

**STRATEGY
RESEARCH
PROJECT**

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**AIR FORCE SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND:
MAKING A "REAL" AIR FORCE MAJOR COMMAND**

BY

**LIEUTENANT COLONEL JOHN A. HILL
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ABSTRACT

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Air Force Special Operations Command (AFSOC) was established 22 May 1990 as a major command (MAJCOM) of the United States Air Force and as the Air Force component of U.S. Special Operations Command, a unified command. AFSOC's small size and lack of three or four-star leadership puts it at a disadvantage with the other Air Force MAJCOMs. This lack of stature effects AFSOC's ability to influence fundamental issues such as its own roles and missions. A review of the Air Force Special Operations Forces (AFSOF) history shows that the forefathers of today's AFSOF provided a cornerstone in the building and evolution of the roles, missions, tactics, techniques, and procedures of all of special operations forces today. The small size of AFSOC possibly could cause over 50 years of lessons be lost if the command would not remain as an Air Force MAJCOM. A proposal to expand the role of AFSOC reflects its historic past and captures previously contained roles and missions. A greater AFSOF capability provides the joint force commander and the Air Force the most efficient use of US taxpayers' dollars.

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INTRODUCTION

Air Force Special Operations Command (AFSOC) is the Air Force major command (MAJCOM) responsible for Air Force special operations and is the Air Force component to United States Special Operations Command (USSOCOM). This paper focuses on the strategic role Air Force Special Operations Forces (AFSOF) and AFSOC have historically played in support of US national defense policy, improving AFSOC's stature as an Air Force MAJCOM, and AFSOC's necessary growth to remain relevant. A key feature of that growth is the return of combat search and rescue (CSAR) to a single AFSOC focal point.

AFSOC is often viewed as being irrelevant by the rest of the Air Force. The commander normally does not have a chair at significant meetings of Air Force leadership (e.g., four- and three-star general conferences known as "Corona") and therefore limited voice in significant Air Force issues. The AFSOC commander may be invited for meetings where issues are only pertinent to his command. The rationale for this exclusion is easy to see. When compared to the Combat Air Forces' (CAF) MAJCOMS, AFSOC does not compare in personnel and equipment. Air Combat Command (ACC) has 108,000 active duty and 97,000 reserve component members (RC) with more than 2400 aircraft. United States Air Forces in Europe (USAFE) has 32,000 personnel and 230 aircraft. Pacific Air Forces contains 45,000 personnel and approximately 300 aircraft. AFSOC's numbers are 9700 personnel

and about 100 aircraft.¹ AFSOC barely compares to the CAF's numbered Air Forces. For example, 12th Air Force oversees 10 active duty wings and 21 RC units. AFSOC oversees 1 active duty wing, 2 groups, and one RC wing.

Furthermore, the rank of AFSOC's commanding officer (two-star) is one star less than the CAF's number air force's (three-star), and two stars short of the CAF's four-star MAJCOM commanders. This issue was highlighted in an assessment to the Senators who proposed the legislation that established United States Special Operations Command.² Mr. John Collin's (author of that assessment) main points concerning AFSOC commanders centered on their lack of special operations experience and their career ascension along a conventional Air Force officer's path. The normal reward for AFSOC command is retirement, even for those brought up on the conventional side.

Though high-lighted to Congress and the Department of Defense (DOD), and often discussed at the higher levels of command within USSOCOM and the Air Force, the two-star commander position remains. If AFSOC wants to remain a relevant Air Force MAJCOM for the foreseeable future, it needs to assess its overall responsibilities (e.g., roles and missions) along with the rank and stature of its commander.

BACKGROUND

The legacy of Air Force fixed and rotary wing aircraft performing unconventional missions has a famous and not so famous history that dates back to World War II. Innovative airmen, participating in what is now call special operations, provided the legacy, honors, and lineage for today's Air Force Special Operations Force (AFSOF).³

In World War II special U.S. Army Air Forces (AAF) units air-dropped and resupplied agents of the Office of Strategic Services (OSS) in the European Theater in 1943. These clandestine, behind the lines, secret infiltrations and exfiltrations of OSS agents were accomplished over France, Norway, Denmark, northern Italy, eastern Europe, and the Balkans. Following the end of the war, by October of 1945, these special European AAF units and the OSS had unfortunately been disbanded and disappeared.⁴

In the Pacific in World War II, Air Commandos, led by Lt Col Philip Cochran and Lt Col John Alison, supported Gen Orde C. Wingate's Chindit forces in Burma by infiltrating, resupplying, and exfiltrating them up to 200 miles behind Japanese lines. These Air Commandos were further diversified and displayed a special capability and adaptability by providing close air support (CAS), top cover (by air), and medical evacuation for the troops on the ground.⁵ Also of great significance during these actions in the Pacific was the first helicopter combat rescues

occurred at the hands of these same Air Commandos.⁶ The Air Commandos versatility to perform a variety of aviation missions was a precursor of things to come, and a growing legacy. With victory in the Pacific, as in Europe, all air commando/special air operations capabilities were disbanded.

Disbanding of special units (and their unique capabilities) was unfortunate because by 1951 a special operations aviation force was required in Korea to assist intelligence and partisan organizations in behind the line activities. Under the cover of unit identities such as Air Resupply and Communications Wings and as unique units and detachments of troop carrier squadrons, air commando and special air unit airmen flew behind the lines into North Korea and Manchuria dropping agents and leaflets.⁷

Another common trend for US Air Force special operations units in Korea was their intimate involvement with assisting in combat search and rescue (CSAR) efforts. Special operations aviators with their organic aircraft,⁸ and covert land and maritime units, known as Crash Rescue Boat Squadrons were assisting with and conducting primary CSAR.⁹ Though not their primary mission, all units did what was needed to be done--give US and allied personnel a chance to fight another day.

In the years between Korea and Viet Nam, the Air Resupply and Communications Service continued with special air operations in the form of psychological warfare, aerial resupply, and the specialized airlift of infiltration and extraction of agents and

political entities behind the Iron Curtain. Some of those extractions closely resembled CSAR scenarios.¹⁰ When the Air Force tired of these covert/ clandestine operation units, they transferred the air unconventional warfare mission to the Air National Guard.¹¹

During the conflict in Southeast Asia, Air Force unconventional warfare units, later designated special operations, conducted counterinsurgency, direct action, close air support, and psychological operations missions.¹² During this time the lines that separated certain special operations missions and capabilities blurred when compared with South East Asia CSAR efforts. The Son Tay Raid, though a classic direct action type of special operation, is also considered a combat rescue attempt. The same point can be made for the later Mayaguez rescue mission.

Two historical points follow for consideration by those who think today's AFSOF is all that should be considered SOF, and CSAR is best left for non-SOF because the business of special operations is far too important to be watered down by CSAR. First, integral in the total theater CSAR efforts and the special operations of this era was the medium speed CAS capability provided by the A-1 Skyraiders.¹³ The equivalent of that today is the A-10 Thunderbolt II. Second, four of the five Air Force Medals of Honor awarded to Air Commando/Special Operators during the Viet Nam War went to aviators conducting CSAR operations.¹⁴ Those heroes did what had to be done without letting the

technical or doctrinal differences between CAS, special operations, and CSAR interfere with a theater commander's job of attempting to save lives and provide hope to those who faced becoming a prisoner of war or death.

Following the Southeast Asia conflict, AFSOF, along with its Army counterparts, were drastically reduced in manpower and organizational structure. The gunship fleet was on its way to the boneyards, long-range infiltration/exfiltration aircraft were soon to be in the reserves, and the helicopter fleet were quickly becoming an afterthought.¹⁵

This last act of degrading AFSOF capability set the stage for the 1980 failure in the Iranian desert. The assembled ad hoc rescue team almost pulled off the rescue of 53 American hostages, but the lack of a SOF vertical lift capability (equipment and crew able to conduct the mission) and SOF command and control structure resulted in national failure, loss of life, and military embarrassment.¹⁶

The major action concerning AFSOF following DESERT ONE was their transfer to Military Airlift Command in 1983. More on the implications of this later. AFSOF was tested early in this new relationship with OPERATION URGENT FURY in Grenada in 1983. This operation looked initially to be a success but had many of the same problem areas that occurred and precipitated the failure during the Iranian rescue attempt. Unclear command and control,

joint operations with forces that do not regularly conduct joint operations, and unnecessary participation by all services.¹⁷

**ESTABLISHMENT OF US SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND
(USSOCOM)**

With a stormy history as a baseline, Congress in the mid-1980s was adamant about correcting the US military's shortfalls with regard to special operations activities. An unexpected catalyst for the revolutionary change came from AFSOF. Following DESERT ONE, a primary concern for AFSOF was the lack of a modern long-range infiltration/exfiltration platform, specifically the capability that would be provided by the MC-130H Combat Talon II. This aircraft was to be an updated version of a Viet Nam era AFSOF workhorse, the MC-130E Combat Talon I.

Congress continually funded the MC-130H only to have the money reprogrammed by the Air Force and Military Airlift Command at the last minute. This left the MC-130H as the number one unfunded program and AFSOF still without modern long-range capability.¹⁸

When discovered, the anger and frustration with Congress didn't last very long. A long Department of Defense, Joint Chiefs of Staff, Army, Air Force, and Navy history of not providing focus to the nation's SOF capability, ignited by this single incident, brought about swift change. Within one year

after the Goldwaters-Nichols act restructured DOD, United States Special Operations Command was placed into law, in 1987.

USSOCOM's continued existence is listed under Title 10, United States Code Armed Forces.¹⁹

AFSOF's long desire to have its own Air Force major command followed relatively soon thereafter. The Air Force created Headquarters, Air Force Special Operations Command on 22 May 1990, replacing Military Airlift Command's 23rd Air Force in an effort to "institutionalize the special operations warfare specialty in the Air Force, and...provide the opportunity to focus more directly on joint and service responsibilities."²⁰

With the completion of this quick recap of 50 years of AFSOF, from the World War II Carpetbaggers to today's USSOCOM, the focus now shifts to what AFSOF does today, its roles and missions. Is AFSOF doing everything it can and should be doing?

SO ROLES AND MISSIONS

The law of the land says that special operations activities are: direct action, strategic reconnaissance, unconventional warfare, foreign internal defense, civil affairs, psychological operations, counterterrorism, humanitarian assistance, theater search and rescue, and such other activities as may be specified by the President or the Secretary of Defense.²¹

The Joint Staff and by *de facto* USSOCOM are responsible for the policy, roles and missions for all of special operations. The legislated activities and realities of current military policy, world situations, and USSOCOM Commander in Chief's desires are now interpreted into the following missions: direct action, special reconnaissance, unconventional warfare, foreign internal defense, civil affairs, psychological operations, combating terrorism, information operations, and counterproliferation of weapons of mass destruction. Collateral activities for SOF include coalition support, combat search and rescue, counterdrug activities, countermine activities, humanitarian assistance, security assistance and special activities.²² AFSOF's missions follow close suit, but not exactly.

AFSOC currently states it conducts unconventional warfare, direct action, special reconnaissance, counterterrorism, foreign internal defense, humanitarian assistance, psychological operations, personnel recovery and counternarcotics.²³ The delta in what AFSOC does compared to joint doctrine is a product of lack of organic capability in certain areas (e.g., civil affairs) or newly evolving doctrine and policy (e.g., information operations, counterproliferation of weapons of mass destruction). The glowing delta (or inconsistency) deals with combat search and rescue.

THE MISSING MISSION

USSOCOM has been unable to accept CSAR as a principal special operations mission. Even though Congress made it a special operations activity, USSOCOM and reflectively AFSOC have side-stepped this responsibility. The CSAR escape clause for all of SOF has been the legislation itself--for where is written the list of special operations activities, it does so with the following caveat: "insofar as it relates to special operations."²⁴ This ambiguity was highlighted to Congress, yet still exists.²⁵

SOF argues that its only obligation is to conduct CSAR for its own forces. If one uses that argument, then does SOF conduct direct action missions only for themselves? Unconventional warfare missions for themselves? All missions are conducted on behalf of the theater combatant commander, and not just for one component's needs or desires.

A flicker of light for accepting CSAR responsibility has previously occurred with regard to AFSOF. AFSOC and the AFSOF community made a play in August 1991 to assume the armed forces CSAR role and the subsequent mission. The focus of that effort was centered around recognition of CSAR as a special operation mission and that AFSOF expected to perform it. That expectation was founded in the reality of current real world deployments to Turkey and Southwest Asia. To bring this into a successful policy would have required close cooperation and recognition of the CSAR

issue and theater shortfalls between the Air Force and USSOCOM. The time was right to fix the problem, but the end result was the status quo.

Less than two years later another opportunity arose to have SOF take on its legislated responsibility for CSAR. The 1993 Report on the Roles, Missions, and Functions of the Armed Forces opened up the CSAR issue along with a multitude of others.²⁶ USSOCOM initially made a strong play to assume the role, but at the final call its position became quite watered down and proved to be ineffective.²⁷ The final product recommended the services (and not USSOCOM specifically) retain responsibility for CSAR.²⁸ The unfortunate status quo was thus codified by General Colin Powell.

The reality of CSAR capabilities for DOD is one reflected by the Air Force's own CSAR doctrine. This doctrine admits to the CSAR shortfall by emphasizing its capability of operating in only a low to medium threat environment and how Air Force organic CSAR assets must use threat avoidance procedures.²⁹ The actuality of who performs true CSAR for the joint force commander in a fiscally constrained DOD environment continues to be the force that has been an essential part of CSAR since World War II--AFSOF.

AFSOF, with the full backing of USSOCOM and with executive agreements made with the Air Force, should take the lead for all of SOF and assume the theater CSAR mission that was called for by

Senators Cohen and Nunn in the enabling legislation. Assuming the mission means the cross-walk of the appropriate CSAR assets and crews, with an understanding that their focus will remain CSAR, and they will normally not be siphoned off for other special operations. Moreover, other SOF assets will focus on their traditional duties, and not CSAR. Result: No more "tap-dancing" around the CSAR issue. Theater CINCs continue to look to SOF, and in particular AFSOF to perform this critical wartime mission.

The Air Force thought it was a good idea back in 1983. The chief of AF plans stressed the synergistic bond between CSAR and AFSOF and the operational logic by "providing a single command responsible for budgeting, manning, training, organizing, and equipping of those forces."³⁰ The first commander of this CSAR/SOF organization (23rd Air Force) emphasized this natural blending of forces with similar weapon systems and tactics into a capability orientated force vice a mission orientated force.³¹

However the purification of 23rd Air Force (23AF), separating SOF and rescue again, came in 1989 with the stand-up of AFSOC. Unfortunately, the marriage of CSAR and SOF was a rocky one with inter- and intra-service and USSOCOM infighting brought to the fore by modern day SOF purists. They saw a diverse role for SOF and were frustrated by existing dual chains of command through Air Force and Military Airlift Command (for CSAR)

and USSOCOM and its theater special operations components (for special operations).³²

The end of the Cold War and reduced force structure throughout the Department of Defense have brought about another reality concerning CSAR. Air rescue forces are under the responsibility of the CAF (ACC, USAFE, and PACAF).³³ That being well and good, SOF, and in particular AFSOF, is a theater CINC's CSAR force of choice because "SOF aircraft [are] best suited to conduct long-range personnel recovery missions..."³⁴ The CAF focus is on local base rescue and permissive threat operations.

AFSOC should take on the CSAR mission, using dedicated CSAR assets cross-walked over from the combat air forces, on behalf of the Air Force and the entire joint community. However, service specific low-threat and local area *search and rescue* capabilities need to be retained in the Navy, Army, and Marine Corps. All Air Force active duty and reserve component CSAR fixed and rotary wing assets, support force structure, and budget should be returned to where they were in 1983. The CSAR assets will focus on that mission, as much as Army psychological operations units focus on their mission. Occasional and natural support among the special operations community should be nothing to fear. CSAR, three squadrons of CAS assets, and current AFSOF would have a good home in AFSOC--and AFSOC would have a force structure and responsibility that goes with being an Air Force MAJCOM.

AFSOC IN A GREATER MAJOR COMMAND ROLE

USSOCOM was created to provide a focus and a professional home for SOF, as well as to fix proponency for two major elements of bureaucratic power--money and people. AFSOC was also challenged to avoid the problems which beset the failures at DESERT ONE (Iran) and during OPERATION URGENT FURY (Grenada).

If AFSOC was ever reduced or threatened to be reduced to a numbered air force in Air Combat Command to save money and/or manpower positions, it would probably end AFSOF for good. An effort tried last by the tactical air forces in 1980. Closing this small MAJCOM could present some savings and would allow SOF detractors the ability to show that USSOCOM can be rendered irrelevant. But history has shown that some national crisis would probably arise and the failure would be linked to a lack of a special aviation capability beyond that of Army special operations helicopters.

AFSOC should be made into a "proper" USAF major command. The expertise that has grown and been seasoned since the mid-1980's should be preserved and the officers and airmen of AFSOC should know that their AFSOC commander has a seat at the "big" table with the members of the combatant MAJCOMs (i.e., Air Combat Command, United States Air Forces Europe, Pacific Air Forces, and Air Mobility Command) and the potential for much more. AFSOC commanders should not be limited to "two-stars and out." Three-star AFSOC commanders would have the opportunity to be nominated

for that coveted fourth star and CINC/CSAF positions. Advantages to all AFSOF would be realized by enhanced status throughout the Air Force--further leading to enhanced assignment and leadership opportunities for all.

A standard numbered air force command and control type node should be developed so that AFSOC can perform a Joint Force Air Component Commander function when a mission so dictates (e.g., OPERATION JUST CAUSE in Panama). Such a node would be the training and operational basis for special operations liaison elements (SOLE), joint special operations air component commanders (JSOACC) (and staffs), and other SOF liaison duties.

To make this JFACC integration and building process complete, in cooperation with the Air Force, AFSOC should bring back the 23rd Air Force (23AF)--the moral and physical equivalent of the CAF's warfighting NAFs. 23AF, with a world-wide SOF aviation focus, would provide critical special operations and CSAR command and control nodes to joint special operations air component commanders and theater JFACCs. More importantly, when a situation so dictates, 23AF could function as a stand-alone JFACC, giving SOF commanders, who become joint task force commanders, a greater capability and understanding of the "air picture."

A revitalized 23AF would have an air operations center at Hurlburt Field, Florida linked to the Joint Blue Flag and command and control battlelabs--making it a complete part of the total

Air Force. The rebirth of 23rd Air Force is appropriate with much greater and appropriate responsibilities than when it was born in 1983.

The key for AFSOC becoming a more relevant MAJCOM is for it to become more than the just the fixed wing focused USSOCOM combat support aviation element. A more robust AFSOC, along with the entire SOF team, allows for greater supporting action, flexibility, and specialized capability to a theater combatant commander.

AFSOC could assume more of the CAS proponency share with ACC. A cross-walk of 3 A-10 squadron's full of force structure and equipment would provide a specialized CAS force, trained in conventional CAS, but now specialized to support CSAR and select special operations (i.e., direct action, unconventional warfare). AFSOC already has a significant aspect of the Air Force CAS puzzle with its AC-130 fleet, and specialized CAS weaponeering and tactics could have a home with AFSOC, as it did before in Southeast Asia.

Having an alternate "home" for CAS and its respective aircraft has a rationale that is consistent with the constant "right-sizing" of military organizations and not so distant Air Force history. In 1989, and just prior to DESERT STORM, the Air Force had an all out effort underway to delete CAS as a mission of the Air Force (as well as special operations).³⁵ Today's Air Force doctrine still emphasizes that CAS rarely achieves

campaign-level objectives and downplays its overall importance.³⁶ CAS may again need a "home" in the not so distant future.

AFSOC 2000

The Air Force of the next century is making a transition from the *air and space* force to a *space and air* force (emphasis added).³⁷ This concept reflects the Air Force vision of the future and is consistent with aerospace doctrine since the Air Force began. Unfortunately the aggressors around the world are not always susceptible or threatened (i.e., restrained) by the modern and futuristic U.S. Air Force.

Furthermore, the future of conflict involving US forces will more than likely involve ground combat, and technology alone will not provide the *silver bullet* to win the next war with F-22, B-2, JVX, or even a super computer. A look at the future which supports the necessity for conventional ground forces and special operations forces (inclusive of unconventional aviation capabilities) states that "Acknowledging war's inherent unpredictability, such a view of war renounces over reliance on any single capability, seeks maximum force versatility, and requires that military operations conform to the peculiar conditions and demands of the conflict itself."³⁸

This paper has previously shown how an unconventional aviation capability, well below the respective modern day

technology, was required to do the bidding of the U.S. National Command Authority. Since USSOCOM became a Combatant Command, there has been no institutional threat to AFSOC and AFSOF. As tax dollars for defense become ever tighter and the current legacy AFSOC aircraft become older, the harmonious existence of this smallest of MAJCOMs could wane.

The National Defense Panel recognized the future of SOF and USSOCOM in its findings. They stated that the focus for the command would be in maintaining global stability and countering evolving threats, including weapons of mass destruction.³⁹ AFSOF of the next century will require as many tools as possible to provide the aviation capability to the SOF community.

A robust AFSOC, as presented in this paper, would be the home for the non-space, futuristic and "silver-bullet" Air Force of the next century. There has been a fifty year plus tradition in having an asymmetrical, unconventional aviation capability that complements the basic Air Force fundamentals of speed, range, and flexibility. A larger, more relevant, and Air Force-respected AFSOC would provide joint force commanders one stop shopping when looking for unconventional aviation capabilities.

AFSOC already has one-half of the CAS equation, the AC-130 gunships. That one-half is not a matter of total CAS force structure but more a matter of employment concept. Together with A-10s and their eventual replacement (maybe even the AF swing force, F-16 fleet) one has a "muddy boots capability" part of the

Air Force, all in the AFSOC community. For doctrine purists, the concept of CAS wraps itself nicely under the special operations mission umbrella of direct action (e.g., AC-130 operations in a combat or combat support role).⁴⁰ And with the now possible return of the "Sandy concept" provided by CAS aircraft in support of CSAR,⁴¹ AFSOC and SOF would have the basic force structure to round out the total ability to pursue theater CSAR.

In summary, AFSOC 2000 would consist of the following:

- A command structure under a three-star general responsible for expanded mission and fiscal responsibilities.
- All current AFSOF, including special tactics teams and current aircraft, and proposed follow-on weapon systems, and the CV-22.
- A numbered air force command and control node with the capability to function as a stand-alone JFACC.
- The expansion of overseas AFSOF groups to wings with the inclusion of CAS and CSAR assets.
- A significant RC build-up due to the return of AF reserve component CSAR assets.
- Forces capable of supporting a tailored package of an air expeditionary task force.⁴² This could be in conjunction with other SOF or as an additive aviation force.

- An organization with a historically based, complete ability to support a joint force commander with the specialized air power required to meet national strategic objectives.

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ENDNOTES

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¹⁹ Title 10, United States Code Armed Forces (Amended Through December 31, 1996), Section 167. Unified combatant command for special operations forces. An excellent look at the establishment of USSOCOM and the political aspects thereof is contained in William G. Boykin's "Special Operations and Low-Intensity Conflict Legislation: Why Was It Passed and Have the Voids Been Filled?" (Carlisle Barracks, PA: US Army War College, 12 April 1991).

²⁰ Message, 051920Z Jun 90, Commander in Chief, United States Special Operations Command to the Secretary of Defense, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Service Chiefs of Staff, and Combatant commanders, 5 June 1990.

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²³ www.af.mil/news/factsheets/Air_Force_Special_Operations.html

²⁴ Title 10, United States Code Armed Forces, Section 167.

²⁵ Collins, 133.

²⁶ Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Report on the Roles, Missions, and Functions of the Armed Forces of the United States (Washington: 10 Feb 93).

²⁷ This "inside information" is a product of the author being a member of the USSOCOM/J5 staff during this process.

²⁸ Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Report on the Roles, Missions, and Functions of the Armed Forces of the United States, III-24.

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³² The Air Commando Association Newsletter, December 1992, contains a letter to the editor from the former Deputy Commander in Chief of USSOCOM, Major General Hugh L. Cox III, which lays out his unique perspective of what transpired. General Cox was a SOF purist who strongly believed in separating SOF from CSAR forces.

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³⁸ Van Riper, Pual and Scales, Robert H., Jr. "Preparing for War in the 21st Century," Parameters, Summer 1997, 6.

³⁹ National Defense Panel. Transforming Defense, National Security in the 21st Century (Washington: December 1997), 71.

⁴⁰ Joint Staff. Joint Publication 3-05, Final Coordination Draft. This definition easily accommodates special operations close air support for both A-10s and AC-130s: "Short duration **strikes** and other small-scale offensive actions by special operations forces to seize, destroy, capture, recover, or inflict damage on designated personnel or materiel. In the conduct of these 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." The basic definition of close air support from Joint Pub 3-09.3 is "Air action by fixed- and rotary-wing aircraft against hostile targets which are in close proximity to friendly forces and which require detailed integration of each air mission with the fire and movement of those forces." These definitions are not in conflict with each other. The use of CAS integrated with special operations has been ongoing for 50 years, and is a central theme of this paper.

⁴¹ Tilford, Earl H. Jr. Search and Rescue in Southeast Asia, 1961-1975 (Washington: Office of Air Force History: 1980), 1, 38, 40. A-1E, Skyraiders were called Sandys and would provide CSAR close air support and rescue escort (RESCORT).

⁴² Department of the Air Force, Air Force Doctrine Document 1, Air Force Basic Doctrine (Washington: September 1997) 71-72.

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