF's. The MEU is comprised of a Command element, commanded by a Colonel, has an Infantry Battalion as its ground combat element, a Composite squadron as its air combat element, and a MEU Service support group as its combat service support element. A MEU carries 15 days of sustainability.

**Marine Expeditionary Brigade (MEB).** A notional Organization that is also called a MEF-forward. Although the term MEB is currently not in Official use, it is still widely used to describe the second level of size and strength for a MAGTF. A MEB

has in its organization, an infantry Regiment as its ground combat element, a composite air group as its aviation combat element, and a Brigade service support group as its combat service support element. Possesses 30 days of sustainability.

**Marine Expeditionary Force (MEF).** The largest of the three traditional MAGTF size units. The MEF is the Marine Corps' principle warfighting organization, particularly for a larger crisis or contingency and is normally commanded by a Lieutenant General. A MEF can range in size from less than one, to multiple

infantry divisions and aircraft wings, together with Force Service Support Groups. With their 60 days of accompanying supplies MEF's are capable of both amphibious operations and sustained operations ashore in any geographic environment. the MEF command element is capable of performing the mission of a joint task force headquarters with appropriate augmentation.

Maritime Special Purpose MAGTF (MSPF). The Maritime Special Purpose Force (MSPF) is a unique task-organization drawn from the MEU major subordinate elements. The MSPF provides the enhanced operational capability to complement or enable conventional operations or to execute selected maritime special missions. The MSPF cannot operate independently of its parent MEU. It relies of the MEU for logistics, communications, transportation and supporting fires. Accordingly, command of the MSPF must remain under the control of the MEU commander. The MSPF is organized and trained to be rapidly tailored to the specific mission.

Marine Corps Combat Readines Evaluation System (MCCRES). The written training standards to which every unit in the Marine Corps trains. These are considered to be the mission essential tasks lists for Marines of every rank, in any position, for any skill. Annual or bi-annual testing of these skills is done throughout the Marine Corps. An infantry battalion will be evaluated during a battalion wide MCCRES prior to all overseas deployments.

Mobile Training Team (MTT). A team consisting of one or more U.S. personnel drawn from Service resources and sent on temporary duty to a foreign nation to give instruction. The mission of the team is to provide, by training instructor personnel, a military service of the foreign nation with a self-training capability in a particular skill. (JCS Pub 1-02)

National Command Authorities. The President and The Secretary of Defense or their duly deputized alternates or successors. Commonly referred to as NCA. (JCS Pub 1-02)

Naval Expeditionary Force (NEF). That force of combined sea, air, and ground forces which comprise a forward deployed Naval Task Force. A NEF will normally include a CVBG and an ARG. This concept is forwarded in the Department of the Navy publication . . . From The Sea.

Naval Special Warfare (NSW). Encompasses that set naval operations generally accepted as being nonconventional in nature, in many cases covert or clandestine in character. They include utilization of specially trained forces assigned to conduct unconventional warfare, psychological operations, beach

and coastal reconnaissance, operational deception operations, counterinsurgency operations, coastal and river interdiction.

Noncombatant Evacuation Operation (NEO). Operation conducted for the purpose of evacuating civilian noncombatants from locations in a foreign (host) country, faced with the threat of hostile or potentially hostile actions. Will normally be conducted to evacuate U.S. citizens whose lives are in danger, but may also include the evacuation of U.S. military personnel, citizens of the host country and third country nationals friendly to the U.S.

Psychological Operations (PSYOP). Planned operations to convey selected information and indicators to foreign audiences to influence their emotions, motives, objective reasoning, and ultimately the behavior of foreign governments, organizations groups, and individuals. The purpose of psychological operations is to induce or reinforce foreign attitudes and behavior favorable to the originator's objectives. (JCS Pub 1-02).

Raid. An operation, usually small scale, involving a swift penetration of hostile territory to secure information, confuse the enemy, or to destroy his installations. It ends with a planned withdrawal upon completion of the assigned mission. (JCS Pub 1-02)

Reconnaissance. A mission undertaken to obtain, by visual observation or other detection methods, information about the activities and resources of an enemy or potential enemy; or to secure data concerning the meteorological, hydrographic, or geographic characteristics of a particular area. (JCS Pub 1-02)

Recovery operations. Those operations executed to recover personnel and /or equipment. (FMFRP 0-14)

Regimental Enhanced Training System (RETS). A system of training the infantry battalion of a MEU(SOC) unit at the regimental, vice the division or MEF level. Currently there is only one RETS in existence in the Marine Corps, located at the First Marine Regiment, I MEF, Camp Pendleton, Ca.

SEAL's. A group of officers and individuals specially trained and equipped for conducting unconventional and paramilitary operations and to train personnel of allied nations in such operations including surveillance and reconnaissance in and from restricted waters, rivers, and coastal areas. Commonly referred to as SEAL team. (JCS pub 1-02)

Special Operations (SO). Operations conducted by specially training, equipped, and organized DOD forces against strategic or tactical targets in pursuit of national military, political, economic, or psychological objectives. These operations may be conducted during periods of peace or hostilities. They may support conventional operations, or they may be prosecuted independently when the use of conventional forces is either inappropriate or infeasible. (JCS Pub 1-02)

Special Operations Capable (SOC). Designation assigned to MAGTF's indicating completion of a prescribed predeployment training syllabus and comprehensive special operations tactical evaluation.

Special Operations Forces (SOF). DOD forces specially trained, and equipped to conduct special operations against strategic or tactical targets in support of national military, political, economic, or psychological objectives. (FMFRP 0-14).

Special Forces. Those U.S. Army forces organized, trained, and equipped specifically to conduct special operations. SF have five primary missions; unconventional warfare (UW), foreign internal defense (FID), direct action (DA), special reconnaissance (SR), and counterterrorism (CT).

Special Reconnaissance (SR) Operations. Reconnaissance and surveillance actions conducted by Special Operations Forces to obtain or verify, by visual observation or other collection methods, information concerning the capabilities, intentions, and activities of an actual or potential enemy, or to secure data concerning the meteorological, hydrographic, geographic, or demographic characteristics of a particular area. It includes target acquisition, area assessment, and post-strike reconnaissance. (USCINCSOS).

Unconventional Warfare forces (DOD): United States forces having an existing unconventional warfare capability consisting of Army Special Forces and such Navy, Air Force, and Marine units as are assigned for these operations.

**APPENDIX B**

U.S. Army Command and General Staff College  
Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, 66027-6900

FROM: MAJOR L.D. NICHOLSON USMC  
TO: SELECTED OFFICERS  
SUBJECT: QUESTIONNAIRE

DECEMBER 1993

**1. GREETINGS and CONGRATULATIONS**

Based upon your past experiences, you have been chosen to participate in this professional research survey. My name is Major Larry Nicholson USMC, and I am currently a student at the U.S. Army Command & General Staff College, Fort Leavenworth, Ks. I am an Infantry Officer, who has served in both a Special Operations Capable (SOC) and regular Infantry Battalion. This project seeks to analyze, and scrub each of the current 21 missions for content and necessity, and to determine whether each warrants the label of Special Operations. This will be done with a very narrow, and unbiased focus. The results of this study may recommend either a reduced, or increased number of Special Operations missions, or it may simply produce a validation of the current list. The results of this study will be submitted to both the Warfighting Center in Quantico, and to the Special Operations Branch at Headquarters Marine Corps, Washington, DC. This project seeks to validate the twenty-one current missions of the Marine Amphibious Unit (SOC) by answering the following question:

**ARE THE TWENTY-ONE SPECIAL OPERATIONS MISSIONS CURRENTLY ASSIGNED TO THE MARINE EXPEDITIONARY UNITS, SPECIAL OPERATIONS CAPABLE(SOC), STILL VALID FOR THE MARINE CORPS?**

As described in MCO 3120.8A the forward deployed MEU is uniquely equipped, and organized to provide the Naval or Joint force Commander with a sustained, sea-based capability optimized for forward presence and crisis response missions. The MEU(SOC) may also serve as a precursor for larger Marine, Joint, or combined forces. *A great emphasis is placed on the flexibility to tailor the force to the need.*

2. This survey has three parts, and will take approximately 20 minutes to complete. Please return this survey to Major Jerry Lynes of MMOA if you work at HQMC, or to Major Drew Watson if you are stationed at Quantico. Major Watson is a student at The Command and Staff College. If neither of those options are convenient please mail it to me at my home address: 302 Hancock ave, Ft. Leavenworth, Ks. 66027. Your opinions are important to me, and I would encourage you to write any comments in the margins or on a separate sheet of paper. The results of this survey will be tabulated, and reflected in the thesis in summary form. There will be no attribution to any of your comments, so

please be undauntedly honest and blunt . This project will be completed in May, and I will provide a copy of the thesis to any interested respondent.

## BACKGROUND

**2. PROBLEM STATEMENT.** The Marine corps is in a period of downsizing. Everything is shrinking except the commitments. This downsizing is characterized by less Marines, smaller budgets, and fewer training resources to go around. Add into this equation the subdividing of the number of Amphibious ships (from 60 to 35 by Oct. 94), and an ageing fleet of transport helicopters whose capabilities don't come close to matching today's operational requirements. With this as a backdrop we are increasing the number of Special Operations Capable missions our MEUs must be able to perform from 18 to 21. Is the Marine Corps being spread too thin and taking on too many missions, or is this the smart thing to do in the current post cold war climate, WHERE mission scrambling, and subtle changes in traditional service roles and functions are occurring? Maybe some of these listed missions are not "special" at all and we should quit calling them such. Maybe some of the missions are found in the already existing doctrine of Amphibious Warfare. While Amphibious warfare is in itself technically a Special Operation, it is not "SPECIAL" to us as Marines. It is the reason for our existence, and our very stock in trade.

While these 21 missions are labeled as Special Operations, the Marine Corps MEU(SOC) forces are not part of the Special Operations Command(SOCOM). The Marine Corps receives no additional funding, training, or assistance from CINC SOC.

Even within the Corps there is no universal agreement about the MEU (SOC) program. It was my personal experience in the First Division that those Infantry Officers in a SOC Battalion Loved it, and those not in one, thought that the money being lavished on those units was unfair and discriminatory. But given a choice, few officers would ever turn down the chance to be in a (SOC) Battalion.

The Marine Corps began planning the MEU (SOC) program in 1983 after a call from the Secretary of Defense, for all services to examine and present ideas on how their forces could use Special Operations in combatting terrorism, within the context of a Low Intensity Conflict(LIC). In 1985 The Marine Corps launched the first Marine Amphibious Unit, MAU(SOC) unit ( Amphibious was later changed to Expeditionary). This unit was tasked with executing eighteen separate Special Operations Missions. The program called for a 26 week workup, culminating with a rigorous testing phase of all conventional, and Special Operations Missions prior to deployment. This is still being done.

Please detach the cover letter, and return pages 3 through 6 of the survey.

PART 1. RESPONDENT BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION.

NAME- (VOLUNTARY) \_\_\_\_\_ MOS \_\_\_\_\_ RANK \_\_\_\_\_

LAST FMF BILLET HELD \_\_\_\_\_ YEAR \_\_\_\_\_ UNIT \_\_\_\_\_

HAVE YOU EVER SERVED IN A MEU (SOC) UNIT \_\_\_\_\_ WHICH ONE \_\_\_\_\_ YEAR \_\_\_\_\_

HAVE YOU EVER PERSONALLY PERFORMED A SOC MISSION WHILE FORWARD DEPLOYED (REAL WORLD-NOT EXERCISE) \_\_\_\_\_

WHICH ONE \_\_\_\_\_ WHERE \_\_\_\_\_  
IF MORE THAN ONE PLEASE ATTACH ADDITIONAL INFORMATION.

PART 2. ASSESSMENT OF EACH MISSION

1. PLEASE READ THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS LISTED A THROUGH D.
2. ANALYZE EACH OF THE 21 SPECIAL OPERATIONS MISSIONS.
3. ASSIGN EACH OF THE 21 MISSIONS WITH A LETTER OF A THROUGH D, WHICH CORRESPONDS WITH THE 4 STATEMENTS BELOW.
4. THIS LETTER SHOULD REFLECT YOUR OPINION ABOUT THAT MISSION.
5. WRITE THE LETTER GRADE YOU HAVE ASSIGNED ON THE BLANK LINE TO THE RIGHT OF THE MISSION NUMBER.

A. IS CLEARLY A SPECIAL OPERATIONS MISSION THAT SIGNIFICANTLY ENHANCES THE MEUs CAPABILITY. SHOULD BE RETAINED AS ONE OF THE STATED USMC SOC MISSIONS.

B. IS A VALID MISSION, BUT ONE THAT ALL MARINE UNITS SHOULD BE ABLE TO PERFORM AS PART OF THEIR CONVENTIONAL ASSIGNED TASKS. THIS MISSION SHOULD NOT BE LISTED AS A SPECIAL OPERATIONS MISSION.

C. IS A SPECIAL OPERATIONS MISSION THAT THE MEU SHOULD NOT BE INVOLVED WITH. LET SPECIAL OPERATIONS FORCES(SOF) FROM SOCOM PERFORM THIS MISSION. DELETE FROM THE LIST OF USMC SOC MISSIONS.

D. DELETE THIS MISSION FROM THE LIST BECALISE TO DO IT RIGHT , WOULD COST MORE TIME AND RESOURCES THAN WE CAN AFFORD. PROFICIENCY HERE WOULD CAUSE DEGRADED TRAINING SOMEWHERE ELSE IN THE MARINE CORPS.

THE CURRENTLY EXISTING 21 SOC MISSIONS ARE:  
(MARK IN EACH BLANK EITHER AN ( A, B, C, OR D)

1. \_\_\_\_\_ AMPHIBIOUS RAIDS
2. \_\_\_\_\_ LIMITED OBJECTIVE ATTACKS
3. \_\_\_\_\_ NON-COMBATANT EVACUATION(NEO)
4. \_\_\_\_\_ SHOW OF FORCE OPERATIONS
5. \_\_\_\_\_ REINFORCEMENT OPERATIONS
6. \_\_\_\_\_ SECURITY OPERATIONS
7. \_\_\_\_\_ MOBILE TRAINING TEAMS
8. \_\_\_\_\_ CIVIL MILITARY OPERATIONS(CMO)
  - a. HUMANITARIAN/CIVIL ASSISTANCE
  - b. DISASTER RELIEF
9. \_\_\_\_\_ TACTICAL DECEPTION OPERATIONS
10. \_\_\_\_\_ FIRE SUPPORT CONTROL
11. \_\_\_\_\_ COUNTER-INTELLIGENCE OPERATIONS
12. \_\_\_\_\_ INITIAL TERMINAL GUIDANCE
13. \_\_\_\_\_ SIGNAL INTELLIGENCE/ELECTRONIC WARFARE OPERATIONS
14. \_\_\_\_\_ RECOVERY OPERATIONS
  - a. CLANDESTINE RECOVERY
  - b. TACTICAL RECOVERY OF AIRCRAFT AND PERSONNEL(TRAP)
15. \_\_\_\_\_ MILITARY OPERATIONS ON URBAN TERRAIN(MOUT)
16. \_\_\_\_\_ AIRFIELD SEIZURES
17. \_\_\_\_\_ SPECIALIZED DEMOLITION OPERATIONS
18. \_\_\_\_\_ CLANDESTINE / RECONNAISSANCE AND SURVEILLANCE
19. \_\_\_\_\_ MARITIME INTERDICTION OPERATION
20. \_\_\_\_\_ GAS AND OIL PLATFORM OPERATION(GOPLAT)
21. \_\_\_\_\_ IN-EXTREMIS HOSTAGE RESCUE

COMMENTS:

### PART 3. SHORT ANSWER

PLEASE PROVIDE BRIEF AND CONCISE ANSWERS TO THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS.

1. PLEASE LIST ANY ADDITIONAL MISSIONS NOT AMONG THE 21 LISTED, THAT YOU FEEL SHOULD BE INCLUDED AS A USMC SOC MISSION.

2. IS THE MEU(SOC) PROGRAM BENEFICIAL TO THE MARINE CORPS? \_\_\_\_\_ IF SO EXPLAIN.

3. SHOULD USMC MEU( SOC) TRAINING AND EVALUATION BE MORE CLOSELY ALIGNED TO THE US SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND? \_\_\_\_\_ WHY/WHY NOT?

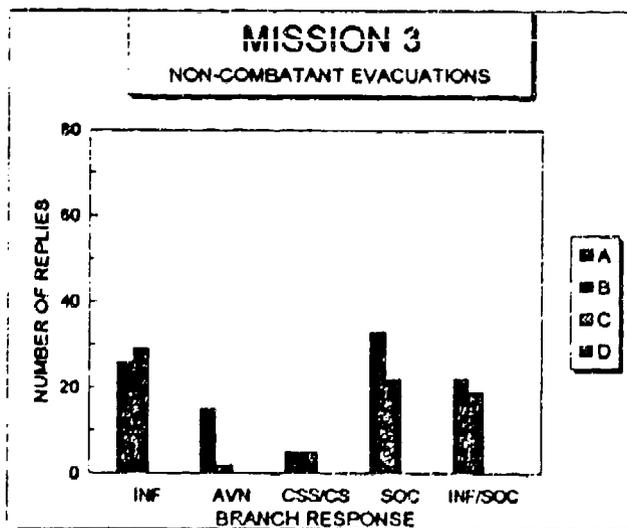
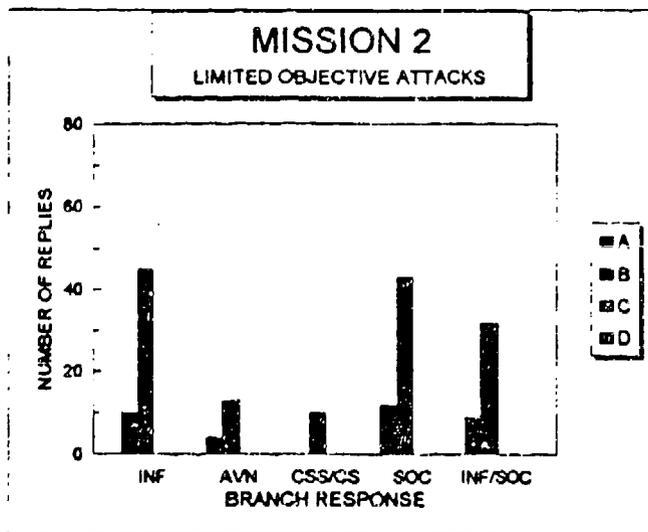
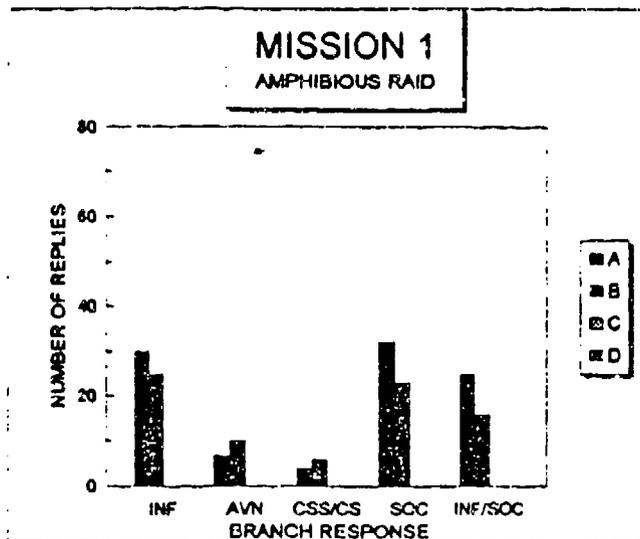
4. DO THESE 21 SPECIAL OPERATIONS MISSIONS ENHANCE OR DEGRADE THE OVERALL COMPETENCE, COMBAT READINESS, AND CONVENTIONAL WARFARE SKILLS OF THE UNITS ASSIGNED TO EXECUTE THEM?

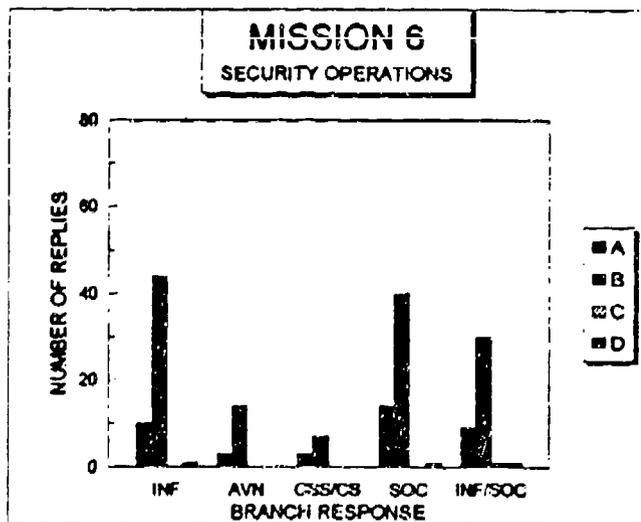
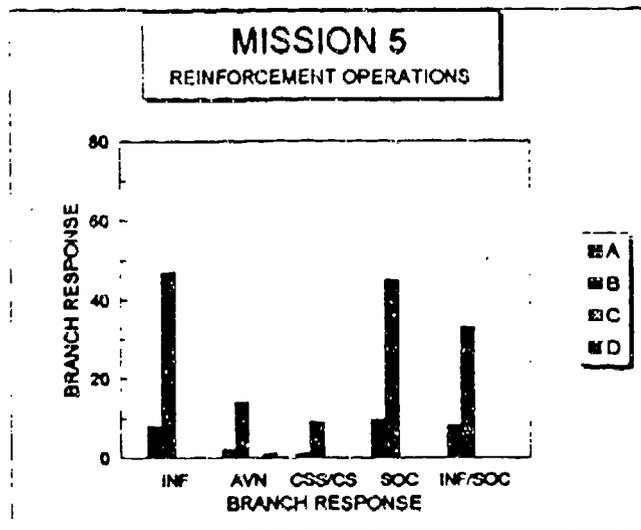
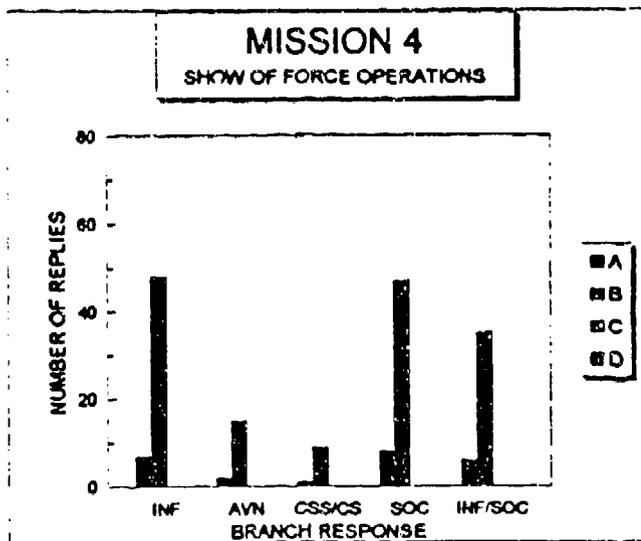
5. SHOULD ONE REGIMENT PER DIVISION BE TASKED WITH THE FIELDING AND TRAINING OF THE INFANTRY BATTALIONS FOR THE MEUs ? \_\_\_\_\_ IF SO SHOULD A REGIMENTAL ENHANCED TRAINING SYSTEM(RETS) BE ESTABLISHED? \_\_\_\_\_ WHY/WHY NOT

6. FROM THE PREVIOUS LIST OF MISSIONS , PLEASE LIST IN ORDER OF IMPORTANCE , AS YOU PERCEIVE THEM, THE TOP 10 SPECIAL OPERATIONS CAPABLE MISSIONS THAT THE MARINE CORPS MUST BE ABLE TO PERFORM.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
- 10.

APPENDIX C  
ILLUSTRATIONS:  
21 MISSIONS  
5 QUESTIONS





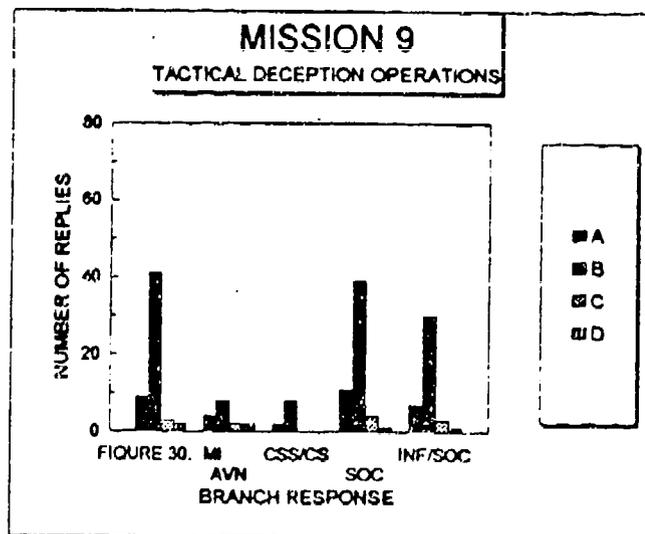
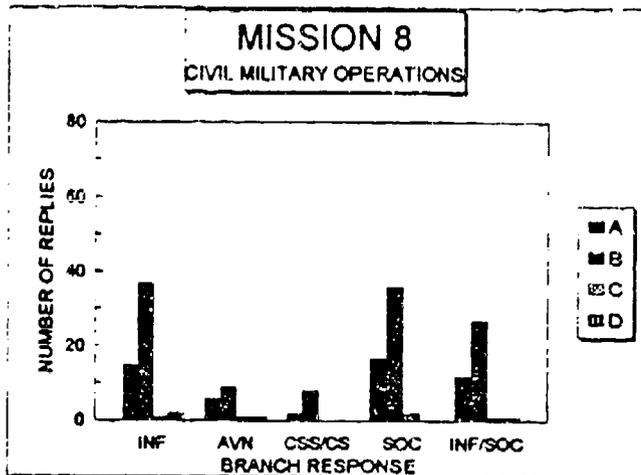
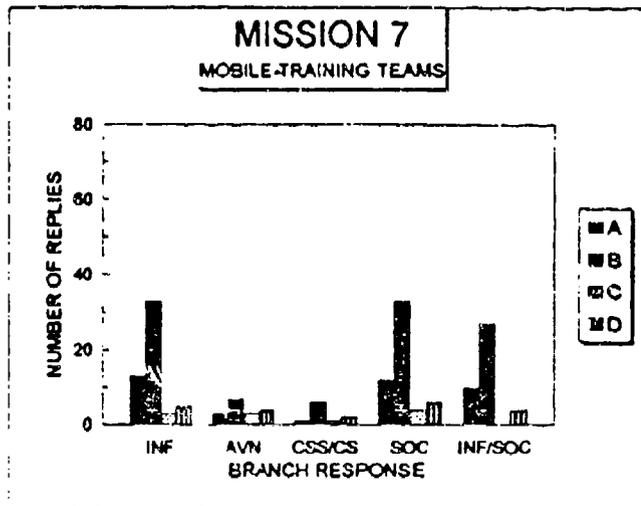
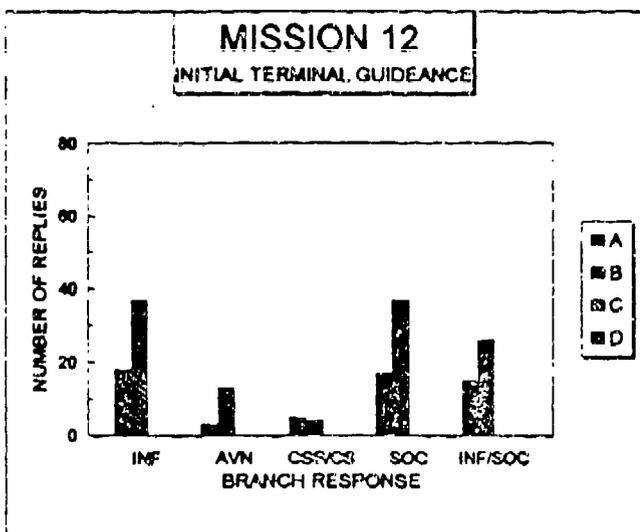
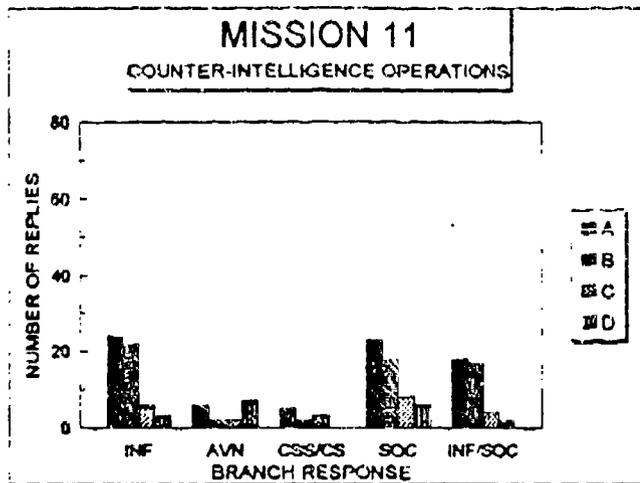
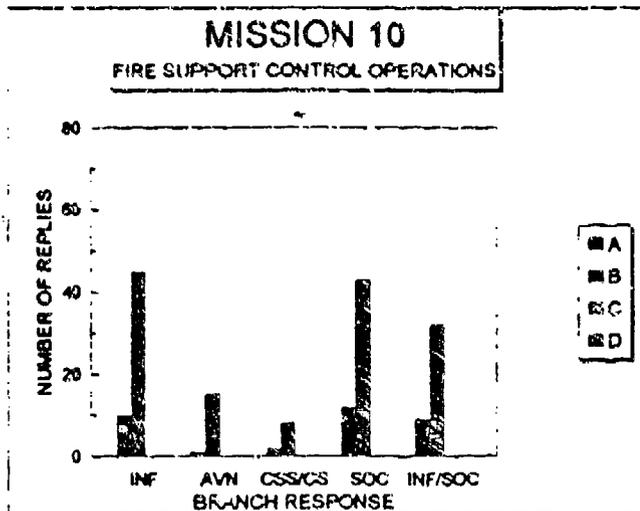
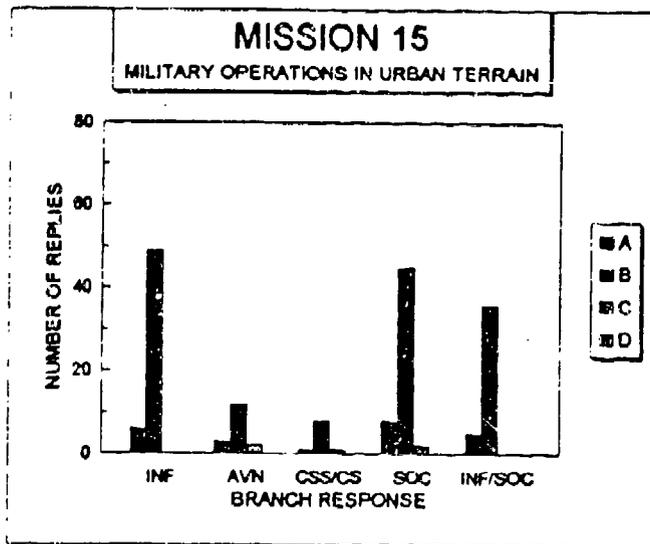
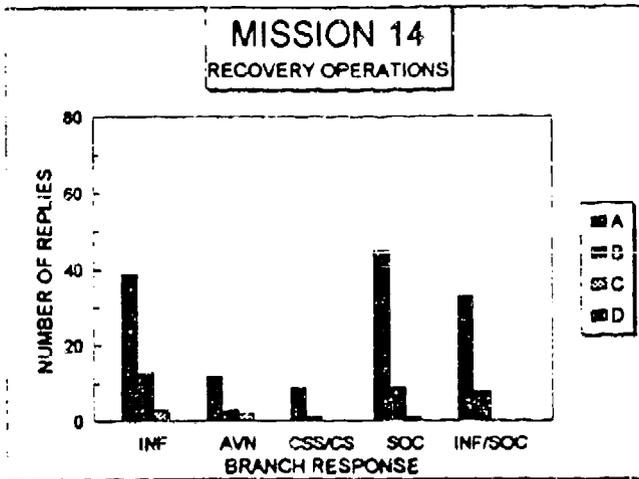
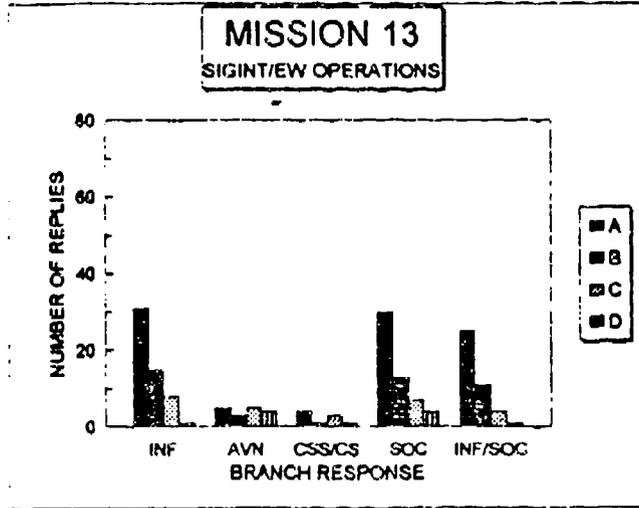
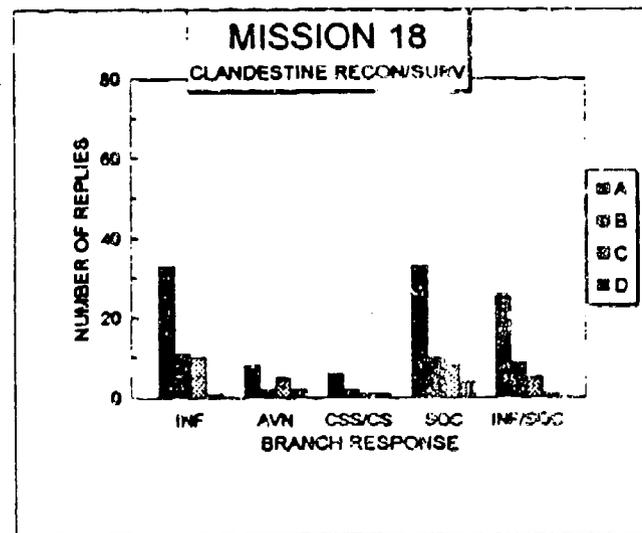
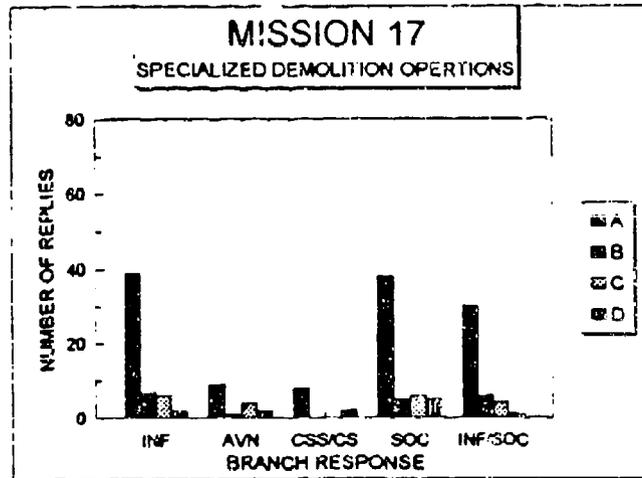
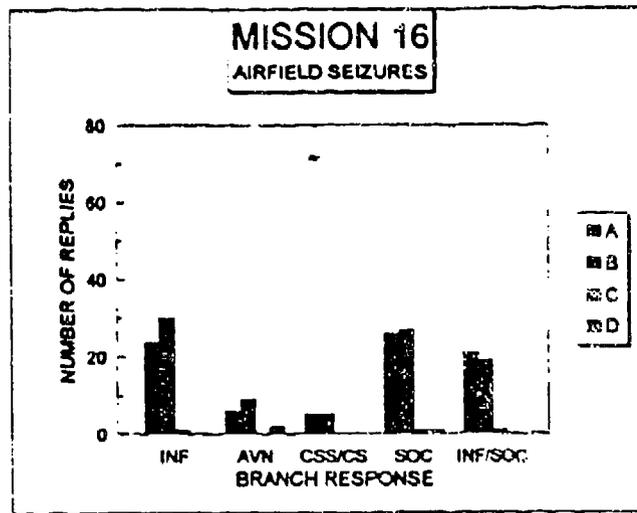
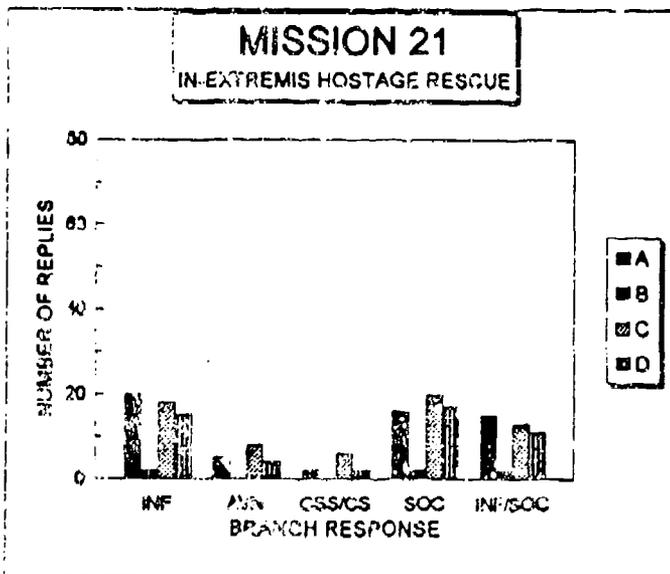
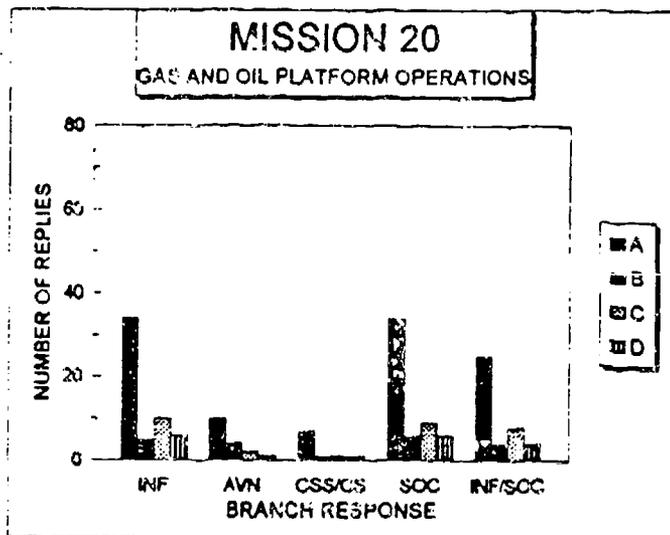
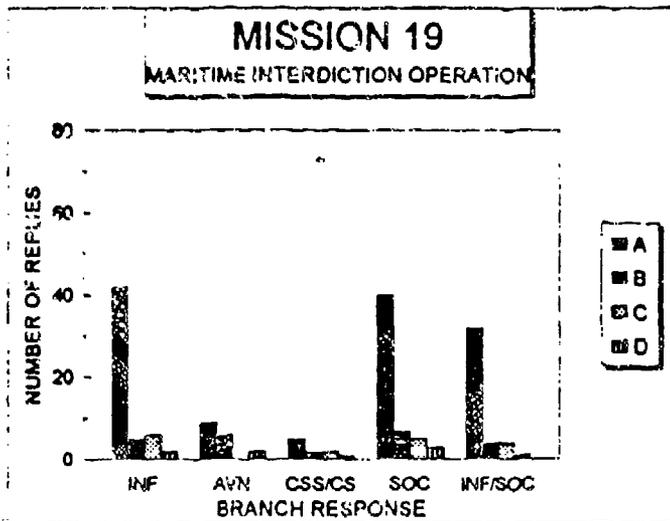


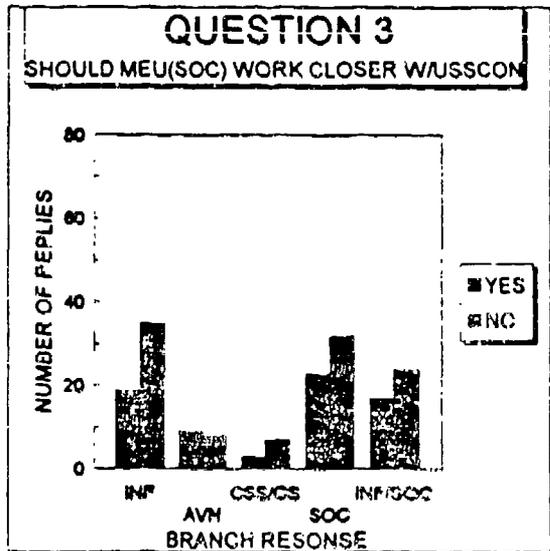
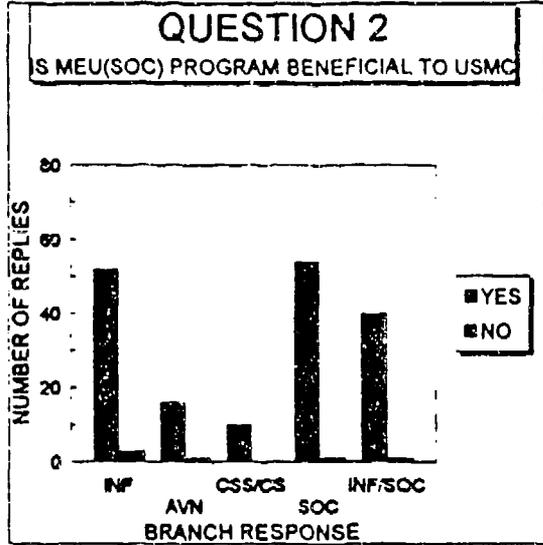
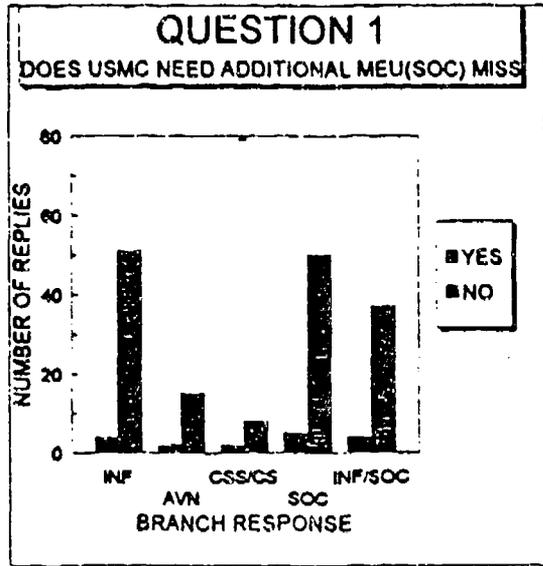
FIGURE 30. MI AVN CSS/CS SOC INF/SOC  
BRANCH RESPONSE





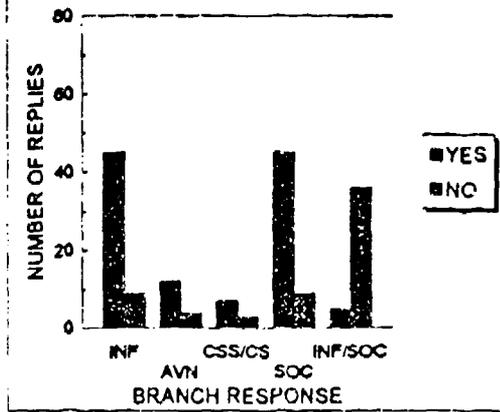






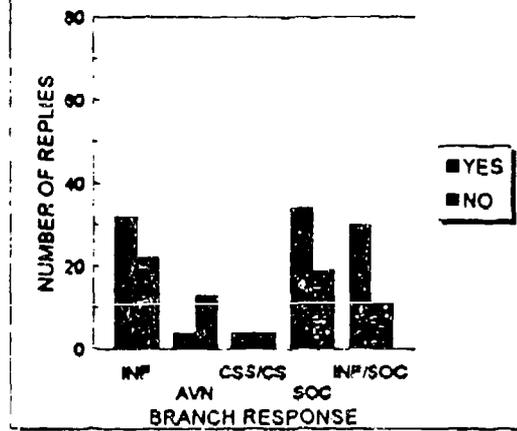
### QUESTION 4

DOES MEU(SOC) ENHANCE OR DEGRADE



### QUESTION 5

SHOULD USMC USE RETS SYSTEM



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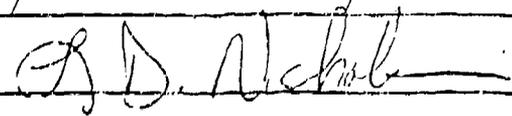
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