RANGERS AND THE STRATEGIC REQUIREMENTS FOR DIRECT ACTION FORCES

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MASTER OF MILITARY ART AND SCIENCE

by

AIDIS L. ZUNDE, MAJ, USA
B.S., United States Military Academy, West Point, New York, 1984
M.A., Uniwersytet Warszawski, Warsaw, Poland, 1997

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Major Aidis L. Zunde, U.S. Army

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This study presents a constellation of capabilities that a direct action force must possess in order to accomplish these missions most effectively. Seven of these, derived from principles of special operations, are generic to direct action. The remaining four stem from the current world environment and the situation of the United States.

This analysis finds that the 75th Ranger Regiment, the current ground direct action force, has all of these required capabilities. Other potential candidates for such missions, such as other SOF, the 82nd Airborne Division, and Marine Expeditionary Units, do not possess all of the capabilities necessary to maximize the probability for mission accomplishment.

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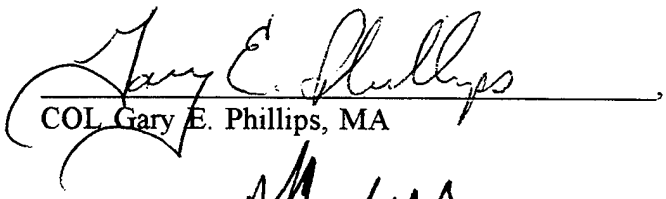

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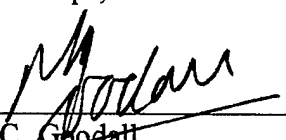

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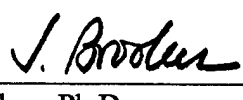

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ABSTRACT

RANGERS AND THE STRATEGIC REQUIREMENTS FOR DIRECT ACTION FORCES by MAJ Aidis L. Zunde, 130 pages.

The national security and national military strategies describe the objectives (ends) of U.S. national security policy. Special operations provide ways to achieve these ends, to include direct action. The tools for direct action include small teams and stand-off attacks with precision-guided munitions, among others. This analysis indicates that the achievement of strategic ends also requires a large-scale special operations ground direct action force to accomplish direct action missions beyond the capabilities of other assets. These fall into two groups: strategic raids and "tip of the spear" forcible entry operations.

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This analysis finds that the 75th Ranger Regiment, the current ground direct action force, has all of these required capabilities. Other potential candidates for such missions, such as other SOF, the 82nd Airborne Division, and Marine Expeditionary Units, do not possess all of the capabilities necessary to maximize the probability for mission accomplishment.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AFSOC	Air Force Special Operations Command
AMT	advanced military operations in urban terrain (MOUT) techniques
ARG	amphibious ready group
ARSOF	Army Special Operations Forces
AWE	Army Warfighting Experiment
BDA	battle damage assessment
C2	command and control
CA	civil affairs
CAS	close air support
CBT	combatting terrorism
CD	counterdrug
CINC	commander-in-chief
CINCSOC	Commander-in-Chief, United States Special Operations Command
CJCS	Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff
CM	countermine
COLT	combat observation and lasing team
CONUS	continental United States
CP	counterproliferation
CQB	close quarters battle
CSAR	combat search and rescue
CSS	combat service support

DA	direct action
DTLOMS	doctrine, training, leader development, organization, materiel, and soldier systems
EW	electronic warfare
FID	foreign internal defense
FIST	fire support team
FLEETEX	fleet exercise
FSE	fire support element
GCE	ground combat element
HA	humanitarian assistance
HHC	headquarters and headquarters company
HMMWV	high mobility multi-purpose wheeled vehicle
IW	information warfare
JCS	Joint Chiefs of Staff
JRX	joint readiness exercises
JSOTF	joint special operations task force
JSPS	Joint Strategic Planning System
JTF	joint task force
LAV	light armored vehicle
METL	mission essential task list
MEU(SOC)	Marine Expeditionary Unit (Special Operations Capable)
MOOTW	military operations other than war

MOUT	military operations in urban terrain
MSPF	Maritime Special Purpose Force
MTOE	modified table of organization and equipment
NBC	nuclear, biological, chemical
NCA	national command authorities
NEO	noncombatant evacuation operations
NMS	national military strategy
NSD	national security directive
NSS	national security strategy
OPSEC	operational security
PDF	Panamanian Defense Forces
PGM	precision-guided munition
POW	prisoner of war
PSYOP	psychological operations
RBA	revolution in business affairs
ROP	Ranger orientation program
RFS	relief for standards
RMA	revolution in military affairs
RSOV	Ranger special operations vehicle
SA	security assistance
SAM	surface-to-air missile
SAR	search and rescue

SEAD	suppression of enemy air defenses
SEAL	Sea-Air-Land
SOCEX	special operations capability exercise
SOF	special operations forces
SOP	standard operating procedures
SMU	Special Mission Unit
SR	special reconnaissance
TF	task force
TRUE	training in urban environments
UAV	unmanned aerial vehicle
USMC	United States Marine Corps
USSOCOM	United States Special Operations Command
UW	unconventional warfare
WMD	weapons of mass destruction

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

> The security environment in which we live is dynamic and uncertain, replete with numerous challenges. Ethnic conflict and outlaw states threaten stability in many regions of the world. Weapons of mass destruction, terrorism, organized crime and environmental damage are global concerns that transcend national borders. Yet, this is also a period of great promise.[1]
>
> The White House, *A National Security Strategy for a New Century*

Special Operations Forces in a Changing Environment

As the Armed Forces of the United States move into the post-Cold War era, they must review their force structure in the light of changing international threats, declining defense budgets, and shrinking forces. In less than ten years, the threat to U.S. national security has changed significantly. No longer must the military devote its primary focus to a high-intensity conventional war against the Warsaw Pact on the North German Plain. In the short and medium term, the United States no longer faces what can be considered to be a military peer competitor. As a result of these developments, domestic political pressure is driving the downsizing of the Cold War force structure.

At the same time, however, many threats to the national security of the United States still exist and it must be able to respond to them. Albeit less obvious than the military might of the former Soviet Union arrayed in tank armies on the far side of the

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[1]The White House, *A National Security Strategy for a New Century* (Washington: Government Printing Office, May 1997), 1.

Elbe River, these current threats are still very dangerous. The threats America faces today range over a wide spectrum from regional instability, terrorism, and drug trafficking to the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and major regional conflict. In order to be able to meet these threats within the limits imposed by a constrained budget environment, the armed forces must carefully consider the strategic requirements which flow from the national security strategy (NSS). These requirements should be the foundation for analysis of the missions and force structure of U.S. military forces.

An ongoing analysis of this sort is especially important to the United States Special Operations Command (USSOCOM) and Army Special Operations Forces (ARSOF). An increase in regional instability throughout the world has gone hand in hand with the declining threat of major conventional war. In the present post-Cold War environment, the range of potential military missions has increased, as has the possibilities for the employment of military force. Major General William Kernan and Lieutenant Colonel Thomas Maffey, in their article "The USSOCOM Perspective on Emerging SOF Roles and Missions," argue that special operations forces (SOF) are ideally suited to take up many of these new challenges.[2] The United States must, therefore, comprehensively analyze its strategic political and military requirements to determine the capabilities that it needs and expects from its special operations forces.

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[2]William F. Kernan and Thomas C. Maffey, "The USSOCOM Perspective on Emerging SOF Roles and Missions," in Richard H. Shultz, ed., *Roles and Missions of SOF in the Aftermath of the Cold War* (MacDill AFB, FL: U.S. Special Operations Command, 1995), 215, 222-223.

Before going much further, however, one must define exactly what one is discussing. Special operations cover a great range of activities that may take place anywhere along the spectrum between peaceful competition and total war. This broad scope of action interferes with a simple definition of the special operations field. The issue is further complicated by the fact that the line between special and conventional operations is not clear-cut. Whether a particular operation is "special" or "conventional" may sometimes depend on a combination of the objectives, the forces employed, the techniques involved, and one's own perspective. Additionally, conventional forces may, on occasion, find themselves conducting special operations. Similarly, special operations forces have (unfortunately, quite often) also been tasked with the execution of conventional missions.

Joint Publication 1-02, *Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms*, offers the following definition:

> Special operations. Operations conducted by specially organized, trained and equipped military and paramilitary forces to achieve military, political, economic, or psychological objectives by unconventional military means in hostile, denied, or politically sensitive areas. These operations are conducted during peacetime competition, conflict, and war, independently or in coordination with operations of conventional, nonspecial operations forces. Political-military considerations frequently shape special operations, requiring clandestine, covert, or low visibility techniques, and oversight at the national level. Special operations differ from conventional operations in degree of physical and political risk, operational techniques, mode of employment, independence from friendly support, and dependence on detailed operational intelligence and indigenous assets.[3]

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[3]The Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint Publication 1-02, *Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1994), 353.

Granted, the above definition does not clearly delineate the area of special operations. Unfortunately, a more concrete definition is probably not possible. One must do what one can with what one has, given the nature of the subject. At the very least, however, one can further break this broad spectrum of operations down into smaller pieces.

In doing so, one finds that special operations missions fall into several categories. *United States Special Operations Forces: 1996 Posture Statement* lists the following SOF principal missions:

1. Counterproliferation (CP)
2. Special reconnaissance (SR)
3. Psychological operations (PSYOP)
4. Direct action (DA)
5. Foreign internal defense (FID)
6. Civil affairs (CA)
7. Combatting terrorism (CBT)
8. Information warfare (IW)/command and control (C2) warfare
9. Unconventional warfare (UW)

This posture statement also lists the following collateral activities for special operations forces:

1. Coalition support
2. Combat search and rescue (CSAR)
3. Counterdrug activities (CD)

4. Countermine activities (CM)

5. Humanitarian assistance (HA)

6. Security assistance (SA)

7. Special activities[4]

As already mentioned, this is a very broad spectrum of missions, based upon a wide range of requirements. These requirements are addressed by special operations forces from all of the services, almost always working in a joint environment. The full analysis of this vast and complicated field is clearly beyond the scope of this work. Instead, we will focus our attention only upon one of these missions--direct action (DA).

> Direct action. 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 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.[5]

Furthermore, this work will concentrate only upon those direct action missions which may require the use of large-scale ground forces. For the purposes of this analysis, large-scale ground direct action operations are defined as those requiring forces of company-size or larger. For the sake of simplicity, when "direct action

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[4]U.S. Special Operations Command, *United States Special Operations Forces: 1996 Posture Statement* (MacDill AFB, FL: U.S. Special Operations Command, 1994), 31-32.

[5]Joint Publication 1-02, 116.

forces" are mentioned, the term refers to large-scale special operations ground direct action forces, unless otherwise indicated.

The Requirement for a Large-scale Special Operations Ground Direct Action Force

Presently, the 75th Ranger Regiment is the only ground SOF unit capable of conducting direct action missions at company level and higher (through regimental level). Within the Army, Special Forces also provide direct action capability, but only at team level. The Navy has Sea-Air-Land (SEAL) teams, but these units also operate only in small elements. Only the Marine Expeditionary Units (Special Operations Capable) (MEU(SOC)s) even come close to providing a similar capability.

Further, if one looks at the Army's force structure since World War II, this large-scale direct action capability is relatively recent. The United States Army has only had such a force since the activation of the 1st Ranger Battalion in 1974.

Prior to that time, during the first part of the Cold War, to include the Korean and Vietnamese conflicts, the United States Army had no equivalent to the current Ranger Regiment. The majority of direct action missions were small-scale, conducted by small teams, and generally fell within the purview of the Special Forces. The U.S. Army either did not conduct DA missions on a larger scale, or it gave such missions to ad hoc units within the Special Forces (the Son Tay raid). Outside the Army, such missions also went to the Marines (the *Mayaguez* incident--though this operation occurred just after the Rangers had been activated). Consequently, one must ask why the United States was able to do without such a force for so many years and why it

needs one now. Do the Armed Forces of the United States have a valid requirement for the Rangers, or a force like them?

Therefore, in analyzing this aspect of U.S. special operations forces, the initial step must be to determine whether a need for large-scale ground direct action exists. If, based upon the national security and national military strategies, such a need does exist, one can then go on to determine the capabilities necessary to fulfill that requirement. The identification of these desired capabilities will, in turn, allow one to determine the type of unit which the military needs. This issue is very significant, as "nice to have" will not ensure retention in the force structure. The military must justify its twenty-first century force based on that force's ability to meet clearly defined strategic requirements.

Consequently, the primary question at the root of this analysis is: What type of unit would best meet the requirements for SOF large-scale direct action? If one can answer this question, one will be able to contribute to a better understanding of the force structure necessary for USSOCOM to successfully accomplish some of its missions. In essence, this analysis hopes to provide a clearer picture of at least one piece of the overall puzzle that is special operations in the post-Cold War era.

In searching for an answer to this question, one must proceed through three phases which build upon each other. Each phase will focus on a different set of questions. In order to be logically consistent, one must proceed from political and military strategic requirements to force capabilities to units which can provide those identified capabilities. The first two of these phases, examining missions and

requirements, will be deductive in nature. This part of the analysis will proceed from general requirements to more narrowly defined missions and then from those missions to more specific capabilities necessary to execute them. This process should result in a list of capabilities required to accomplish the special operations direct action missions identified in America's national security and national military strategies. The last phase will address the type of unit necessary to fulfill the requirements uncovered in the first part of the analysis. This portion of the research will set forth the hypothesis that the 75th Ranger Regiment, in its present form, best meets the requirements for a large-scale special operations ground direct action force, and then attempt to disprove it through an analysis of alternative options. Failure to disprove this hypothesis would serve as an argument for retaining the capabilities offered by the Ranger Regiment as a vital element of the overall special operations force structure.

Literature Review and Methodology

Special operations can be a mysterious, interesting, and exciting topic. Not surprisingly, therefore, literature, both official and unofficial, on this topic is very extensive--and varies greatly in quality. This literature ranges from official doctrine to personal opinions, from scholarly works to popular summaries. Yet, despite the plethora of writings in the field, there seems to be no focused treatment of the strategic requirements for large-scale special operations ground direct action forces.

In attempting to establish those strategic requirements and to determine the ideal force to meet them, one is best served by proceeding through a series of logical stages. Such a course of action will allow the derivation of the nature of this force

from the capabilities that it must have, which, in turn, are driven by strategic requirements.

Therefore, the first phase of this research will attempt to deduce the large-scale ground force DA missions that face the United States. To do so, one must begin with an analysis of the present and potential future strategic requirements for special operations direct action which flow from the national security strategy and the national military strategy. These documents are the essential foundation. If the U.S. force structure is to make sense, it must efficiently and effectively support the strategic ends outlined in these documents. What do these documents require of a direct action force? Why would a ground force be necessary to meet some of these requirements? One must have a good grasp of the answers to these questions before proceeding.

In this phase, the essential first step is to determine these strategic requirements. For this information, it is simplest and most effective to turn directly to primary source material. This analysis will draw the strategic political requirements directly from the United States' national security strategy as presented in *A National Security Strategy for a New Century*. This document will serve as the most basic foundation--outlining the government's perception of the international security environment, U.S. strategic security objectives, threats to U.S. interests, and strategies for advancing those national interests. As is to be expected, the national security strategy is broad-brush sketch, dealing with all four instruments of national power--diplomatic, informational, military, and economic.

This accomplished, one must then seek the military's perspective on its own role within this overarching strategic plan. This can be found in the *National Military Strategy of the United States of America*, which outlines how the U.S. Armed Forces support the national security strategy. In this document, one finds an examination of the international environment, a summary of national military objectives, a description of U.S. military strategy, and a brief discussion of critical capabilities. Thus, the national military strategy, in the context of the national security strategy, presents one with the first concrete set of military requirements. It also serves as the linkage between U.S. national political objectives and the specific requirements developed through mission analysis. With a careful examination of these first two documents, one has a solid starting point.

After examining these two foundational documents, one can proceed to list, using both joint and service doctrine, various special operations missions and to analyze how direct action fits into the overall picture. These missions are the ways that USSOCOM uses its tools to achieve the effects desired in the national security and military strategies. In analyzing potential direct action operations, current doctrine for such missions will be very important and will serve as the center of focus. Joint Publication 3-05, *Doctrine for Joint Special Operations* provides an essential start. Missions which fall to the Army are more specifically addressed in Field Manual 100-25, *Doctrine for Army Special Operations Forces*. Ranger missions--and, by extension, current large-scale ground SOF missions--are specifically addressed in Field Manual 7-85, *Ranger Operations*. These official documents will allow one to make at

least an initial determination of which direct action missions currently require large-scale ground SOF.

However, special operations missions, never set very firmly in stone, are in the process of rapid evolution as the United States encounters new security threats in the post-Cold War era. Without a doubt, the types of direct action missions the U.S. may decide to undertake in the future will be varied and very situation dependent. Therefore, one cannot confine this analysis to doctrinal writings. One will also have to examine current trends in the international environment, historical examples of direct action missions in different situations, and expert analyses of trends and alternatives.

Several works, both government sponsored and private, address developing trends in the strategic requirements for special operations. *Special Operations Forces: Roles and Missions in the Aftermath of the Cold War*, edited by Richard Schultz, Robert Pfaltzgraff, and Bradley Stock, examines this evolution and points to developing missions as well as those current ones which should remain valid in the future. This is done in the light of the new security environment, as well as current and evolving threats. Rod Paschall, a former commander of a Special Mission Unit (SMU), also takes a look into the future with *LIC 2010*. In that work, Paschall not only examines present and future missions, but also delves into the capabilities necessary to accomplish those missions.

Once this has been done, the next step is to determine the types of direct action missions which can most effectively be handled by ground forces. This question will

also require a careful examination of current doctrine, expert analyses, and historical examples.

Several important issues arise at this point. With technological advances, potential new options are emerging and complicating the picture. First, one must ask how much direct action now can be accomplished by fires from air and sea platforms? Is an air strike enough to achieve mission objectives? Second, there is the new dimension of options provided by current missile technology--the result is that the national command authorities (NCA) have to make a decision between the employment of ground forces and precision-guided munitions (PGMs) from air, land or sea platforms.

Given current technology, precision-guided munitions and aerial platforms can accomplish many direct action missions which formerly required troops on the ground. The use of PGMs may also be attractive because they can avoid the political liability of American casualties or the embarrassment of American prisoners. Certainly, PGMs seem to provide a relatively bloodless way to accomplish direct action missions--thus providing for much less political risk. However, one must ask if they provide exactly the same capabilities with regard to effects in the target area and battle damage assessment. If not, is the United States willing to sacrifice the capabilities that PGMs do not provide? Do these developments, coupled with the political climate, change the list of requirements that ground SOF should handle?

Moving further, from those missions which eventually fall to ground forces, one must identify those which involve the use of large-scale direct action forces as

opposed to individuals, small teams, or other assets. Historically, such missions seem to fall into two categories:

1. Direct action missions (primarily raids), conducted either unilaterally or in conjunction with other specialized SOF teams, in direct support of national security objectives

2. Joint forcible entry operations as part of a larger conventional operation

Examples of raids include the Son Tay raid in 1970 (Operation KINGPIN), the Israeli raid on Entebbe in 1976 (Operation JONATHAN), and the operations of Task Force (TF) RANGER in Mogadishu in 1993. Examples of forcible entry missions include the invasion of Grenada in 1983 (Operation URGENT FURY), the invasion of Panama in 1989 (Operation JUST CAUSE), and the planned invasion of Haiti in 1994 (Operation UPHOLD DEMOCRACY).

After one has examined special operations direct action missions and the assets best suited to the execution of such missions, the first stage of this analysis will be complete. One should then have a list of missions that appear to be best conducted by large-scale ground direct action forces. Of course, this list, much like everything else in this field, will not be able to be written in stone. The peculiar aspects of a given politico-military situation may argue in favor of ground force involvement in one instance and against such involvement in another. In the midst of a crisis, the president, through a presidential decision directive, may even demand a radically different course of action or method of employment. However, one cannot plan effectively for every possibility and contingency. One can only hope to arrive at some

general (and generic) guidelines designed to achieve optimal effectiveness in most cases. Even with such guidelines, there always will (and must) be ample room for judgment.

With this critical first phase complete, one can then attempt to deduce the capabilities necessary for the accomplishment of the missions that have been identified. This process will comprise the second phase of this analysis. Once again, this will require relying upon a mixture of doctrine, analysis of historical examples, and expert opinion, as well as a projection of current political, military, and technological trends. Not surprisingly, special operations doctrinal manuals (some of which have been under revision for some time) are a start point, but certainly not the entirety, of this analysis.

The examination of this issue must include the military's perspective on how doctrine will be applied to the future world environment. Vision statements by key military leaders describe their interpretation of how military capabilities and employment will evolve in the light of current trends. Consequently, this analysis should also incorporate the guidance provided by those forecasts, beginning with *Joint Vision 2010.* Do the required SOF direct action capabilities reflect dominant maneuver, precision engagement, full-dimensional protection, and focused logistics? Are these concepts relevant in the special operations direct action arena?

SOF Vision 2020 attempts to answer those questions in the affirmative by providing the link between national military strategy and *Joint Vision 2010* on one hand and special operations forces on the other. In this document, General Henry

Shelton (at that time, Commander-in-Chief, Special Operations Command) emphasizes the crucial role and unique responsibilities of SOF, as well as laying out a strategy for how they will adapt to the changing environment.[6] *Army Special Operations Forces Vision 2010* takes this even one level lower by applying *SOF 2020* in an ARSOF context.

The lion's share of the capabilities discussion can be found in various analytical works. Though none focus directly upon the subject of direct action, many works touch upon (in varying amounts of detail) different aspects of special operations force capabilities. Paschall's work *LIC 2010* has already been mentioned. He dares to make a series of fairly specific predictions based upon both his experience and trend analysis. In *Spec Ops: Case Studies in Special Operations Warfare, Theory and Practice*, William McRaven presents six principles of special operations and how they impact upon the success of direct action missions. John Collins looks at the state of SOF in the nineties in his book *Special Operations Forces: An Assessment.* Steve Fondacaro's "U.S. Army Ranger Force Utilization: A Continuing Inability to Correlate Missions with Capabilities" highlights some of the historic mismatches between Ranger capabilities and the missions which have been assigned to them. More recently, Chelsea Chae's "The Roles and Missions of the Rangers in the Twenty-first Century" draws some conclusions about Ranger employment based upon his study of historical examples and present capabilities. None of these works, however, begin

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[6]U.S. Special Operations Command, *SOF Vision 2020* (MacDill AFB, Fla.: U.S. Special Operations Command, 1996), 1.

with an analysis of those capabilities necessary to accomplish the large-scale direct action ground mission.

Furthermore, in attempting to identify these capabilities, this analysis will also draw upon the author's own experience and interviews with subject matter experts.

The goal of this portion of the analytical process is the development of a list of capabilities essential to the successful execution of large-scale special operations ground direct action force missions. This phase will conclude with an analysis of the implications these capabilities have upon such a unit's mission essential task list (METL), training, joint interoperability, command and control, and equipment. What does this list of required capabilities mean for the employment of such units?

In the third phase, this analysis will determine what type of unit possesses the capabilities that best meet the requirements that have been identified. The yardstick for all subsequent analysis will be the critical capabilities list identified in the second stage of this process. In attempting to identify this unit, this research will return to the hypothesis that the 75th Ranger Regiment is the unit that best meets these direct action requirements. This will serve only as a focus for analysis--it is entirely possible that the Rangers do not meet these requirements.

To begin with, then, one must first examine the 75th Ranger Regiment. Drawing upon the modified table of organization and equipment (MTOE), doctrine, capabilities statements, training philosophy, and historical employment, this analysis will determine how many of the necessary capabilities the Rangers possess, and to what extent. For the historical examples of potential employment as well as

demonstrated levels of effectiveness, this work will look primarily to World War II, the Iranian hostage rescue mission, Grenada, Panama, Somalia, and Haiti.

It should be noted that the Rangers of World War II arose as a direct counterpart of the British Commandos. Though some of these units participated in what we now call special operations, the original intent for this force was to provide a battle-experienced cadre for the rest of the U.S. Army.[7]

The historical employment of Ranger forces have been discussed in a great many works. *Darby's Rangers: We Led the Way*, by William O. Darby and William Bauer, provides insights into the development of the World War II Ranger battalions from the perspective of their first commander. In *Rangers: Selected Combat Operations in World War II*, Michael King also analyzes the employment of Rangers during that conflict, to include the actions at Cisterna, Zerf, and Cabanatuan. His analysis of a mixed bag of successes and failures allows him to draw some lessons concerning the capabilities of Ranger units and their employment. David Hogan's excellent book, *Raiders or Elite Infantry: The Changing Role of the U.S. Army Rangers from Dieppe to Grenada*, examines the evolution of the U.S. Army Rangers' role since the beginning of World War II through Grenada, to include their transition into special operations. As can be gathered from the title, a key question he raises is whether the Rangers are really special operations commandos or just an elite light infantry unit.

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[7]David W. Hogan, *Raiders or Elite Infantry? The Changing Role of the U.S. Army Rangers* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1992), 14-17.

Bruce Hoffman's *Commando Raids, 1946-1983* presents the Rand Corporation's analysis of special operations direct action missions since World War II. A British officer, Mark Adkin, provides insights on the employment of special operations forces during the invasion of Grenada in *Urgent Fury: The Battle for Grenada*. Thomas Donnelly, Margaret Ross, and Caleb Baker do the same for the next conflict in *Operation Just Cause: The Storming of Panama*.

Then, in an attempt to disprove this hypothesis, this analysis will examine a series of alternative options. In essence, this part will be a survey (combined with critical analysis) of the conventional and special operations forces available to the United States that could possibly be used to accomplish the designated direct action missions. This survey of alternatives will attempt to identify other forces that could potentially accomplish the direct action missions above with the necessary level of effectiveness to meet national political and military objectives. A key element of this is the "necessary level of effectiveness"--a force that could accomplish a direct action mission in an *in extremis* situation, but with a significantly lower level of effectiveness, may not produce the effects desired by the U.S. national security and military strategies. Certainly, such "back up" capabilities are good to have, but one should not fall into the trap of relying upon second-best solutions for nationally sensitive missions such as these direct action operations.

First, this research will examine other forces within USSOCOM and see if Special Forces, SEALs, or other SOF could accomplish such large-scale direct action

missions. Can any of these forces readily be combined into larger organizations which could effectively execute the large-scale direct action mission?

In this area, accurate and detailed information is somewhat more difficult to gather due to security considerations. Nonetheless, a good starting point is provided by the various posture statements of the United States Special Operations Command. Charlie Beckwith, the founder of DELTA, describes the planning, preparation and execution of the Son Tay raid and the Iranian rescue mission in *Delta Force*.

Second, this research will look at the capabilities and employment doctrine for U.S. airborne forces to see if they possess the necessary capabilities and could accomplish the identified direct action missions. In the U.S. Army, what are the differences between Ranger forces and paratroop units? What would it take to give airborne battalions capabilities similar to those of Ranger battalions (if they do not already have them)? Would such a course of action be effective and efficient? Though, given sufficient resources, the 82nd Airborne could be converted into a "Ranger" division, would the Army really want to do that? Would anything be lost in doing so?

The capabilities of U.S. airborne forces are addressed in many works. Tom Clancy presents an introductory survey in *Airborne: A Guided Tour of an Airborne Task Force*. In "Roles and Missions of Airborne, Rangers, and Special Forces in Contingency Operations," Charles McMillin compares the capabilities of airborne, ranger and special forces units. Turning to doctrinal sources, Field Manual 7-30, *Infantry, Airborne, and Air Assault Brigade Operations*, includes a chapter on airborne

brigades, as well as discussion of combat operations common to all conventional light infantry brigades. Other manuals, of course, deal with the other echelons of airborne forces (in the broader context of light infantry).

Third, this research will examine the Marine Corps' MEU(SOC)s to see what capabilities they possess and how well suited they are to the accomplishment of special operations direct action missions. Certainly, MEU(SOC)s represent forward deployed battalion task forces with some special operations training. Does that make them special operations forces? Is that training and their capabilities enough for the accomplishment of direct action missions?

Characteristically, Marine Corps public affairs have done excellent work and attracted a great deal of attention to the Corps' capabilities. Tom Clancy presents a very good and detailed description of a MEU(SOC) in *Marine: A Guided Tour of a Marine Expeditionary Unit*. Agostino von Hassell, a few years earlier, did the same in *Strike Force*. The United States Marine Corps (USMC) home page on the World Wide Web is also an excellent source of information.

At the conclusion of this survey of options, if any of these forces display a greater share of the necessary capabilities required to accomplish large-scale direct action missions than do the Rangers, then the initial hypothesis will have been disproved. The best confirmation of this will lie in historical effectiveness. However, this survey of historical performance will have to be combined with a significant amount of critical analysis in order to incorporate current issues that may not have been present in the examples.

If, on the other hand, none of these elements possess a greater measure of the requisite capabilities for large-scale direct action missions than the Rangers, the hypothesis cannot be disproved. The Rangers, then, would be the optimal basis for a direct action force.

This evaluation and comparison is an interesting question, because the missions of the modern Rangers have clearly greatly evolved since the time of their inception. General Abrams, in reviving the Rangers, envisioned an elite light infantry unit capable of rapidly responding to emergencies around the world. Its missions would not necessarily lie outside of the capabilities of other conventional units; rather, the Rangers distinguishing feature was to be that they could accomplish those missions better than any other unit.[8] Over the years since that time, the Rangers have moved rapidly into the special operations arena and have been part of USSOCOM since its creation in 1987. Has this evolution in employment been mirrored by an evolution in structure, equipment, training, and missions?

Clearly, this entire issue is both intricate and complex. This fact, however, should not deter one from a careful study of the matter. On the contrary, for this reason, such an analysis is even more critical as the U.S. military attempts to determine the future forms of special operations forces which are needed to best match American strategic requirements.

Additionally, it is important to note that this work is far from unique in its focus upon the Ranger Regiment. As mentioned earlier, many authors have written a

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[8] Ibid., 198-201.

great deal about the Rangers. In analyzing the Rangers, some have devoted their attention to the historical development of the Rangers from their beginnings in Colonial America. Others have focused upon Ranger capabilities and limitations, as well as guidance about how they should be properly employed. In doing so, many of these authors have correctly identified frequent mismatches between Ranger capabilities and employment. Others have examined what the Rangers "bring to the table" in their special operations role.

In the strategic sense, however, all of this is similar to putting the cart before the horse. In today's military, everything is driven by a combination of strategic requirements and the budget. Consequently, the first question in this analysis always must be: What are the requirements for a ground force capable of large-scale direct action missions? Only after these requirements are identified, can one proceed to determine how (or if) the Rangers meet them. Requirements and capabilities, ideally, should smoothly dovetail. Then, if the 75th Ranger Regiment is indeed the force indicated to be necessary to U.S. military strategy (as determined by strategic analysis), those same requirements can then serve to provide senior commanders with clear guidance on how this force should be employed.

Of course, another analysis hurdle that force structure decisions must encounter and overcome is the issue of affordability. Not only must the force identified meet the requirements of our national strategy, it must also be affordable within the national budget. Budgetary concerns can quickly limit the field of solutions for strategic requirements issues!

Limitations and Delimitations

At this point, it is important to mention that in the conduct of this research, one will encounter certain limitations. The most significant of these is that much of the information pertaining to this topic is classified as SECRET or higher. In some cases, if this analysis is to remain open to an unclassified forum, classification will limit the missions and capabilities that may be addressed. As such, an unclassified study such as this runs the very real risk of presenting a less than complete picture to the reader. To a certain extent, however, many unclassified missions may have, if necessary, classified applications also. Consequently, the picture presented by this unclassified analysis should be relatively, though certainly not totally, complete.

Another limitation is that it is not possible to empirically test alternate conclusions. The testing process, in this case, must primarily consist of the critical analysis of historical examples. Therefore, this research will make extensive use of Ranger and other special operations in the last quarter century, as well as drawing upon certain parallels and examples from World War II.

One must also remember that special operations, and even its direct action subset, represent a huge field of study. In order to prevent this subject from becoming too broad for the scope of this work, one must further impose several delimitations.

First, this study will focus only upon the conduct of large-scale direct action operations (as already defined above) requiring the use of ground forces. This leaves out many direct action missions that are normally performed by other services from air and sea platforms. This narrower focus also excludes those direct action operations,

such as sabotage, demolitions, and other similar missions, that may best be performed by individuals or small teams. This study will, however, examine those missions in which the NCA must choose between the use of air/sea platforms (to include PGMs) and a large-scale ground force.

Second, the purpose of this study is not to determine whether the Rangers have, or do not have, a place in the overall force structure. Rather, this analysis will focus on their role within the special operations arena. The issue under consideration is whether they are the special operations ground direct action force of choice. If it turns out that they are not, they may still have a role within the conventional structure--in line, perhaps, with General Abrams original intent. Such a question, however, is also beyond the scope of this analysis.

Third, this analysis will not attempt to reach too far back into Ranger history. Ranger units, in some form or another, have played a role in U.S. military history since the French and Indian War. Over the intervening centuries, their roles, missions, and capabilities have varied a great deal. To include this history would only serve to muddy the waters when evaluating present and future special operations missions. Therefore, in examining the Rangers, this work will not immerse itself in extensive historical research on Ranger operations in earlier eras, such as World War II, Korea, and Vietnam. The focus will be primarily on their operations since their revival by General Abrams in 1974. It will, however, draw upon some examples from World War II in order to present some very interesting and striking parallels and to illustrate some specific points. These examples have some utility, as the World War II

experience was the only time prior to the present day when Rangers were employed in battalion-size units.

With these limitations and delimitations in mind, one can proceed with a deeper analysis of the problem.

A Final Note of Caution

The difficulty in all this critical analysis, of course, is that one is dealing with uncertainty. Historical examples serve as a very strange laboratory. The only constant, after all, is change. Situational factors affecting a specific outcome often change, technology changes quite rapidly, and the various other political and military factors may be radically different from one year to the next. As a result, though historical analysis may provide many answers, it will not necessarily provide all of them. One must still add a significant dose of individual (and collective) reasoning based upon both the current situation and emerging trends. Certainly, one does not want to find oneself planning to fight the last war.

Given all this effort, one may still finish well wide of the mark. As Michael Howard said: "I am tempted to declare dogmatically that whatever doctrine the Armed Forces are working on now, they have got it wrong."[9] This certainly is a rather grim pronouncement. Nonetheless, civilian and military leaders, strategists, and force designers are dealing with grave issues and must still give it their best attempt! Even

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[9]Michael Howard, "Military Science in an Age of Peace," *RUSI, Journal of Royal United Services Institute for Strategic Studies* 119 (March 1974); in U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, *C610 Syllabus/Book of Readings* (Ft. Leavenworth, KS: U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, August 1997), 28.

Howard, in his speech, went on to add: "Still, it is the task of military science in an age of peace to prevent the doctrines from being too badly wrong."[10] Hopefully, the U.S. Armed Forces will be at least close.

What the United States of America does not want to do, however, is to find itself in the future without a capability that it sorely needs. Given the state of world affairs, the ability to conduct effective large-scale special operations ground direct action missions may very well be one of those capabilities.

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[10]Ibid.

CHAPTER 2

NATIONAL STRATEGY AND LARGE-SCALE DIRECT ACTION

> The Armed Forces are the Nation's military instrument for ensuring our security. Accordingly, the primary purpose of US Armed Forces is to deter threats of organized violence against the United States and its interests, and to defeat such threats should deterrence fail. The military is a complementary element of national power that stands with the other instruments wielded by our government. The Armed Forces' core competence is the ability to apply decisive military power to deter or defeat aggression and achieve our national security objectives.[1]
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> Joint Chiefs of Staff, *National Military Strategy*

Strategy, Vision, and Doctrine

The national security strategy serves as the logical foundation for this analysis. *A National Security Strategy for a New Century*, published in 1997, lays out the basic approaches that the United States will take in the pursuit of national security policy objectives. In very broad terms, this document explains the main directions of U.S. security policy and provides general guidance on the use of all the instruments of national power, to include the military instrument.

A National Security Strategy for a New Century sets forth three core objectives for U.S. national security policy. The first of these is to enhance American security through a combination of "effective diplomacy" and military forces that are capable of winning future conflicts. The second is to support and further the economic prosperity

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[1]The Joint Chiefs of Staff, *National Military Strategy of the United States of America* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1997), 5.

of the United States. The third objective listed is to promote democracy throughout the world.

In order to achieve these three core objectives, the national security strategy goes on to state that the United States must shape the international environment, be able to respond to the entire spectrum of possible crises that may arise, and be prepared to deal with threats. The NSS then proceeds to divide these threats into two groups: regional and transnational. Regional threats are centered on specific states, such as Iraq. Transnational threats include such things as terrorism, the illegal drug trade, arms trafficking, international organized crime, uncontrolled refugee migrations, and environmental damage. The national security strategy identifies the threat from weapons of mass destruction as the greatest potential threat that the United States currently faces.[2]

In addition to providing core objectives and a general course of action to achieve them, the national security strategy also discusses how each of the instruments of power can contribute to national security. The military instrument supports the national security strategy across the spectrum of responses--from shaping the environment to dealing with crises and reacting to threats.

The military is expected to shape the international security environment in times of peace through active involvement. For example, the military affects the regional security climate through such activities as overseas presence, defense

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[2]The White House, *A National Security Strategy for a New Century* (Washington: Government Printing Office, May 1997), i-6.

cooperation, security assistance, and training exercises. In conducting these and similar operations, the military promotes stability, deters aggression, and prevents or reduces conflicts. Additionally, through its example, the military promotes concepts of civil-military relations in a democracy.

In dealing with crises, the military provides an wide range of options to policy makers. In response to international terrorism, the military supports the counterterrorism effort through the ability to deter and punish terrorists. It can participate in the interdiction of drug trafficking. Show of force operations, such as the deployment of carrier battle groups, can serve to deter a potential aggressor through the demonstration of U.S. resolve. The military is also capable of conducting humanitarian assistance operations to respond to non-military crises, such as hurricanes and floods. Small scale crisis operations may also include limited strikes and interventions.

Finally, the military has the paramount mission of fighting and winning major wars. The NSS elaborates that this includes not only the ability to rapidly defeat the enemy, but also the capability to deal with asymmetrical threats such the use of WMD, information operations against the U.S., and terrorism. This requirement includes the specified additional capability to rapidly transition from peacetime engagement to fighting a major war.[3]

In discussing the international environment and the security challenges that exist, the NSS does not confine itself entirely to generalities. Some attention is also

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[3]Ibid., 8-13.

devoted to the identification of specific regional threats to U.S. interests. Two that stand out in today's environment are Korea and Iraq.[4] Not surprisingly, the military must be capable of responding to the threats to regional stability generated by these states.

From the national security strategy, it can be seen that the military, as one of the four instruments of national power, plays a prominent role. Though the use of force is not necessarily the first instrument of choice in the pursuit of national objectives, it must be a credible tool. Due to this credibility, the military is able to shape the international environment without the actual application of force. Of course, should military action become necessary, the military must be capable of achieving the United States' security goals--in everything ranging from a "show the flag" operation to high-intensity conflict.

Furthermore, it is important to realize that the current NSS has not arisen out of a vacuum. Similar to the national security strategy of the Bush administration, the Clinton administration's strategy is an attempt to cope with a rapidly changing world no longer polarized by superpower rivalry. As such, these strategies are similar in many ways. Of course, they are not very consistent with the American strategy before the disintegration of the Soviet Union--but that is to be expected, as the international environment has changed considerably since that time. In response to those changes, the focus of the NSS has shifted from containment to engagement.

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[4]Ibid., 23-27.

The national security strategy is the basis for further military policy guidance, but it is not the only source of potential missions. The president may also assign missions to the armed forces on the basis of a national security directive (NSD) or similar executive tools.[5] Though the names of such directives may change (in the Clinton administration they are known as presidential decision directives), these documents are basically designed to respond to unexpected international developments that require decisive action. Though these directives could assign the military almost any conceivable task, they can generally be expected to follow the general guidance expressed by the national security strategy. After all, they should be in support of the same national security goals. Consequently, other than mentioning this possibility, this analysis will not devote any additional examination or extrapolation to the missions that could fall out of these executive actions.

Building upon the national security guidance, it is the responsibility of the national military strategy (NMS) to lay out in greater detail how the military can support the overall objectives outlined in *A National Security Strategy for a New Century*. The Joint Chiefs of Staff do so in the *National Military Strategy of the United States of America,* the most recent version of which was published in 1997.

In order to support successfully the national security strategy, the NMS posits two primary national military objectives: to promote peace and stability and to defeat adversaries. The U.S. Armed Forces intend to achieve those objectives through a

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[5]Amos A. Jordan, William J. Taylor, Jr., and Lawrence J. Korb, *American National Security: Policy and Process,* 4th ed. (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), 212-219.

threefold approach of shaping the international environment, responding to the full spectrum of crises, and preparing now for an uncertain future.

The military seeks to shape the environment through a combination of deterrence, peacetime engagement, and active participation and leadership in alliances. The objectives of these activities are the promotion of stability and the prevention or resolution of conflicts and threats.

Responding to the full spectrum of crises refers to the full range of military options available to the United States, ranging from humanitarian assistance operations through conducting multiple smaller-scale contingencies to fighting and winning major theater wars. Essentially, should deterrence fail, the military must stand ready to defeat any adversary. A critical aspect of this, according to the national military strategy, is the capability to win two major theater wars conducted in overlapping time frames.

Finally, the Armed Forces intend to prepare now for an uncertain future. This requires them to exploit the possibilities presented by the revolution in military affairs (RMA) and the revolution in business affairs (RBA). The military's "conceptual template" for future operations is *Joint Vision 2010.*[6]

As noted in the both the NSS and the NMS, the military is involved across the entire spectrum of security affairs. Once again, however, the requirement to fight and win wars logically remains paramount. Though it will probably remain the least likely

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[6]The Joint Chiefs of Staff, *National Military Strategy of the United States of America* (1997), 11-18.

and least frequent aspect of the national military strategy, this capability is clearly the core competency that must rank first in importance for the Armed Forces.

The national military strategy's analysis of the threats faced by the United States echoes that of the national security strategy and repeats several critical themes. Some states--notably Iran, Iraq, and North Korea--pose significant threats that could undermine regional stability. Another area of concern is the possibility of some states or nonstate actors posing "asymmetric challenges" to the United States. The most significant of these threats are terrorism, the use or threatened use of weapons of mass destruction, and information warfare. Then, there exist transnational dangers, such as those mentioned earlier--extremism, organized crime, illegal trade in weapons and drugs, and environmental threats. Lastly, there are "wild card" threats--threats that the United States simply cannot predict that may later arise to challenge its security.[7]

To successfully accomplish the objectives of the national military strategy in such an environment, the Armed Forces see themselves employing a combination of four strategic concepts: strategic agility, overseas presence, power projection, and decisive force. Strategic agility is the rapid employment of U.S. military power to seize the initiative in a crisis. Overseas presence describes the stationing of some elements of U.S. military power forward in key regions of the world in order to demonstrate U.S. commitment and to act as forces for regional stability. At the same time, the U.S. maintains the credibility of its deterrence by being able to rapidly project power anywhere in the world in order to achieve "unconstrained global reach."

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[7]Ibid., 8-10.

Finally, decisive force is "the commitment of sufficient military power to overwhelm all armed resistance in order to establish new military conditions and achieve political objectives."[8]

The NMS repeatedly stresses that the force to operate within these concepts must be joint. U.S. military forces must be capable of multiple missions, they must be interoperable with each other and with select foreign militaries, and they must be able to coordinate their operations with other agencies of the government as well as some civilian institutions. Conventional, nuclear, and special operations forces all have a critical role to play.[9]

Finally, in describing this joint force, the NMS discusses a list of important capabilities that the U.S. Armed Forces must be able to provide the NCA. These include the capabilities for special operations, forcible entry, and countering weapons of mass destruction. Special operations offer the NCA a wider variety of options with which to influence world events. They are smaller and less visible than conventional forces, while offering "unique skills, tactics, and systems for the execution of unconventional, potentially high-payoff missions." Forcible entry refers to the capability to introduce military forces onto foreign soil in a non-permissive environment and is a critical aspect of U.S. power projection capabilities. Countering weapons of mass destruction includes the ability to prevent the spread of WMD, the

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[8]Ibid., 19-20.

[9]Ibid., 21-22.

detection of WMD, and the destruction of WMD before they can be used, as well as various defensive measures.[10]

General John M. Shalikashvili, when he was serving as the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS), projected the guidance of the national military strategy into the early twenty-first century with *Joint Vision 2010.* In this document, he saw America's goals and interests, as well as the strategic concepts of the armed forces, as threads of continuity into the early part of the coming century. At the same time, he described an evolution in potential threat capabilities and U.S. technological and informational advances producing dynamic changes and leading to new operational concepts. These four evolutionary concepts are: dominant maneuver, precision engagement, full dimensional protection, and focused logistics.[11]

Of these four operational concepts, dominant maneuver and precision engagement have the most potential impact upon direct action missions. Dominant maneuver will require the "application of information, engagement, and mobility capabilities to position and employ widely dispersed joint air, land, sea, and space forces to accomplish the assigned operational tasks." These forces will be joint and capable of highly synchronized operations. Through position advantages and decisive speed, dominant maneuver will allow U.S. forces "to apply decisive force to attack enemy centers of gravity at all levels."[12]

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[10]Ibid., 24-27.

[11]The Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Joint Vision 2010* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1996), 3-25.

[12]Ibid., 20-21.

Precision engagement, for its part, will "enable our forces to locate the objective or target, provide responsive command and control, generate the desired effect, assess our level of success, and retain the flexibility to reengage with precision when required." It is intended to build upon U.S. advantages in both weapon system accuracy and low observable technologies.[13] Though referring primarily to aerial delivery systems and stand-off platforms, this concept can also be applied to the precision engagement achieved by direct action operations.

This does not mean, however, that the other concepts cannot apply to direct action. On the contrary, all of them do so. For example, direct action missions to destroy Scud launchers equipped with chemical or biological warheads could be considered as part of full dimensional protection in a broader context.

SOF Vision 2020 further refines this strategic vision. Stating that "all aspects of *JV2010* apply to SOF," General Henry H. Shelton (then Commander-in-Chief, USSOCOM (CINCSOC)) noted that special operations forces "will provide military capabilities not available elsewhere in the armed forces." SOF should serve as force multipliers, to include the conduct of direct action missions against "centers of gravity" and counterproliferation operations against WMD threats before they can be brought to bear.[14]

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[13]Ibid., 21-22.

[14]U.S. Special Operations Command, *SOF Vision 2020* (MacDill AFB, FL: U.S. Special Operations Command, 1996), 13-17.

It is interesting to note that special attention is devoted to the WMD threat. Shelton emphasizes that "we must be able to find, track, and neutralize an adversary's WMD capability."[15]

As one looks at the "big picture," the national security and military strategies describe the effects that American leaders desire to produce (the ends), the ways in which the United States will attempt to achieve those effects, and the various tools (means) at their disposal. The tools, in the military instance, are the units, aircraft, ships, and other assets of the Armed Forces of the United States. Military doctrine, then, proceeds to describe more specifically the capabilities each of these tools must possess and the ways in which they should be employed, both separately and in concert, in order to achieve U.S. strategic ends.

It should be readily apparent that the available tools could be used to produce a wide range of different effects. Consequently, the characteristics of specific tools and the doctrine governing the ways in which they may be employed will not necessarily change with every shift in strategy. At the same time, the ongoing evolution of strategic goals and desired effects will affect the relative importance of the various tools, as well as certain aspects of their employment. The bottom line is that these tools, in order to be effective, must possess the capability to achieve the ends described by the national security strategy.

Consequently, joint special operations doctrine provides the national command authorities with the ways in which certain tools--special operations forces--can be

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[15]Ibid., 6.

applied against the requirements of the national security strategy. Joint Publication 3-05, *Doctrine for Joint Special Operations*, published in 1992, described ten missions--five principle and five collateral--with which special operations forces supported the overall military strategy. The principle missions of special operations were unconventional warfare, direct action, special reconnaissance, foreign internal defense, and counterterrorism. The five collateral missions were security assistance, humanitarian assistance, security activities, counterdrug operations, and personnel recovery or search and rescue (SAR), as well as special activities as designated by the NCA.[16]

Since that time, the number of missions for special operations forces has increased. The *United States Special Operations Forces: 1996 Posture Statement* lists an additional four principle missions--counterproliferation, psychological operations, civil affairs, and information warfare/command and control warfare--and two collateral missions--coalition support and countermine activities.[17]

From the missions listed above, one can see that special operations forces support the national military strategy across a broad spectrum of potential situations. Furthermore, these missions need not be conducted only during time of war. Rather, they support all three aspects of the military's strategy--peacetime engagement,

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[16]The Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint Publication 3-05, *Doctrine for Joint Special Operations* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1992), II-7 - II-15.

[17]U.S. Special Operations Command, *United States Special Operations Forces: 1996 Posture Statement* (MacDill AFB, FL: U.S. Special Operations Command, 1994), 31-32.

deterrence, and winning wars. Similarly to the rest of the armed forces, SOF do so through a combination of overseas presence and power projection.

The flexibility of special operations forces allow them to ideally support the national security strategy of shaping the international environment, dealing with crises, and responding to threats. These forces give the NCA the option of pursuing humanitarian operations and military to military contacts to generate goodwill towards the U.S. in different regions of the world, deal with a crisis through show of force, psychological, or counterterrorist operations, among others, or respond to a serious threat through direct action.

Within the U.S. Special Operations Command, there is an ongoing analysis to determine the ways in which SOF can best support the national military strategy. One of the outputs of this process is the Required Capabilities List. It should not be surprising to note that, in response to increased emphasis within the NSS and the NMS, certain capabilities have significantly increased in their level of priority within this list. Notable among those are:

#19 (up from #60) Conduct preemptive, reactive, or punitive attack on terrorist infrastructure.

#21 (up from #38) Identify, diagnose, and characterize components of WMD.

#22 (up from #39) Destroy WMD and associated infrastructure.

#23 (up from #50) Destroy or disable hardened, deep underground bunkers (DUGS).

#24 (up from #50) Prepare and containerize WMD.

#25 (up from #44) Provide security for WMD.

#26 (up from #54) Transport WMD to turnover site.[18]

The execution of most of these capabilities (as well as many of those not listed above) would often require some type of direct action.

As one focuses upon direct action, the military is no longer dealing with peacetime engagement or deterrence (though the existence of a direct action force or the results of a direct action mission may serve to deter potential enemies). Rather, direct action is potentially an act of war. As such, it is used primarily in the crisis response and war fighting aspects of the national military strategy. In this context, one may see direct action operations across the spectrum of conflict from low-intensity conflict through nuclear war.

As explained in Joint Publication 3-05, direct action operations "are normally limited in scope and duration and usually incorporate a planned withdrawal from the immediate objective area." These operations are conducted in order to achieve specific strategic, operational, or critical tactical objectives. Often, though not necessarily, they occur beyond the operational range of conventional forces. These operations include such missions as (1) attacks on critical targets, (2) location, capture, or recovery of personnel or equipment, (3) interdiction of critical lines of communication or target

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[18]U.S. Special Operations Command, *BOD Approved P-RCL* (MacDill AFB, FL: U.S. Special Operations Command, 27 June 1997), 1-2.

systems, and (4) seizure, destruction, or neutralization of critical facilities in support of conventional operations.[19]

In a discussion of future crisis and combat operations, *Army Special Operations Forces Vision 2010* sees direct action missions as an important part of dominant maneuver. This document lists the following possible missions under "strikes and raids" (in other words, direct action):

1. Terminal guidance operations
2. Pre-strike suppression of enemy air defenses (SEAD)
3. Recovery
4. Combat search and rescue
5. Counterterrorism
6. Counterproliferation[20]

A close examination of this list would lead one to argue that all of the missions listed as "strikes and raids" actually may not be cases of dominant maneuver. Terminal guidance operations, for example, are probably an instance of precision engagement. Combat search and rescue missions, on the other hand, are not really part of direct action and would better fall under the concept of full dimensional protection. Nonetheless, all of these missions support the operational concepts presented in *Joint Vision 2010*.

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[19]Joint Publication 3-05, II-5.

[20]U.S. Army Special Operations Command, *Army Special Operations Forces Vision 2010* (Ft. Bragg, NC: U.S. Army Special Operations Command, 1997), 5-8.

Special operations forces conduct direct action missions as either close-combat operations or stand-off attacks. Close-combat operations may be raids, ambushes, or assaults. They may also involve the emplacement of munitions or sabotage. Stand-off attacks take place either independently or in support of close combat operations. They involve attacks employing precision-guided munitions or other weapons from ground, air or maritime platforms. Such attacks may also include ground units providing terminal guidance for such munitions.[21]

Thus, direct action operations involve a wide range of potential mission profiles against a myriad of potential targets. Direct action can be conducted as unilateral special operations missions or in support of conventional operations. The key elements defining direct action operations are the critical nature of the target and the fact that it is normally beyond the operational reach or capabilities of conventional units.

Clearly, not all of these operations require the employment of ground troops. Stand-off attacks, for example, can easily be conducted without placing forces on the ground. The AC-130 gunship is an excellent aerial platform that can provide precision fires onto a target area. Furthermore, with the increasing accuracy of PGMs, conventional air and maritime forces can deliver precision fires on targets once considered relatively inaccessible.

In fact, such operations will very likely be preferred in the future over missions requiring the use of ground troops. The reasoning is simple--why take the risk of

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[21]Ibid., II-5 - II-6.

incurring casualties or, perhaps even worse, leaving captured American soldiers as hostages when a mission may be accomplished through the use of advanced technology? The current state of precision-guided munitions presents the NCA with weapons of unparalleled accuracy. Consequently, the destruction of a target that earlier may have required ground forces can now be accomplished (in many cases) by PGMs launched from air, sea or land platforms.

Examples of such missions are plentiful. In Operation EL DORADO CANYON, Air Force and Navy aircraft struck targets in Libya in a complex retaliatory raid for a terrorist bombing.[22] During DESERT STORM, SOF MH-53 Pave Low helicopters led AH-64 Apache attack helicopters on a strike which destroyed Iraqi radar installations to initiate the air war.[23] Navy Tomahawk missiles and Air Force ordinance struck at various C2 and suspected WMD sites within Iraq. As mentioned already, Air Force Special Operations Command (AFSOC) AC-130 aircraft have provided pinpoint fires on all types of targets from Vietnam through Somalia.

There are, however, certain disadvantages associated with the use of PGMs. First, precision-guided munitions, even with their current accuracy, cannot absolutely

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[22]Stephen Anno and William Einsphas, "Command and Control and Communications Lesson Learned: Iranian Rescue, Falklands Conflict, Grenada Invasion, Libya Raid," Air War College Research Report (May 1993); in U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, *DJCO Selected Readings Book: Fundamentals of Operational Warfighting* (Ft. Leavenworth,KS: U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, 1997), 8-O-1 - 8-O-2.

[23]U.S. Special Operations Command, *United States Special Operations Command 10th Anniversary History* (MacDill AFB, FL: U.S. Special Operations Command, 1996), 37-38.

guarantee, and confirm, the destruction of a target. Second, PGMs cannot take (or rescue) prisoners, nor can they bring back any type of evidence or materials--"precious cargo" in special operations terminology. Third, some targets, by their very construction, may defy destruction by PGMs.

With regard to the first issue, battle damage assessment (BDA) from a PGM strike could be attempted by satellite, aircraft, or other sensors. Yet, though these sources are technologically very accurate, they still cannot provide guaranteed proof of mission success, especially against facilities located below ground. Only a force physically holding the ground where the target is located can guarantee, and subsequently physically confirm, the desired target effects. That requires a combat force able to temporarily seize and hold that piece of terrain.

Especially when we begin to deal with issues pertaining to weapons of mass destruction, such a guarantee and confirmation of target effects may be essential. If the NCA commits itself to direct action against a foreign nation, terrorist organization, or other group, it will probably consider it vital to be able to confirm success if WMD are involved. Failure to do so could result not only in embarrassment, but also potentially devastating retaliation.

Turning to the second point, ground forces also provide the capability to extract something--prisoners, hostages, evidence, or other "precious cargo"--from the objective area. Precision-guided munitions, even if they were able destroy a target with reasonable certainty, would not be able to bring anything back. For example, the mission may require the recovery and extraction of prisoners or certain critical

materials in order to confirm the presence of weapons of mass destruction. In other cases, it may require the rescue of personnel from a non-permissive target area.

Rod Paschall, in his book *LIC 2010: Special Operations & Unconventional Warfare in the Next Century*, illustrates a potential requirement to bring evidence back from a raid against a terrorist facility:

> Reprisal actions such as air raids and missile strikes may bring brief satisfaction for an offended nation, but questions unfailingly arise. The government suspected of supporting terrorists will usually claim the air raid resulted in outrageous atrocities against children, schools, and hospitals, regardless of the facts of the case. What an air raid or missile strike cannot do is present proof. A well-led commando action, however, can.[24]

With regards to the third point, it is not unrealistic to expect that a potential adversary would understand the capabilities of precision-guided munitions. It is certainly possible to construct facilities that conventional PGMs would not be able to effectively destroy. Deep underground bunkers with sophisticated construction and protection would prove very difficult (if not impossible) targets with regards to both destruction and accurate BDA.

However, it is important to note that those direct action missions that do require the employment of ground forces would not necessarily always require a large unit. At times, a very small team could achieve the desired results. Army Special Forces, Navy SEALS, and the Special Mission Units (SMU) provide such a capability.

These small teams are capable of accomplishing a variety of missions and thus afford the NCA with the flexibility of additional options. They can emplace

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[24]Rod Paschall, *LIC 2010: Special Operations & Unconventional Warfare in the Next Century* (Washington: Brassey's, Inc., 1990), 147.

munitions, conduct raids and ambushes against targets which are not too large or heavily defended, and provide terminal guidance for PGMs. Small teams are often also the ideal force for the related field of counterterrorist operations. In fact, General Carl Stiner, when he was CINCSOC, identified in Congressional testimony that counterterrorism was one of the primary missions of the SMUs.[25]

Small teams, infiltrated into the objective area, can serve to further increase the accuracy of precision guided munitions by providing ground-based laser target designation from a vantage point overlooking the objective. Widely practiced by combat observation and lasing teams (COLTs) in the conduct of conventional operations, these same techniques are available to special operations forces. Rod Paschall even suggests that the occurrences of a small team "painting" a target with a laser designator may become more common in future operations.[26] Though this would require a small force on the ground, these personnel would not have to make contact with the enemy and would certainly be exposed to less risk than a commando force engaged in close combat.

Thus, the employment of small teams for direct action missions undoubtedly offers some advantages. Such teams can further enhance the accuracy of precision-guided munitions when target destruction is crucial. Furthermore, if the team members are involved only in target designation, they do not necessarily have to expose

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[25]John M. Collins, *Special Operations Forces: An Assessment* (Washington: National Defense University Press, 1994), 69-70.

[26]Paschall, 90.

themselves to the enemy and consequently run less risk of compromise or capture. Even in the conduct of other direct action missions, small teams often have the advantage of speed and stealth. During a sabotage mission, for example, the personnel involved are ideally away from the target area before the effects of their actions are noticed. Additionally, regardless of the type of mission, small teams are generally easier to infiltrate into and exfiltrate from the objective area. A RAND study conducted in the 1980s confirmed the higher success rate of small and medium-size forces (up to fifty men), as opposed to larger forces, in commando operations conducted since World War II.[27]

At the same time, the use of small teams involves some disadvantages and the acceptance of the associated risks. Clearly, the risk of compromise and capture is still greater for ground teams than it is for stand-off weapons employed by themselves. If something does go wrong during an operation and the team is compromised, it does not have the firepower with which to protect itself--it can be easily overwhelmed. Additionally, if the team is being used only to provide terminal guidance, it also may not be able to indisputably confirm the achievement of the desired target effects nor bring back "precious cargo" from a well-defended target. Once again, to accomplish such tasks, the force involved must be capable of physically holding that ground, even if only for a short period of time.

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[27]Bruce Hoffman, *Command Raids, 1946-1983* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 1985), 21.

Consequently, in circumstances where absolute confirmation of target effects is required, or in cases where the mission involves the recovery of "precious cargo" from a defended target area, precision-guided munitions or small special operations teams will not be enough. In most cases, if the items or personnel in question are critical enough to merit U.S. military direct action, the enemy will realize this and take appropriate defensive precautions. In other words, such missions will normally involve a fight on the ground and require a direct action force capable of close combat operations.

It is very difficult to predict with great accuracy the types of missions that may be demanded of such a force. However, by looking at current national security concerns, trends, and historical patterns, one can at least try to estimate which missions may be more likely to occur.

Rod Paschall, in analyzing recent trends in conflict, suggests that the major trends in the early twenty-first century will be towards increased terrorism and more insurgency or counterinsurgency operations. This includes the growing threat of mass casualty terrorism. Though counterterrorism, in the U.S. force structure, falls under the general purview of the SMUs, direct action missions could involve retaliatory raids in response to terrorist activity or even supporting other units conducting counterterrorist missions.[28]

John Collins, in a book sponsored by the National Defense University, raises the possibility of direct action against weapons of mass destruction and their

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[28]Paschall, 5-7, 46, 100.

production facilities.[29] Given the concern of the national security strategy and the national military strategy with this topic, coupled with the potential for the spread of such weapons, such a requirement is becoming increasingly more likely.

Collins is far from alone. Robert Pfaltzgraff also sees the spread of weapons of mass destruction as a major source of future instability. He believes that SOF will be called upon to undertake "high stakes and high risk activities" against enemy WMD facilities and associated command and control centers. These missions may also include actions against terrorist and criminal organizations engaged in the transfer of WMD.[30] Dr. Christopher Lamb lends credence to such options when he reminds us that the Secretary of Defense "recently refused to rule out preemption as a counterproliferation option." (He also adds that "potential SOF missions in a preemption scenario would be most demanding.")[31] William Boykin, in presenting the Joint Staff view on SOF missions, further supports the emphasis on countering WMD as a potential direct action mission.[32]

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[29]Collins, 4.

[30]Robert L. Pfaltzgraff, Jr., "Sources of Instability: Implications for Special Operations Forces," in Shultz et al., *Special Operations Forces: Roles and Missions in the Aftermath of the Cold War*, 23-24.

[31]Christopher Lamb, "Perspectives on Emerging SOF Roles and Missions: The View from the Office of the Secretary of Defense," in Shultz et al., *Special Operations Forces: Roles and Missions in the Aftermath of the Cold War*, 204.

[32]William G. Boykin, "A Joint Staff Perspective on Emerging SOF Roles and Missions," in Shultz et al., *Special Operations Forces: Roles and Missions in the Aftermath of the Cold War*, 214.

U.S. Direct Action Missions, 1942-1994

One can supplement this expert analysis through a study of recent history. Such research can reveal patterns that could remain applicable in the current strategic environment. An examination of how the United States has employed its large-scale ground direct action forces may serve as an indicator of future uses for similar units.

During World War II, the U.S. Army Rangers were created to be a type of American commando force.[33] In the African and European theaters of operations, the U.S. Army employed the Rangers as a shock force to spearhead invasion assaults. In North Africa, Rangers conducted a surprise night landing at Arzew and neutralized its primary coastal defenses prior to the main Allied assault.[34] Subsequently, Ranger battalions spearheaded amphibious assaults on Sicily, Italy, and France.

In the Pacific Theater, the 6th Ranger Battalion conducted a complex direct action mission to rescue American prisoners at Cabanatuan. Reinforced by Alamo Scouts and Filipino guerrillas, the Ranger force infiltrated behind enemy lines on Luzon and struck at a Japanese prisoner-of-war camp, achieving total surprise. The mission was an outstanding success.[35]

The use of Rangers for large-scale direct action lapsed after World War II. The Army created Ranger companies during the Korean War, but these formations

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[33]Michael J. King, Leavenworth Papers No. 11. *Rangers: Selected Combat Operations in World War II* (Ft. Leavenworth, KS: Combat Studies Institute, U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, 1985), 5-6.

[34]Ibid., 13-14.

[35]Ibid., 55-71.

were not properly employed and simply served as elite infantry. In Vietnam, Rangers companies were created in divisions for the purpose of special reconnaissance. As such, the only direct action missions conducted by Ranger forces were done at the team level.

Instead of the Rangers, other units were tasked with direct action missions in the 1970s. U.S. Army Special Forces conducted the Son Tay raid into North Vietnam in 1970, while U.S. Marines conducted the *Mayaguez* operation off the coast of Cambodia in 1975.

General Abrams reactivated the Rangers in 1974. Since that time, Rangers have conducted several types of direct action missions, to include both raids and forcible entry operations.

In their first mission, the Rangers were intended to serve in support of other SOF during a hostage rescue operation. As part of the Iranian rescue mission (Operation EAGLE CLAW), the Rangers were to secure an evacuation airfield (Manzariyeh) deep within Iran. Colonel Charlie A. Beckwith and DELTA, after the rescue of the American hostages from the embassy compound in Teheran, were to bring the hostages to Manzariyeh for exfiltration by C-141. However, that phase of the operation was not executed because the mission ended with the disaster at DESERT ONE.[36]

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[36]Charlie A. Beckwith, *Delta Force* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1983), 4-6, 253-257.

Subsequently, the Rangers served as the point of the spear for two, and almost three, conventional forcible entry missions. The first of these was Operation URGENT FURY, the invasion of Grenada. During this operation, the 1st and 2nd Ranger Battalions conducted a parachute assault to seize Point Salines airfield in order to allow the introduction of follow-on forces from the 82nd Airborne Division. Later in this same operation, Ranger elements also conducted air assaults to rescue U.S. students at Grand Anse campus and strike at enemy forces thought to be at Calvigny barracks.[37]

The second such employment of Rangers came during Operation JUST CAUSE, the invasion of Panama. In this case, the 1st Ranger Battalion seized Torrijos/Tocumen airfield for the follow-on introduction of the 82nd Airborne, also by airborne assault. Simultaneously, the 2nd and 3rd Ranger Battalions conducted another airborne assault to destroy the Panamanian Defense Forces (PDF) at Rio Hato, who were perceived to be one of the more significant threats to success of the operation. SEALS, Special Forces and AFSOC AC-130s conducted other, smaller direct action missions.[38]

Another case of employment of the Rangers for direct action in support of conventional forcible entry operations was during the planned invasion of Haiti--Operation RESTORE DEMOCRACY. Though this operation never came about due to

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[37]Mark Adkin, *Urgent Fury: The Battle for Grenada* (Lexington, MA: Lexington Books, 1989), 193-231, 263-273, 278-285.

[38]U.S. Special Operations Command, *United States Special Operations Command 10th Anniversary History*, 17-32.

the last-minute decision of the Haitian leadership to abdicate peacefully, the *Army Times* subsequently described some details of the planned operation. In this case, Ranger forces were to conduct air assaults to strike at enemy C2 in Port-au-Prince and the Haitian heavy weapons company at Camp d'Application before they could react to the conventional assault. Simultaneously, another Ranger battalion was to conduct an airborne assault to secure a forward operating base for special operations forces.[39]

In a radically different type of operation, a reinforced Ranger company participated in Scud hunting missions during DESERT STORM. In one of these missions, Rangers, supported by AH-6 attack helicopters, secured and destroyed a radio relay site.[40]

In yet another type of mission, Rangers served as security for other special operations forces conducting raids to seize critical enemy personnel in the Somali capital of Mogadishu. As violence escalated in Somalia during Operation RESTORE HOPE, TF RANGER, composed of a Ranger company and other SOF elements, was formed and given the mission to capture Aideed and his key lieutenants. This mission required the conduct of company air assault raids in an urban environment. In all, seven of these direct action operations were conducted. The most notorious of these

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[39]Robert C. Shaw, "Special Operations Forces Doctrine in Haiti" (Master of Military Art and Science Thesis, U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, 1979), 42-43.

[40]U.S. Special Operations Command, *United States Special Operations Command 10th Anniversary History*, 40-41.

missions took place on 3-4 October 1993, ended with a fierce firefight, took seventeen American lives and produced over one thousand enemy casualties.[41]

The Missions

The preceding examination of expert analyses and historical examples reveals two general mission categories for a large-scale special operations ground direct action force--raid missions and "tip of the spear" missions in support of forcible entry operations.

The first type of mission consists of DA raids in direct support of national objectives. One can expect the NCA to order such missions against targets which require indisputable confirmation of destruction or the recovery of some type of "precious cargo" from the target area. This may involve the rescue of prisoners, a retaliatory raid to destroy terrorists facilities, or a strike to destroy or capture weapons of mass destruction. Given current security concerns, this last mission, though it has yet to be executed, may gradually increase in its level of probability.

The ground direct action force would execute all of these raids as part of a joint special operations task force (JSOTF) integrating special operations aviation and other assets. In some cases, the large-scale ground DA force would be the only ground element. In many more cases, however, this force would work with other SOF to accomplish the mission most effectively.

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[41]Ibid., 45-47.

One can find examples of raids among the operations of both U.S. and foreign militaries. In 1970, in the latter days of the Vietnam War, a group of Special Forces soldiers, under the leadership of Colonel Arthur D. Simons, conducted a heliborne raid deep into Vietnam in an attempt to liberate American prisoners-of-war in Son Tay Prison (Operation KINGPIN). In 1976, in response to the terrorist highjacking of an Israeli airliner, an Israeli strike force conducted an airland raid (Operation JONATHAN) that temporarily seized the airport at Entebbe, freed the hostages, and exfiltrated the entire force back to Israel. In 1993, as already mentioned, TF RANGER conducted a series of raids within the city of Mogadishu in an attempt to capture Aideed and his principal lieutenants.

The second type of mission refers to those direct action missions which serve as the "tip of the spear" or otherwise support conventional forcible entry operations. This has been the most common employment of large-scale special operations direct action forces. Ranger battalions performed this function during World War II; over forty years later, airborne-capable Ranger battalions performed similar missions in Grenada and Panama. Based upon these operations, the recent trend seems to be towards a joint special operations task force, built around a large-scale direct action ground force, striking at the most critical targets in a forced entry operation. This could include, in many cases, the initial lodgement site.

In fact, for the U.S. Armed Forces, such direct action operations have been more common than large-scale raids during the past two decades. This analysis has already discussed several examples of forcible entry missions--the invasion of Grenada

in 1983 (Operation URGENT FURY), the invasion of Panama in 1989 (Operation JUST CAUSE), and the planned invasion of Haiti in 1994 (Operation UPHOLD DEMOCRACY).

Several common threads run through both of these mission groups. The two most notable of these threads are the strategic sensitivity of these missions and their relatively short duration.

All of these missions are politically and strategically sensitive -- failure could have very damaging national security repercussions. A failed rescue mission, such as the one in Iran, could produce negative diplomatic and political fallout for an American government. The failure of Operation EAGLE CLAW was a political debacle for the Carter administration. Similarly, a failed strike against weapons of mass destruction could produce a disaster on an unprecedented scale. For a forced entry operation, the failure to rapidly secure a lodgment with minimal casualties could also produce a costly (and domestically unpopular) outcome. In such operations, it lies in the interests of the NCA to assign such tasks to a force with the highest probability of success. This "stacking of the deck" is made simpler by the fact that, unlike the conduct of conventional warfare, the amount of strategically "sensitive" targets should, by definition, be limited.

Second, these missions are all of relatively short duration. Missions in the first category have the profile of traditional commando raids. The direct action force must infiltrate into the target area, execute its mission, and then quickly exfiltrate. The ground operation for Operation KINGPIN took only twenty-six minutes. During the

Entebbe operation, only ninety-nine minutes elapsed between the landing of the first Israeli C-130 and the departure of the last aircraft.[42] Even those missions in the second category (such as Grenada and Panama), although they may not strictly be considered raids, normally anticipate comparatively rapid relief by conventional follow-on forces. In Operation JUST CAUSE, the 2nd Brigade of the 82nd Airborne Division was scheduled to jump into Torrijos/Tocumen airfield just forty-five minutes after the assault of the 1st Ranger Battalion.[43]

Thus, the two families of missions listed above are the ones that, most likely, a large-scale special operations ground direct action force would be required to undertake in support of the national security and national military strategies. From here, one can proceed to determine the capabilities required for such a force to successfully execute these missions.

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[42]William H. McRaven, *Spec Ops: Case Studies in Special Operations Warfare, Theory and Practice* (Novato, CA: Presidio, 1995), 328,366.

[43]U.S. Special Operations Command, *United States Special Operations Command 10th Anniversary History*, 19-20.

CHAPTER 3

WHAT IS NECESSARY?

> [SOF] must be able to dominate a limited time and space faster and smarter than any potential adversary. Not only must we be able to focus combat power, information superiority, and logistics at the point of attack, but do so with precision and speed that minimize friendly casualties, collateral damage, and the enemy's ability to react.[1]
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> U.S. Special Operations Command, *SOF Vision 2020*

The Capabilities Required

Based upon the two mission groups discussed in the previous chapter, one can now move on to determine the capabilities required in order for a unit to successfully accomplish those missions. In many ways, those two mission categories are similar; consequently, the required capabilities will often overlap from one mission to another. In fact, the capabilities required for the successful execution of the initial forcible entry mission are a subset of those required for a strategic raid.

After analysis of the missions, the list of necessary capabilities includes the following:

1. A level of training and readiness permitting short-/no-notice employment
2. Staff proficiency in joint special operations raids
3. Habitual joint special operations task force (JSOTF) relationships
4. Rapid (airborne/heliborne) or undetected infiltration

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[1]U.S. Special Operations Command, *SOF Vision 2020* (MacDill AFB, FL: U.S. Special Operations Command, 1996), 15.

5. Proficiency in basic combat drills

6. Proficiency in joint fire support synchronization

7. An independent and coherent selection and retention process

8. Rapid strategic deployability

9. Expert proficiency in military operations in urban terrain (MOUT), to include close quarters battle (CQB) and demolitions

10. The ability for disciplined target discrimination

11. The ability to operate effectively in a nuclear, biological, and chemical (NBC) environment

The first seven of these capabilities arise from the principles of special operations derived by William H. McRaven, a senior U.S. Navy SEAL.[2] Based as they are upon principles of operations, they are by nature general. These capabilities could easily apply to almost any type of raid force in any type of situation.

The last four principles, on the other hand, derive more specifically from the strategic situation of the United States and the desired effects presented in its national security and national military strategies.

Of course, more capabilities could be added to this list. Ease of operation in any environment, for example, is a desirable capability for any power projection force. However, this capability, though beneficial, is not critical for a short duration mission. The same applies to other mission-enhancing, but not mission-essential, capabilities.

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[2]William H. McRaven, *Spec Ops: Case Studies in Special Operations Warfare, Theory and Practice* (Novato, CA: Presidio, 1995), 8-23.

Raids

The raid is the primary mission of a ground direct action force. As noted earlier, other direct action missions can be accomplished through the employment of stand-off air, ground, or sea platforms firing PGMs or through the employment of small teams to provide terminal guidance or conduct sabotage. Raids, on the other hand, require a larger force on the ground--a force that is able to control the objective area for a specified amount of time.

Field Manual 7-85, *Ranger Operations* defines a raid as "a strike operation conducted behind enemy lines against strategic objectives, targets of high tactical value, time-sensitive targets, or key personnel and facilities in enemy rear areas."[3]

In most cases, raids are conducted by comparatively small forces facing an enemy in greater strength or in a more secure position. The enemy forces, the location of the target, the arrangement of the defenses, or any of a number of other factors put the objective beyond the effective operational reach of conventional forces. The raid force is required to rely upon such factors and surprise and speed to throw the enemy off balance, seize the initiative, and successfully execute the mission before the enemy is able to react.

William McRaven, in his book *Spec Ops: Case Studies in Special Operations Warfare: Theory and Practice*, attempted to outline a theory of special operations

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[3]U.S. Army, Field Manual 7-85, *Ranger Operations* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1987), 5-1.

warfare. Though the title refers to "special operations," by his own admission, McRaven was specifically examining direct action missions. In his definition, these are missions "conducted by forces specially trained, equipped, and supported for a specific target whose destruction, elimination, or rescue (in the case of hostages), is a political or military imperative."[4]

In his work, McRaven examined eight special operations direct action missions. These operations ranged in size from the Italian manned torpedo attack at Alexandria in 1941 to the Israeli raid on Entebbe. Several of these missions, such as the Entebbe and Son Tay raids, were rescue missions. Others, such as the torpedo attack already mentioned and the British raid on St. Nazaire, had as their object the destruction of enemy facilities. Still others, like the German glider assault on Eben Emael, were in direct support of conventional operations.

After analyzing these actions, McRaven determined that SOF are able to accomplish their direct action missions through the attainment of "relative superiority." This is achieved when the attacking force is able to gain "a decisive advantage" over the enemy. The raiders achieve victory through quickly gaining and then maintaining relative superiority long enough to accomplish their mission. If the raiders fail to gain relative superiority, or subsequently lose it, the mission fails.

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[4]McRaven, 2-3.

McRaven went on to identify six principles of special operations success--principles which help the direct action force to achieve this relative superiority. These principles are simplicity, security, repetition, surprise, speed, and purpose.[5]

The first three--simplicity, security, and repetition-- are most significant during the planning and preparation phases. Simplicity in planning is achieved by limiting the number of objectives, good intelligence, and innovation. This requires good command guidance, strong links to the intelligence community, and good, sound staff work. Security refers to the maintenance of good operational security (OPSEC) that allows the direct action force to preserve the element of surprise. Repetition simply denotes extensive, realistic rehearsals. This also includes a unit's familiarity and comfort with the generic mission profile, requiring it only to adapt to specific conditions, rather than train from the ground up for all aspects of an upcoming mission.[6]

The important capabilities for a direct action force that arise from these three principles of planning and preparation are (1) the requirement for a consistently high level of training and readiness, (2) staff proficiency in joint special operations raids, and (3) habitual JSOTF relationships.

First, a consistently high level of training and operational readiness provides the direct action force with the ability for short- or no-notice employment. This allows the National Command Authorities to use the direct action force in response to

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[5]Ibid., 4-11.

[6]Ibid., 11-16.

rapidly changing international events. The military, in executing the directives of the NCA, may not always have the luxury of extensive preparation required for high-risk high-payoff missions. At the same time, raids often require an extremely high level of proficiency. For example, training a Special Forces team for the Son Tay Raid took three months.[7] If a unit is already proficient in a particular mission, such as a raid, preparation time can be significantly reduced. McRaven noted that familiarity and proficiency with certain mission profiles has allowed some units to concentrate on the specifics of an impending mission without spending too much time reviewing the basics.[8]

Second, the staff of the direct action force must be extremely proficient in the planning, preparation, and execution of joint special operations raids. This capability actually provides benefits that apply to many of McRaven's principles. The greatest benefit is that this familiarity allows the staff to craft a plan that is relatively simple while taking advantage of the combat multipliers afforded by the various assets involved in the operation. Of course, "relative" is an important word--staff proficiency and familiarity with such missions can make the raid a "relatively simple" mission to that staff, while to another, less experienced, staff, such a mission would be hopelessly complex.

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[7]John Nadel and J. R. Wright, *Special Men and Special Missions: Inside American Special Operations Forces 1945 to the Present* (London: Greenhill Books, 1994), 57-58.

[8]McRaven, 15.

Ranger battalion staffs, for example, routinely integrate close air support, fixed-wing airdrop and airland operations, assault and attack helicopters, aerial electronic warfare (EW) platforms, airborne command and control, aerial refueling, and other special operations forces into their operations. At first glance, such synchronization would seem daunting to the casual observer; however, these staffs' level of proficiency in the planning and execution of such operations causes this to be well within their comfort zone.

Third, the ground direct action force must be accustomed to habitual JSOTF relationships which allow it to function easily as part of a JSOTF or other joint task force (JTF). These habitual relationships go a long way toward promoting effective planning and preparation. Raids, by their very nature, will involve the integration of special operations assets from several services. Air Force, Navy, or Army aviation SOF will, more likely than not, insert the raid force. The direct action force will have to integrate fire support from air, sea, and land platforms to achieve the necessary violence of action on the objective. Finally, upon completion of the mission, SOF aviation assets will often exfiltrate the raiders. All of these assets must be able to plan and prepare together without much difficulty or confusion.

Such habitual relationships also provide the ground direct action force easier access to the intelligence sources available to the special operations community. As noted by McRaven, good intelligence can contribute markedly to the simplicity of the plan by allowing the raid force to have a better picture of the enemy and consequently minimize the number of objectives. A ground force planning and operating under the

umbrella of a JSOTF would normally have the benefit of rapid, high-quality intelligence provided by an entire series of intelligence-gathering assets--something not always available to tactical conventional forces.

Habitual relationships and easy interoperability also contribute to effective rehearsals--essential to success during execution. One of the lessons learned from the failed Iranian rescue mission was the need for integrated preparation. The lack of integrated training and feedback among the C-130 pilots, the helicopter pilots, Rangers, and Special Forces contributed to the failure of the mission. Few of the assets had worked together previously and there was not even a full dress rehearsal of the operation with all of the players.[9]

Turning to the execution of a raid, surprise, speed, and purpose are the critical principles. McRaven defines surprise as "catching the enemy off guard" and speed as getting to the objective as rapidly as possible. One should add that this, in many cases, also means executing the operation and withdrawing as quickly as possible. Purpose is "understanding and then executing the prime objective of the mission regardless of emerging obstacles or opportunities."[10] For a direct action force to successfully apply these last three principles in the conduct of a raid requires additional capabilities.

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[9]Paul B. Ryan, *The Iranian Rescue Mission: Why It Failed* (Annapolis, MA: Naval Institute Press, 1985), 116-121.

[10]McRaven, 16-23.

Surprise, especially, is often critical to the success of raids. Though many factors influence surprising the enemy, when striking at targets in the enemy's rear area it can be gained primarily through rapid or undetected infiltration. This allows the direct action force to catch the enemy before he is fully able to understand and react to what is occurring. In 1943, Otto Skorzeny achieved surprise in his rescue attempt of Mussolini (Operation OAK) by landing his glider detachment directly on Gran Sasso -- something Il Duce's Italian guards were certainly not expecting.[11] The Son Tay raid achieved surprise through the conduct of a long-range rotary-wing infiltration deeper into North Vietnam than the Vietnamese thought could be attempted, coupled with the effective use of technology and flight techniques that kept the raid force off radar.[12] Moving more slowly, the 6th Ranger Battalion achieved surprise in their raid on Cabanatuan in 1944 by the conduct of a careful ground infiltration against a prison camp that the Japanese thought would not be attacked. Assisted by Alamo Scouts and Filipino guerrillas, they moved through a heavily trafficked area without being discovered and caught the Japanese guards entirely unaware.[13]

Speed in the conduct of a raid is important because it allows the direct action force to maintain the initiative. After surprise has psychologically dislocated the

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[11]Ibid., 178-185, 195.

[12]Ibid., 305-307, 327-328.

[13]Michael J. King, Leavenworth Papers No. 11. *Rangers: Selected Combat Operations in World War II* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: Combat Studies Institute, U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, 1985), 58-71.

enemy, speed of execution allows the raider to keep the enemy off balance. It also allows the direct action force to withdraw from the objective area before the enemy has time to react or muster additional forces in an attempt to regain the initiative.

Speed of execution is achieved through the rapid massing of combat power at the decisive point and subsequent rapid completion of the mission. Three capabilities are essential to producing these effects: staff proficiency in the planning and execution of such missions, a high level of proficiency in basic combat drills, and an equally high level of synchronization of joint fire support, to include air, sea, and land platforms.

The importance of staff proficiency in the conduct of these missions has already been mentioned in the context of planning, preparation, and rehearsal. This proficiency is also critical to the rapid massing of combat power during execution. If the staff is not able to synchronize all the various special operations assets available, the raid force will may not be able to concentrate the combat power necessary for the rapid success of the mission.

The importance of the other two capabilities, drill proficiency and the synchronization of fire support, is apparent from the examination of the raid on Son Tay. In preparation for the mission, the assault force practiced rapid off-loading and loading of helicopters, prisoner of war (POW) evacuation drills, and immediate action drills in the interests of making the ground operation proceed as rapidly as possible. As a result, the direct action force was only on the ground for twenty-six minutes. This was intentional, as the planners assumed that after thirty minutes the North

Vietnamese Army units in the surrounding area would begin reacting to the raid. The raiders also integrated helicopter gunships into the attack on the POW camp, as well as Air Force F-4D and F-105 fighter strikes against surface-to-air missile (SAM) sites.[14]

Raids conducted by Israeli forces have also demonstrated extremely rapid execution. The Israeli heliborne raid on Beirut airport, on 28 December 1968, lasted only forty-five minutes, but the raid force managed to destroy thirteen aircraft.[15] In another raid in 1969, an Israeli commando force conducted a heliborne assault against an Egyptian radar site at Ras Gharib. They overcame resistance in three minutes. After some intense work with acetylene torches, the raiders were able to lift the critical radar equipment that was the object of the mission back to Israeli controlled territory.[16] During Operation JONATHAN, the Israeli strike force neutralized the terrorists at the airport in Entebbe and secured the hostages within three minutes of the first C-130 landing.[17]

The final principle of special operations, purpose, requires both a clearly defined mission statement and the personal commitment of the direct action force.[18] The first aspect of purpose can be achieved through clear objectives, good planning,

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[14]McRaven, 312-317, 328-329.

[15]Bruce Hoffman, *Commando Raids, 1946-1983* (Santa Monica, CA: Rand, 1985), 34.

[16]David Eshel, *Elite Fighting Units* (New York: Arco Publications, 1984), 84-86.

[17]McRaven, 353-367.

[18]McRaven, 21-22.

and well-disseminated commander's intent. Not surprisingly, staff proficiency is, once again, a key capability necessary to produce these results. The second aspect of purpose, however, requires that the members of the team have a strong commitment to the success of any given mission. To create the body of personnel with the requisite level of commitment, the direct action force must have the capability to shape itself through control of its personnel composition. In essence, the force must select, train, and maintain an elite body of troops. This can only be achieved by discriminatory selection and retention standards.

The seven capabilities outlined above, based upon McRaven's principles of special operations, apply to a raid force in any context. The next four capabilities required for the large-scale direct action force, however, are specific to the situation of the United States and are directly related to its national security and national military strategies.

As U.S. strategy has evolved in recent years, the military has shifted from a forward deployed force to a power projection force relying upon deployable forces from the continental United States (CONUS). This is clearly presented in the national military strategy, as the requirement for power projection is one of the basic strategic concepts applied to the U.S. Armed Forces. Consequently, in order to be able to conduct the strategic missions that may be directed by the NCA, often in the context of crisis response, the direct action force must be capable of rapid strategic deployment. The Son Tay raid, the Iranian rescue mission, and the TF RANGER operations in Mogadishu were conducted at a great distance from the United States.

Next, given the nature of these raid missions, one can expected the targets to be either in built-up areas or, at the very least, to contain buildings. Critical C2 nodes and WMD sites, as well as other targets, normally will be located in some sort of structure. Often, this structure may itself be part of a larger complex of buildings. Of the one hundred raids between 1946 and 1983 studied by the RAND Corporation, more than one third involved close quarters combat either in or around buildings.[19] Most recently, the seven raid missions in Mogadishu took place completely within an urban environment.[20] Consequently, a high level of proficiency in military operations in urban terrain is essential to the direct action force.

In the context of this urban environment, individual soldiers and small teams must be proficient in both close quarters battle and demolitions. All of the small units (squads and platoons) within the direct action force must be able to quickly and efficiently clear rooms and buildings. These elements must also be able to conduct the demolitions incident to both breaching in a built-up environment and destroying materiel in the objective area.

The requirement for the discriminate use of force arises from both political and situational constraints. Politically, despite the rapid massing of combat power, it is usually not acceptable for a raid force to inflict collateral noncombatant casualties. This is especially true today, when CNN and other news media can bring pictures of

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[19]Hoffman, 29-64.

[20]U.S. Special Operations Command, *United States Special Operations Command 10th Anniversary History* (MacDill AFB, FL: U.S. Special Operations Command, 1997), 45-47.

the unintended casualties of such operations into the living rooms of millions of viewers. Similarly, prisoner and hostage rescue situations, such as the ones at Son Tay or Entebbe, require the discriminate use of force in order not to kill the very objects of the operation! To do this effectively, however, is complex and stressful. Consequently, members of the direct action force must have both solid proficiency in the marksmanship aspects of CQB and the discipline to control fires during intense, high-stress operations.

Finally, the direct action force must be able to deal with the requirement to conduct raids against sites containing or producing weapons of mass destruction. Both the national security and the national military strategies have emphasized the significance of this threat to American security. The military's vision of the future and experts analyses of the evolving international environment seem to indicate that this threat will only get worse. Consequently, U.S. direct action forces must be prepared to act in support of counterproliferation operations. Not only will these missions demand the capabilities already described, they will also require the ability to operate effectively in a contaminated environment. The direct action force must be able to fight in an NBC environment, identify the components of WMD, destroy WMD and supporting infrastructure, containerize and transport WMD and contaminated material, and decontaminate its own personnel and equipment, among other things. This is clearly no simple list of tasks.

Together, these eleven items represent the critical required capabilities that a large-scale direct action force should possess in order to effectively accomplish raid

missions in support of the NSS and the NMS. That is not to say that a force without the full constellation of capabilities described above would be incapable of executing a raid mission. On the contrary, many raids have been conducted by forces which do not possess all of these capabilities. The Israeli raid on Entebbe, for example, used an ad hoc force which included the Sayeret Matkal Counterterrorist Unit, paratroopers, and Golani infantry.[21] However, these three ground units were essentially given separate missions and the direct action force as a whole still displayed many of the other capabilities that have been discussed.

Thus, even though a DA force does not necessarily need to possess all of these eleven capabilities, a force that incorporates them maximizes its chance of success. A force that does not do so is at a disadvantage--with the concurrently greater risk of mission failure. Given the strategic sensitivity of missions that would cause the NCA to commit a ground direct action force in the first place, any increased risk of failure should be unacceptable.

Forcible Entry

Direct action forces, as noted earlier, also have the mission to serve as the "tip of the spear" for forcible entry missions. Specifically, this would involve attacks against critical enemy nodes, such as command and control facilities and other decisive points of his operational or tactical defenses. These forces could also strike

[21]McRaven, 333, 338-341.

against the "key to the country," as Gordon Bonham describes an airfield seizure operation.[22]

In recent history, direct action forces, acting in support of forcible entry operations, have done, or planned to do, all of these missions. During Operation URGENT FURY, the 1st and 2nd Ranger Battalions seized Point Salines airfield for follow-on conventional troops. In Operation JUST CAUSE, the 75th Ranger Regiment both seized Torrijos/Tocumen airfield for follow-on forces and neutralized a significant Panamanian ground threat (in the form of the 6th and 7th Rifle Companies) at Rio Hato. During planning for UPHOLD DEMOCRACY, the Rangers were to conduct helicopter assaults to strike at both Haitian C2 and key ground combat elements.

The tasks required to accomplish forcible entry missions are in many ways a subset of those required for a raid. In both instances, the direct action force must quickly achieve relative superiority over the enemy. In the case of forcible entry, however, the direct action unit does not withdraw; rather, it normally would be rapidly relieved by a conventional unit prepared to continue sustained combat operations.

During planning and preparation, the principles of simplicity, security, and repetition remain important. Direct action units still must maintain the high state of training and readiness that allows them react quickly to the international situation. Once alerted for potential utilization, these forces then do not have to expend precious time to "ramp up." Secure in the basics, these units can quickly transition to

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[22]Gordon C. Bonham, "Airfield Seizure: The Modern "Key to the Country" (School of Advanced Military Studies Monograph, U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, 1989), 2.

rehearsals which deal with the specifics of the upcoming operations. Prior to Operation JUST CAUSE, for example, the 75th Ranger Regiment was able to conduct a full dress rehearsal of the coming parachute assaults.

Staff proficiency is as important to success in forcible entry missions as it is in raids. In both cases, the staff is required to synchronize diverse joint assets in order to mass combat power and achieve the desired effects on the enemy. Because forcible entry missions are generally similar to raids (with the exception of the planned withdrawal from the objective area), staff proficiency in the planning and execution of raids translates quite well into staff proficiency in the other. The tools at the disposal of the direct action force could easily be identical for both missions.

Additionally, the capability of habitual JSOTF relationships and its resultant interoperability with other SOF remains important. Recent U.S. forcible entry missions have been spearheaded by joint special operations forces, as would have been the case for the invasion of Haiti, had it occurred. This predilection toward the employment of a JSOTF as the "tip of the spear" is a logical consequence of the unique capabilities, in the form of rapid, undetected infiltration, coordination, and firepower, that these organizations can bring to the table. A ground direct action force, therefore, must be able to fully integrate into such a team and be comfortable in such a framework in order to achieve maximum effectiveness.

Proceeding to the principles governing the execution of special operations, one sees that in forcible entry operations, as in raids, surprise is a key element of success. This is the case due to the greater vulnerability of the power projection forces during

infiltration and until relative superiority is achieved. Consequently, the direct action force conducting forcible entry must also be capable of rapid or undetected infiltration. At Eben Emael, the rapid German glider assault on the Belgian fort allowed the Germans to neutralize the fort's guns before the defender's could react effectively. In doing so, the men of Storm Detachment Koch prepared the way for the success of the subsequent conventional attacks across the Albert Canal.[23] During Operation JUST CAUSE, the invasion was supposedly compromised a few hours before H-Hour, but the speed of the airborne infiltration allowed the Rangers to still accomplish their mission.[24]

The Ranger landings at Arzew, on 8 November 1942, are examples of undetected infiltration. Two companies of Rangers slipped into the inner harbor of Arzew, climbed the sea wall, cut the wire, and assaulted the fort which controlled the harbor. The defenders were completely surprised and the fort fell in fifteen minutes. William Darby and four other companies landed further up the coast and climbed a ravine to seize another battery that could have adversely affected the follow-on landings of conventional forces.[25]

Forcible entry operations often take place during limited visibility in order to further exploit the element of surprise. The Ranger assaults at Arzew and Cabanatuan

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[23]McRaven, 36-39, 45-55, 65-66.

[24]Thomas Donnelly, Margaret Ross, and Caleb Baker, *Operation Just Cause: The Storming of Panama* (New York: Lexington Books, 1991), 197-211.

[25]King, 24.

took place at night, as did the two airborne assaults by the 75th Ranger Regiment during Operation JUST CAUSE.

Speed in forcible entry operations is almost as important as it is in the conduct of raids. Once again, it helps keep the defenders off balance until the attackers achieve a position of superiority. Speed was critical to the assaults at Eben Emael, Arzew, and in Panama, among others. At Eben Emael, the well-trained German storm troopers accomplished all of their missions within twenty minutes of the first gliders landing.[26] At Torrijos/Tocumen and Rio Hato, the Rangers rapidly gained control of the airfields. Tocumen was secure in a little over one hour after the airdrop and Rio Hato airfield was secure in less than two hours.[27] This effect, too, can be achieved through the rapid massing of combat power that is the result of combat drill proficiency and the effective synchronization of all available fire support.

Turning from generic capabilities to those which are specific to the U.S. situation, one can see that a direct action force responsible for forcible entry must also be capable of strategic deployment. The airborne assaults in both Operation URGENT FURY and Operation JUST CAUSE were conducted from bases in the United States. Given the current deployment of U.S. ground forces, future forcible entry operations will also entail deployment from the continental United States.

In the conduct of forcible entry operations, the seizure of a lodgement, such as an airfield, will require the clearing of buildings, as will the seizure of critical C2

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[26]McRaven, 66-67.

[27]Donnelly et al, 193-202, 348-349.

nodes and other facilities. In some cases, this will involve full-fledged MOUT. Even striking at enemy units, if surprise has been achieved, will probably require combat in and around barracks. Ranger forces and other SOF were required to conduct extensive combat in buildings and built-up areas during Operation JUST CAUSE. Similar combat would have been required in Haiti.

Though more limited and less critical than in raid operations, the capability for discriminate force may also be necessary in some instances of forcible entry. One such situation arose during the seizure of the terminal at Torrijos International Airport by C Company, 3/75 Ranger (attached to 1/75 Ranger for the assault). The Rangers found four hundred civilians in the terminal along with the Panamanian Defense Forces. Nonetheless, the Rangers, displaying both situational awareness and fire control, secured the terminal without any civilian loss of life.[28]

Thus, with the possible exception of independent selection and retention and the ability to operate effectively in a WMD environment (which, in some cases, could also be necessary), the constellation of capabilities for the "speartip" element of forcible entry operations are almost identical to that for raid missions. As a result, the special operations ground direct action force is able to effectively serve in both capacities without any diffusion of focus. Additionally, both these missions share the characteristics of being strategically sensitive and of short duration.

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[28]U.S. Special Operations Command, *United States Special Operations Command 10th Anniversary History*, 20-22.

Implications

The constellation of capabilities that a large-scale special operations ground direct action force must have in order to be able to successfully execute its two mission families is an aggregate of those which arise from generic special operations principles and those which are directly related to the strategic situation of the United States and its national security strategy. Fortunately, this is not a very long list--a consequence of the extensive overlap between the two mission families. As a result, the direct action force is not torn by two competing requirements. Taken together, these capabilities present a demand for a very specific type of force. What are some of the implications of these capabilities?

The first implication arising from this capabilities list is that the direct action force must be focused upon its mission essential task list and avoid the danger of taking on many additional tactical tasks. There is a great danger in trying to be the best in too many areas. All tasks on the METL should be based upon the two mission families of raid and forcible entry. These, by themselves, are more than enough to keep the direct action force fully occupied. In order to be valuable to the NCA, this force must present them with employment options involving a high probability of success. Otherwise, as the probability of failure increases, the employment of such a force becomes no longer feasible. Consequently, it is absolutely essential that this force focus upon its core competencies.

Second, the focus of small units within this direct action force must be on the basics. The rapid and efficient execution of appropriate combat drills is one of the

key elements which allow the force to quickly mass combat power on the objective. Realistic live-fire exercises are critical to this ability. This proficient execution of basic combat drills provides the foundation upon which mission-specific aspects of an operation may be easily erected.

Furthermore, key elements of this training must include military operations in urban terrain and close quarters battle. Given its two broad mission categories, this direct action force can expect to fight either in a built-up area or, at the very least, inside a few buildings. Unfortunately, the conventional forces are presently weak in these areas. The ground direct action force cannot afford to be, if it is to enjoy mission success.

Third, this direct action force should strive to conduct as much as possible of its training in a joint environment. In order to succeed, this force will have to rely upon both other ARSOF and special operations elements from sister services. The more it can train with these elements, the more habitual and comfortable the relationship becomes. One of the attractive aspects of using the JSOTF as the "tip of the spear" for forcible entry is that the component elements synergistically interact to bring overwhelming combat power to bear upon the enemy. This capability must be continuously practiced in order to be sustained.

Fourth, the direct action ground force, due to its relatively small size, can afford to take maximum advantage of emergent technologies. The relatively short duration of its mission profile, coupled with the requirement to quickly and briefly mass combat power, encourage the exploitation of these technologies. Project LAND

WARRIOR, for example, may provide a way to maximize the combat power of the individual "commando," while other technologies derived from Army Warfighting Experiment (AWE) could facilitate command and control.

This incorporation of technological improvements, however, should not be misinterpreted as a blind reliance upon technology. Rather, these emergent technologies should simply be considered as facilitators for the direct action mission. The individual "commando" must still possess the abilities and commitment to deal with combat on a very intense and human level. He must possess the skills which allow him to accomplish the mission, with or without the aid of technology.

Finally, the employment of a large-scale direct action force must take into consideration the capabilities and limitations imposed by its focus on two mission groups. Obviously, a concentration of the capabilities described in this chapter comes at the cost of others. First and foremost, it must be remembered that this is not a force designed for sustained combat operations. It lacks the organic indirect fire assets and combat service support necessary for such missions. Furthermore, due to the capabilities that have been discussed, reconstitution of this direct action force would be a lengthy process. Employment of this direct action force outside of the framework of raids and "tip of the spear" forcible entry missions risks the unnecessary waste of this important strategic asset.

CHAPTER 4

WHO CAN DO THIS?

The 75th Ranger Regiment

Having this list of capabilities, one can now proceed to compare the various forces that the United States has at its disposal against these requirements. The objectives are: first, to see if the present large-scale special operations ground direct action force--the 75th Ranger Regiment--has the requisite capabilities, and second, to see if any other force also has all those capabilities. If another force does match that description, then the capabilities represented by the Rangers may be redundant. If another force does not, then the Rangers represent the large-scale direct action force required by the national security and national military strategies.

The 75th Ranger Regiment is composed of a Regimental headquarters and headquarters company (HHC) and three Ranger battalions. All together, it has an authorized strength of 1848 men. The Regimental HHC is divided into the Regimental headquarters and the company headquarters. The Regimental headquarters contains two command and control teams, various tactical and logistical operations centers, three liaison teams, a unit ministry team, and a reconnaissance platoon. The company headquarters consists of the headquarters section, a communications section, and a communications equipment maintenance section.[1]

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[1]U.S. Army, Table of Organization and Equipment Number 07302C000, *Headquarters and Headquarters Company, Ranger Regiment* (April 1998).

The three Ranger battalions each number 575 officers and men. A battalion is comprised of an HHC and three Ranger companies. The battalion HHC, with a strength of 122 Rangers, has the standard headquarters and support elements, to include a command section, the staff, a support platoon, a fire support element, a communication section, and a medical treatment squad. There are no scouts or anti-armor elements.

The Ranger companies, numbering 151 Rangers, are composed of the company headquarters, three rifle platoons, and a weapons platoon. The rifle platoons each have forty Rangers and three M240G machine guns. The weapons platoon, with twenty-four Rangers, includes two 60 millimeter mortars, snipers, and an antitank section (equipped with either the Carl Gustav or the Javelin).[2]

Very limited ground mobility is provided the battalions by their Ranger special operations vehicles (RSOVs) and motorcycles. The RSOVs, which can be equipped with either Mark 19 grenade launchers or M2 .50 calibre machine guns, also provide some additional firepower for the force.

Very recently, the Rangers have, on a provisional basis, restructured their indirect fire assets. The individual rifle company mortar sections have been consolidated into provisional mortar platoons in each of the Ranger battalions. With the addition of additional assets, these platoons now contain four 60 millimeter

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[2]U.S. Army, Table of Organization and Equipment Number 07085C000, *Ranger Battalion* (April 1998); Table of Organization and Equipment Number 07086C000, *Headquarters and Headquarters Company, Ranger Battalion* (April 1998); Table of Organization and Equipment Number 07087C000, *Rifle Company (Ranger), Ranger Battalion* (April 1998).

mortars, four 81 millimeter mortars, and four 120 millimeter mortars. The battalions determine what mix of mortars to take based upon the nature of each separate mission.[3]

The Ranger force, thus, consists primarily of heavily armed light infantry. The individual companies have more firepower than comparable light infantry companies, but the battalion (apart from the provisional mortar platoon) does not have the heavier assets found in other infantry battalions. In order to mass combat power, the Rangers rely upon the proficiency of their individual soldiers and the joint fire support assets that are always at their disposal. How does this force fare when compared against the capabilities described in chapter 3?

First, the Rangers have the level of training and readiness which permits short- or no-notice employment. The Regimental training philosophy emphasizes training for combat, operating at night, and conducting live-fire exercises as often as possible. The battalions' METL serves to keep the focus narrow, concentrating upon direct action missions (airfield seizure and raid), infiltration techniques (airborne assault and air assault) and supporting tasks (execute readiness standard operating procedures (SOP), plan combat operations, defend, perform relief in place, and perform combat service support (CSS) operations).[4] Within the context of this focus and supported by ample resources, Ranger units are able to achieve and continuously maintain a high level of

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[3]Stanley A. McChrystal, "Memorandum for Deputy Commanding General, U.S. Army Special Operations Command" (12 January 1997).

[4]75th Ranger Regiment, Regimental Training Circular 350-1, *Training* (Ft. Benning, GA: 75th Ranger Regiment, 1996), 2-1 - 2-5.

proficiency in these tasks. Unlike other units, which must alternate between training, mission, and support cycles, Rangers have no support requirements. Their total attention is devoted to training for potential missions.

Second, the Ranger staffs are very proficient in the planning and execution of joint special operations raids. This proficiency arises out of a combination of quality personnel (to be discussed later), the mission focus (noted above), and constant rehearsals with potential JSOTF partners. These include bilateral training exercises (Bilats) with AFSOC and ARSOF aviation assets. Joint readiness exercises (JRXs) with all other key SOF players serve to validate the Ranger battalion's mission readiness.[5] Ranger staffs play a key role in the planning, preparation, and execution of these and other exercises, producing an extremely high level of proficiency in direct action operations within those organizations. These organizations also benefit from the large store of institutional knowledge regarding special operations direct action missions--the result of the constant rehearsal, refinement, and, occasionally, execution of such operations.

Third, the 75th Ranger Regiment is part of strong habitual JSOTF relationships. The Rangers expect to fight within that command and control context and understand how to maximize the capabilities of the various assets involved. The Ranger Regiment works closely with other SOF assets on a regular basis, as indicated by the exercises already mentioned. Recently, these habitual relationships have been further

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[5]Ibid., 5-2 - 5-3, 10-1 - 10-2.

reinforced as the mission cycles of the various SOF units that may be expected to work together in a direct action context have been synchronized.[6]

Other sources agree on the importance of these relationships for the effectiveness of the Ranger Regiment as a ground direct action force. Steve Fondacaro, in his study on Ranger utilization, emphasizes this aspect: "The habitual training relationship the Ranger Regiment has with other SOF members of a joint special operations task force enable this joint unit to project a highly reliable and lethal, direct action capability throughout the operational or strategic depth of the battlefield."[7]

Fourth, the Ranger Regiment, carried by special operations fixed- or rotary-wing assets, is capable of both rapid and undetected infiltration. Ranger elements can be deployed into the objective area by MC-130E/H Combat Talon aircraft, MH-53J Pave Low III, MH-47E Chinook and MH-60K Blackhawk helicopters, as well as conventional aircraft. Of course, the advantage of deployment by special operations platforms is that their state-of-the-art electronics, refueling capabilities, and avionics increase the possibility that the infiltration will either go undetected or that it will be detected too late for the enemy to react effectively. Rangers also have the possibility for ground infiltration, which can be by either vehicle or on foot.

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[6]Lieutenant Colonel Kevin Merrigan, interview by author, Ft. Leavenworth, KS, 18 February 1998.

[7]Steve A. Fondacaro, "U.S. Army Ranger Force Utilization: A Continuing Inability to Correlate Missions with Capabilities" (School of Advanced Military Studies monograph, U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, 1989), 38.

Historically, the Rangers have used fixed-wing aircraft during forcible entry operations. Operation UPHOLD DEMOCRACY, however, called for the Rangers to infiltrate by a combination of both fixed-wing and rotary-wing means. In the raid operations of TF RANGER in Mogadishu, helicopter insertion techniques, to include fast rope, were used. In general, Rangers retain the capabilities to utilize whatever infiltration assets will afford them the greatest possibility to achieve surprise.

Fifth, the Rangers have the requisite proficiency in basic combat drills which contributes to speed on the objective. The collective task list for Ranger squads and platoons emphasizes the basics--tasks such as assault, overwatch/support by fire, conduct breach, and clear a room (squad)/building (platoon), among others.[8] These units are afforded the time and resources to train the basic combat drills and these tasks to high standards. These skills are honed in a near-combat environment through the conduct of frequent live-fire exercises.

Sixth, Ranger elements are able readily to synchronize joint fire support. The coordination and control of fires is considered a mission essential task for the regimental and battalion staffs. The training standard is that each fire support team (FIST) and fire support element (FSE) directs close air support (CAS) and attack helicopters on a semi-annual basis as a minimum. FISTs and FSEs are also required to adjust mortar fire, artillery, and AC-130 fire. When possible, they also adjust naval

[8]75th Ranger Regiment, Regimental Training Circular 350-1, *Training*, 2-5.

gunfire.[9] In the author's experience, these frequency standards are easily exceeded as many of these fire support assets are present during major Ranger exercises.

Seventh, the Ranger Regiment has the necessary authority for independent selection and retention. It is said that Rangers are triple volunteers--they volunteer for the military, for the airborne, and for the Rangers. Prior to being assigned to one of the Ranger battalions, new soldiers undergo an indoctrination process at Ft. Benning that eliminates those who are either mentally, psychologically, or physically unfit to serve in the Regiment. Once in the unit, Rangers may be summarily relieved for standards (RFS) if they fail to live up to the high standards of the Regiment. This process is far more expeditious than the conventional separation system and ensures that no "weak links" are allowed to remain within Ranger units.

Officers and noncommissioned officers who desire to serve in the Regiment must be Ranger-qualified. They, too, must also undergo a two-week indoctrination process known as the Ranger Orientation Program (ROP). Additionally, officers who desire to lead in the Rangers must already have had successful leadership experience at that same echelon in another unit--platoon leaders must already have demonstrated success as platoon leaders, company commanders must have successfully commanded a company, and Ranger battalion commanders must also have had previous battalion command experience.

The result of these personnel policies is a highly motivated, highly professional unit with a sense of purpose and comparatively few discipline problems.

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[9]Ibid., 2-5, N-6 - N-7.

Eighth, being a very lightly equipped unit, Rangers are easily deployable by strategic lift. Since they have the capability to conduct parachute operations, this strategic deployment can culminate, if necessary, with an airborne forcible entry mission.

Ninth, Ranger units demonstrate high proficiency in military operations in urban terrain, to include close quarter battle and demolitions. Advanced MOUT techniques (AMT) are a critical and frequent element of small unit training for Ranger units and each platoon has an AMT master trainer.[10] A large amount of ammunition is dedicated by the rifle companies to close quarters marksmanship and CQB--training a rifle platoon in these techniques requires over 43,000 rounds of 5.56 millimeter ball ammunition alone.[11] Demolitions, to include breaching, are also trained on a regular basis and each rifle platoon has a designated demolitions team. At higher echelons, target profiles for training exercises, to include live-fire exercises, almost always include some built-up structures.

This Ranger capability for urban combat is widely recognized. During JUST CAUSE, the final assault on the Commandancia was given to C Company, 3rd Ranger Battalion because "it was clear that they were better prepared for that tough mission than probably any company in the Army at that time."[12] Rangers had another

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[10]Ibid., 10-1.

[11]75th Ranger Regiment, *75th Ranger Regiment Close Quarter Battle (CQB) Program of Instruction (POI)* (Ft. Benning, GA: 75th Ranger Regiment, 1991), 5-1.

[12]Edward M. Flanagan, *Battle for Panama: Inside Operation Just Cause* (New York: Brassey's Inc., 1993), 107-108.

opportunity to employ MOUT and CQB in Mogadishu in 1993. They distinguished themselves in the final action, inflicting over a thousand enemy casualties at the cost of sixteen Ranger lives. By any military standards, that operation would normally have been considered an outstanding victory.

Tenth, Rangers have the capability to apply disciplined target discrimination. Due to both the discipline of the personnel and the nature of their training, which can involve noncombat targets and requires the individual Ranger to identify the target as enemy before he shoots, Ranger units are able to deal with situations that involve noncombatants mixed with combatants. The best example of this occurred during Operation JUST CAUSE, when C Company 1/75 Ranger was faced with an airport terminal containing both noncombatants and enemy soldiers. No civilians were harmed in the course of the Rangers securing that facility.

Finally, the Rangers have the ability to operate effectively in an NBC environment. This is a somewhat recent development, stemming directly from the national security and national military strategies' emphasis on the threat posed to international stability by the proliferation of WMDs and the necessity to be able to stop such proliferation.

Operations in a contaminated environment and the handling of WMD have become a key part of Ranger training. Major training exercises often involve such missions. Forces are required to recover and move WMD material which may or may not be contaminated. Ancillary to this, they must then calculate downwind hazards and other issues related to the handling of this material. Units also train in the

detection of WMD hazards, the evacuation and handling of chemical and biological casualties, and other similar tasks.[13]

One sees, therefore, that the Ranger Regiment is competent to address all of the capabilities that U.S. national strategy requires of a large-scale special operations ground direct action force. They are suitable for both raid and forcible entry operations. Furthermore, they have proven as much on several occasions in the recent past.

The next question, however, is whether any other unit possess these same capabilities. Are the Rangers the only ones that provide the NCA with these capabilities or are there acceptable alternatives?

Other Special Operations Forces

Within SOF, there are several units that conduct special operations direct action missions. However, as previously mentioned, apart from the Rangers, these forces conduct primarily small-scale direct action. Such missions include hostage rescue, sabotage, guidance for PGMs, and similar activities. Could these forces easily be adapted to missions on a larger scale?

Looking first at the Special Forces, we see that they are oriented on a different set of tasks. Though direct action missions fit within their mission profile, these units are better suited for guerrilla warfare, special reconnaissance, and foreign internal defense missions. The twelve man "A" detachments combine a broad mix of

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[13]Lieutenant Colonel Kevin Merrigan, interview by author, Ft. Leavenworth, KS, 18 February 1998.

specialists that allow them to conduct the many different tasks associated with those three missions, as well as some limited direct action, such as PGM terminal guidance. This organization, however, is not organized or equipped for large-scale direct action. Simply put, the "A" teams do not have sufficient manpower or firepower for such operations..

In line with their capabilities, however, Special Forces have conducted small-scale direct action missions in Vietnam, Panama, and the Persian Gulf. On occasion, Special Forces personnel have also been assembled into larger groups in order to conduct larger missions. This was the case, for example, in the Son Tay raid. Though this can certainly--as has been shown historically--be done, the resultant force does not possess all of the required capabilities that have been identified for a large-scale direct action unit.

First and foremost, such ad hoc organizations would not possess the level of training permitting short- or no-notice employment. Special Forces teams, certainly, can deploy on short-notice to conduct their normal missions. They could not, however, be hastily thrown together and expected to immediately execute a complicated large-scale raid. Ad hoc organizations, by their very nature, are assembled together as an exception. As a result, a significant amount of time must be spent integrating such an element and then training it to accomplish the mission before it actually can be dispatched. Though the individual combat and small unit proficiency may be there from the beginning, the capabilities for large-scale operations

will not. The Son Tay raid, for example, required three months of training and preparation.

Second, the staff of such an ad hoc Special Forces unit would not have the proficiency in planning and executing special operations raids on such a scale. These personnel would not be able to draw upon a large base of common experience in such actions. In such circumstances, staff efficiency is bound to be impaired.

Third, though Special Forces will certainly have some familiarity and have established habitual relationships with at least some of the other SOF within the JSOTF, they will not have worked with them in the context of a large-scale direct action mission. Thus, despite this familiarity, interoperability will be negatively affected by the lack of exercise of these relationships in such a mission profile.

Finally, depending upon the previous focus of the Special Forces teams involved, they may or may not have the ability to function effectively in an NBC environment. Such a capability is not normally required for unconventional warfare, special reconnaissance, or foreign internal defense. Consequently, these tasks would also demand the expenditure of additional train-up time if WMD were part of a raid's profile.

Thus, one sees that even though an ad hoc force may be assembled--and has, on at least one occasion, conducted a large-scale raid--it does not meet all the characteristics necessary to function with maximum effectiveness in today's environment. In critical missions, that may mean both the difference between timely

and late response, as well as the difference between success and failure on the objective.

Another option within the SOF community is the Navy SEALs. Joint Publication 1-02 describes SEALs as "a naval force specially organized, trained, and equipped to conduct special operations in maritime, littoral, and riverine environments."[14] They are, therefore, narrowly targeted toward a very specific type of situation and environment.

SEALs have conducted many small direct action missions, usually close to water. On 22 November 1970, a fifteen-man SEAL force working with eighteen South Vietnamese militia conducted a successful raid on a Viet Cong prison camp in the Mekong Delta.[15] Another POW rescue operation was conducted in June, 1972 by elements of SEAL Team One operating from the USS *Grayback*. The force attempted and failed to rescue American prisoners held near the mouth of the Red River. Overall, SEALs conducted hundreds of small direct action missions during the Vietnam War.[16]

However, though SEALs meet many of the requirements for a direct action force, they are not used to operating in larger groups than their sixteen-man platoons

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[14]The Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint Publication 1-02, *Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1994), 335.

[15]Bruce Hoffman, *Commando Raids, 1946-1983* (Santa Monica, CA: Rand, 1985), 46.

[16]John Nadel and J. R. Wright, *Special Men and Special Missions: Inside American Special Operations Forces 1945 to the Present* (London: Greenhill Books, 1994), 74-75.

(half the size of U.S. Army infantry platoons). Consequently, to create a force capable of large-scale direct action from the SEALs would entail the same ad hoc mode of operation--with the same shortcomings--as creating such an element from Army Special Forces.

Finally, Special Mission Units within USSOCOM are specifically designed and trained for the counterterrorist mission, which justifiably absorbs most of their attention. They, too, cannot serve as a large-scale direct action force.

One can see, therefore, that even though other SOF elements possess a direct action capability, this capability is focused upon small-scale operations, usually within the context of unconventional warfare. Though the generally high calibre of special operations personnel allows for the creation of ad hoc elements, this course of action would entail a lengthy training period for the newly created unit. Such an organization's lack of habitual relationships would also serve to hinder its combat effectiveness. If the mission under consideration is serious enough to put U.S. personnel on the ground, with all the attendant risks that such a course of action entails, then such a potential decrease of effectiveness should not be acceptable.

Consequently, the remainder of the SOF community does not offer a viable alternative to the Rangers for a large-scale direct action force. Do any elements outside of USSOCOM present such an alternative means?

The 82nd Airborne Division

Within the conventional Army, the force that provides the closest alternative to the Ranger Regiment is the 82nd Airborne Division at Ft. Bragg, North Carolina.

Also light infantry, the 82nd Airborne has strategic reach and seems to provide most of the capabilities necessary to quickly mass combat power against the enemy and overwhelm him. In many other countries, such as France, Belgium, and the United Kingdom, airborne forces fulfill a role similar to that of the Rangers in the U.S. Armed Forces.

An airborne infantry battalion is composed of a battalion HHC, three rifle companies, and an antiarmor company, for a total of 671 paratroopers. In addition to the staff and company headquarters, HHC includes communications, maintenance, medical, and support platoons. There is also a mortar platoon equipped with four 81 millimeter mortars and a nineteen-man scout platoon for reconnaissance.

The three airborne rifle companies each have 131 paratroopers. Each company is composed of a headquarters, three rifle platoons, and a mortar section. The rifle platoons, unlike those in Ranger battalions, only have two machine guns each, as well as two Javelin antitank weapons. The company mortar section has two 60 millimeter mortars. These companies, therefore, have somewhat less firepower than their Ranger counterparts.

Delta company, the antiarmor unit, adds significant antiarmor capability to the airborne battalion. Its twenty high mobility multi-purpose wheeled vehicles (HMMWVs), armed with the TOW II missile, allow it to destroy armor at long ranges. This provides the airborne battalion with a long range anti-tank capability which is not

present in the Ranger battalions. In the face of other threats, these vehicles can also be mounted with the Mark 19 grenade launcher or the M2 .50 calibre machine gun.[17]

Like the Rangers, airborne infantry battalions are primarily light infantry organizations. In the case of the latter, they also have significant additional antiarmor capability in the form of Delta company and its TOW HMMWVs. Do the capabilities of these paratroop units also mirror those of the Rangers?

Certainly, airborne forces have conducted direct action raid missions. Belgian paracommandos conducted Operations DRAGON ROUGE and DRAGON NOIRE to rescue Western hostages in the Congo in 1964.[18] Similarly, the French employed their Foreign Legion paratroopers in Zaire in 1978 to protect the lives of French citizens against rebel forces.[19] Israel has also used its paratroopers as a raid force during and between the numerous Arab-Israeli wars. Can, and should, the United States do the same with its airborne forces?

Analysis reveals that such a course of action would not be the optimal solution. Though a highly capable and versatile unit, the 82nd Airborne Division does not

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[17]U.S. Army, Table of Organization and Equipment Number 07035C000, *Infantry Battalion (Airborne)* (April 1998); Table of Organization and Equipment Number 07036C000m *Headquarters and Headquarters Company, Infantry Battalion (Airborne)* (April 1998); Table of Organization and Equipment Number 07037C000, *Rifle Company, Infantry Battalion (Airborne)* (April 1998); Table of Organization and Equipment Number 07038C000, *Antiarmor Company, Infantry Battalion (Airborne)* (April 1998).

[18]Thomas P. Odom, Leavenworth Papers No. 14. *Dragon Operations: Hostage Rescues in the Congo, 1964-1965* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: Combat Studies Institute, U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, 1988), 61-160.

[19]Howard R. Simpson, *The Paratroopers of the French Foreign Legion: From Vietnam to Bosnia* (Washington: Brassey's, 1997), pp. 65-75.

possess the complete constellation of capabilities required for large-scale special operations direct action missions.

First, though the 82nd Airborne maintains the high level of training and readiness required for short- or no-notice employment in conventional forcible entry operations, this division, understandably, does not focus on special operations. Raids are not even on the METL for either rifle companies or battalions.[20] Consequently, these units do not emphasize proficiency in the tasks required for the execution of such missions.

Second, since raids are not a mission essential task for airborne battalions, staffs are not practiced in the planning and execution of such complex missions. Staff proficiency in raid planning and execution, therefore, is clearly missing.

Third, the 82nd Airborne does not a have habitual JSOTF relationship. Being within the conventional force structure, the 82nd paratroopers are accustomed to working with conventional assets. Airborne battalions have significantly less opportunity than the Rangers to work with special operations forces. These battalions do not understand SOF standard operating procedures as well as units that habitually work in USSOCOM. Consequently, they cannot integrate as readily with SOF partners.

This lack of a habitual relationship also applies to the integration of joint fire support. For example, though units in the 82nd Airborne Division occasionally have

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[20]Major Timothy J. Flynn, telephonic interview with author, Ft. Bragg, NC, 3 April 1998.

the opportunity to train with AC-130 aircraft, this does not occur frequently. This lack of training affects performance, as there is a significant difference in effective employment of this asset between those units (such as the Rangers) that train frequently with gunships and those that do not.[21] Furthermore, given the paucity of such aerial fire support assets, it would be three times as difficult to provide this training to the nine battalions of the 82nd Airborne as it is to the three battalions of Rangers.

Fourth, the 82nd Airborne does not possess independent selection and retention authority. True, soldiers must volunteer for airborne training and subsequent service with paratroop units. However, once they arrive at their battalion, these soldiers are governed by essentially the same retention and separation guidelines as the remainder of the conventional force. Therefore, the 82nd Airborne is not capable of rapidly eliminating sub-standard performers, nor is it capable of selecting already proven personnel to fill its leadership positions.

Fifth, even though the 82nd Airborne emphasizes and regularly conducts MOUT training, it has not achieved the proficiency in close quarter battle that is displayed by the Ranger battalions. In the author's experience as a rifle company commander in both organizations, the Rangers dedicated significantly more time and effort to such training. Once again, this is a matter of focus. As a conventional unit with a broad range of missions, an urban area is only one of the many environments in

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[21]Major John M. Hicks, interview with author, Ft. Leavenworth, KS, 2 April 1998.

which the 82nd Airborne must be able to fight. It is not able to devote the resources and time necessary to specialize in MOUT.

Tied to this CQB capability is the ability for disciplined target discrimination. Once again, this is a function of both close quarters battle proficiency and individual soldier discipline. On the conventional battlefield, this arguably could be less important, as civilians tend to flee areas of intense combat. In a raid environment, however, due to the unexpected nature of the operation and the objective's location in enemy rear areas, this will often be a factor.

In looking over the analysis, one sees that the 82nd Airborne Division does not completely lack the capabilities required for a direct action force. Rather, they simply do not have them at the level necessary to effectively conduct the two special operations direct action missions described in chapter 2.

This should come as no surprise. One must realize that, as conventional forces, the paratroops are organized, trained, and equipped to conduct conventional operations. Given their light infantry organization and their method of delivery to the battlefield, the airborne forces provide the military with the important capability of utilizing surprise on the operational or strategic battlefield, to include conducting a forcible entry operation, but they are designed to fight conventional battles.

This emphasis on sustained combat operations is what makes the 82nd Airborne Division so significantly different from the 75th Ranger Regiment. The additional firepower and other assets required for such operations make the airborne division a decidedly heavier and more powerful organization. At the same time, the

combat support and combat service support also required for these sustained operations adds a large, but essential, tail to the 82nd. The Ranger Regiment simply does not need all those additional assets--it is designed for a quick mission followed by rapid withdrawal.

At the same time, the focus on sustained conventional combat demands that the 82nd Airborne Division be prepared for a wider and less specialized range of missions than the Rangers. This larger METL decreases the amount of time the 82nd can devote to any particular task, with the concurrent decrease in proficiency. The Rangers are specialists; paratroopers must be generalists.

Finally, a division-size organization on a military post cannot avoid becoming involved in the various support functions that are part of the day-to-day operation of that installation. This, too, serves as a distractor for the troops of the 82nd and prevents the narrow focus on training and mission readiness that is afforded the individual Ranger battalions in their separate locations.

Simply put, the 82nd Airborne Division is a conventional power projection force capable of conducting airborne forcible entry operations followed by sustained combat. It can be expected to seize airfields and other bases for follow-on forces, as well as seizing important objectives until link-up with other forces; it can occupy or reinforce areas beyond the reach of other land forces; it can conduct noncombatant evacuation operations (NEO); and it can conduct the full range of conventional ground

operations.[22] It is, therefore organized, trained, and equipped to execute those type of missions. This structure, as has been shown, is not totally compatible with the requirements for special operations direct action.

Could the 82nd Airborne Division be restructured to conduct special operations ground direct action missions? The answer, certainly, is yes. Provided enough resources, personnel support, and mission focus, the 82nd Airborne could replicate the capabilities of the 75th Ranger Regiment. The more important question, however, is: Is this really necessary?

As mentioned, the 82nd Airborne has many assets specifically designed for the conduct of sustained ground operations. Training with the necessary focus to achieve a high level of proficiency in raids would entail a significant stress for the division training calendar. The attention that would have to be devoted to this task would detract from other items on the METL that focus upon conventional combat. Placing the emphasis on raids--to achieve the necessary level of proficiency--would be at the expense of other tasks for which the division is also designed.

Finally, this "conversion" would necessarily involve a large expenditure of resources in all areas. The 82nd Airborne is eight times as large as the Ranger Regiment and has three times as many infantry battalions. Selecting and retaining the quality personnel required would become a significantly more difficult undertaking. Similarly, the training budget would have to increase by a similar amount in order to

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[22]Charles D. McMillin, "Roles and Missions of Airborne, Rangers, and Special Forces in Contingency Operations" (Master of Military Art and Science thesis, U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, 1979), 49.

have the entire force ready for the associated special operations tasks. Other special operations assets, such as AC-130s and 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment, would be severely strained to support training for the increased force, even if the ready package remained the same.

In effect, all of these changes would make the 82nd Airborne into a "Ranger" division. This would greatly increase the costs and overhead of the strategic direct action capability, while wasting resources designed for sustained conventional combat operations.

On the other hand, the lack of certain direct action capabilities does not mean that the 82nd Airborne is ill-suited for forcible entry operations. It role in such operations, however, is different. In the analysis of this issue, there are three salient points.

First, this study is looking at a JSOTF, due to its unique proficiency, as the force of choice for "tip of the spear" forcible entry missions. This does not include all missions involved in forcible entry operations. Rather, it indicates that some targets will be so crucial to the success of the operation that it would be prudent to direct the most proficient assets against them. There still remain many other missions requiring a forcible entry capability within the context of the overall operation.

Second, though the constellation of capabilities described in chapter 3 presents the ideal combination for these "speartip" forcible entry missions, these capabilities are not absolutely essential for every forcible entry unit. Certainly, airborne forces can conduct such missions, and have, on many occasions. In American military history

alone, airborne forces have participated in forcible entry operations in Sicily, Normandy, the Philippines, Grenada, and Panama, to mention a few.

Third, a forcible entry operation will normally involve significantly more than a few missions aimed at critical targets. Forces engaged in the operation may have to secure multiple lodgements and can be expected to conduct sustained operations in the immediate aftermath of the forcible entry. It is for such missions that the 82nd Airborne Division and other conventional forces are ideally suited. The 75th Ranger Regiment, with its lack of a sustained support structure and high training overhead, is not ideal for protracted ground combat.

Consequently, the 82nd Airborne Division still has, and will continue to have, a significant role in forcible entry operations.

Marine Expeditionary Units - Special Operations Capable

Yet another alternative for a raid force is provided by the Marine Expeditionary Units (Special Operations Capable). These forces, forward deployed, claim to have most of the capabilities required to conduct direct action missions. Certainly, they represent a robust combat force. Especially attractive is the complete package that provides for the organic integration of ground combat, attack and assault aviation, and combat service support assets. General Charles Krulak, Commandant of the Marine Corps, regards MEU(SOC)s as the "premier crisis-response force in the world" and "the most flexible military force in the world today."[23]

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[23]Tom Clancy, *Marine: A Guided Tour of a Marine Expeditionary Unit* (New York: Berkley Books, 1996), 42.

A MEU(SOC) is composed of four separate elements, brought together under the command of a Marine colonel. Because each commander is able to tailor the unit's structure to match the requirements of anticipated missions, this organization varies somewhat from one MEU(SOC) to another. Nonetheless, the basic elements remain generally the same. Command and control is exercised through a command element consisting of approximately 214 men. The ground combat element (GCE), around which the MEU(SOC) is built, is a reinforced battalion landing team. The aviation element consists of a reinforced medium Marine helicopter squadron. Finally, the combat service support element is a company-sized unit which provides support for the rest of the organization.

The ground combat element, consisting of 1,232 men, has more firepower and ground mobility than either the Army Ranger or airborne battalions. The GCE is composed of a headquarters company, three rifle companies, a heavy weapons company, an artillery battery, a light armored reconnaissance platoon, an assault amphibian platoon, a tank platoon, a surface rubber boat raid and cliff assault company, an engineer platoon, a reconnaissance platoon, and a shore fire control party. This impressive array of forces adds up to twenty-eight HMMWVs (twenty of which are armed with TOW II missiles, Mark 19 grenade launchers, or M2 .50 calibre machine guns), six M198 105 millimeter towed howitzers, eight 81 millimeter mortars, six light armored vehicles (LAVs), thirteen AAV-7 amphibious assault tractors, and four M1 Abrams tanks.

The aviation element provides the MEU(SOC) with both assault and attack capabilities. Though the organization may vary, a typical aviation element could include twelve CH-46E Sea Knight transport helicopters, eight CH-53E Super Stallion heavy transport helicopters, eight AH-1W Cobra attack helicopters, three UH-1N Iroquois command and control helicopters, and six AV-8B Harrier II attack aircraft. If necessary, the aviation element could be supported by land-based KC-130 Hercules for operations requiring aerial refueling.

Finally, the combat support element provides the MEU(SOC) with communications, supply, maintenance, medical, motor transport, landing support, and engineer support platoons. The resources of this element, combined with those of the amphibious ready group (ARG) upon which the MEU(SOC) is embarked, can sustain an operation for up to fifteen days.[24]

The MEU(SOC) is carried aboard a three ship amphibious ready group. In addition to these ships, the ARG has a few helicopters, unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), assault craft, a beach control party, and a SEAL team.[25]

MEU(SOC)s rotate through a three-phase fifteen-month cycle that provides one MEU(SOC) on station for every three in the Marine Corps. In essence, a new organization is trained for every cruise. The first phase, lasting three months, consists of refit and basic refresher training. During this time, personnel have a chance to rest, equipment is repaired, and new personnel are brought into the units. During the next

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[24]Ibid., 214-226.

[25]Ibid., 227-231.

phase--the MEU(SOC) workup and qualification period--the various elements of the organization are brought together and trained to work as a team. This phase, which lasts six months, begins with the basics and culminates with a fleet exercise (FLEETEX) and special operations capability exercise (SOCEX).

Several aspects of the MEU(SOC) train-up have a direct bearing on special operations missions. These include special skills courses and the fire support coordination exercise early in the training cycle, followed by Maritime Special Purpose Force (MSPF) interoperability training, training in urban environments (TRUE), strikes against gas and oil platforms, and long range night raid training as this training cycle advances. This process culminates with the SOCEX at the end of the training phase.[26]

Upon successful completion of the FLEETEX and the SOCEX, the MEU(SOC) is certified as ready. The final phase of the rotation cycle is the six month cruise.

As a result of this cycle, of the seven MEU(SOC)s, two, sometimes three, are operational at any given time. The 22nd, 24th, and 26th MEUs rotate in providing an operational MEU(SOC) in the Mediterranean, while the 11th, 13th, and 15th MEUs take turns providing a MEU(SOC) in the Western Pacific, Indian Ocean, or Persian Gulf. The seventh MEU (31st MEU) is based out of Okinawa. Component units of that MEU(SOC) deploy to Okinawa, "cover down" on the equipment, and conduct the train-up on location before certification. As a result, the 31st MEU is operational only part of the time.[27]

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[26]Ibid., 246-249.

[27]Major John Love, interview with author, Ft. Leavenworth, KS, 4 March 1998.

The Marine Corps claims that the MEU(SOC)s are certified on their capability to execute a series of twenty-nine different missions. These missions fall into four major categories: amphibious operations, direct action operations, military operations other than war, and supporting operations.

Amphibious operations are, naturally, the bread and butter of the Marine units. These include amphibious assault, amphibious raids, amphibious demonstrations, and amphibious withdrawal. The amphibious raid is described as "the capability to conduct a swift incursion into an objective in order to inflict loss or damage upon opposing forces, followed by a planned withdrawal. The amphibious raid provides the operational focus for the MEU(SOC)."[28]

Direct action operations cover a wide range of missions: in-extremis hostage recovery, seizure or recovery of offshore energy facilities, visit, board, search and seizure operations, specialized demolition operations, tactical recovery of aircraft and personnel, seizure or recovery of selected personnel or material, and counterproliferation of weapons of mass destruction. It is important to note that these missions include most of the tasks that have been identified as the primary ones for the special operations ground direct action force.

Finally, the remaining two groups cover military operations other than war (MOOTW) and supporting operations. MOOTW includes peace operations (peace keeping and peace enforcement), security operations, noncombatant evacuation

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[28]U.S. Marine Corps, Marine Corps Order 3120.9A, *Policy for Marine Expeditionary Units (Special Operations Capable)* (Washington: Department of the Navy, 1997), 11-17.

operations (NEO), reinforcement operations, joint/combined training/instruction teams, and humanitarian assistance and disaster relief. Supporting operations cover a broad spectrum of secondary (and not so secondary!) missions. These are: tactical deception operations, fire support planning, coordination, and control in a joint/combined environment, signal intelligence and electronic warfare, MOUT, reconnaissance and surveillance, initial terminal guidance, counterintelligence operations, airfield and port seizure, limited expeditionary airfield operations, show of force operations, JTF enabling operations, and sniping operations.[29]

Taken together, these MEU(SOC) capabilities certainly seem to meet all of the requirements outlined earlier in this analysis. Is this an alternate answer for a special operations direct action force?

The MEU(SOC) concept has several strengths as a crisis response force. Forward deployed aboard ships, the MEU(SOC) is capable of very rapid reaction if the target is within its operational reach. The unit's focus on amphibious raids, usually employing rotary-wing assets for infiltration, provide it with a high level of proficiency at rapid infiltration, mission execution, and exfiltratrion that can be applied to a series of missions, to include NEO. Finally, the combination of light and heavy maneuver, artillery, helicopter, and fixed-wing aviation assets within the MEU(SOC) provide it with a powerful combined arms punch.

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[29]Ibid.

However, upon examination of the MEU(SOC) in the light of the constellation of capabilities listed in chapter 3, some shortcomings come to light. One finds that, though the MEU(SOC) is an impressive organization, it is based on the concept that a "pick-up" unit, with special training, can accomplish difficult special operations missions.[30] Such an approach presents significant problems with regards to specialized missions and habitual relationships.

First, even though the MEU(SOC)s represent an effective combined arms team, they do not exercise a habitual relationship with other JSOTF assets that may be required for the conduct of complicated strategic direct action missions. This limited interaction inhibits the MEU(SOC)s from utilizing SOF force multipliers in everything ranging from strategic intelligence to AFSOC fire support platforms. If a direct action operation would call for extensive interaction between the Marines and SOF, there would be little common basis of experience upon which to draw.

Second, the very nature of the six month cruise places limitations on the sustainment training that MEU(SOC)s can conduct. Once the MEU(SOC) is afloat, training opportunities become limited. Though MEU(SOC)s generally participate in a series of multinational exercises during their deployments, these are usually in support of strategic political objectives and may not match the unit's actual training requirements. Live fire skills, especially, are prone to suffer.[31] Consequently, it is

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[30]Clancy, *Marine*, 213-214.

[31]Major John Love and Major Marcus Smith, interviews with the author, Ft. Leavenworth, KS, on various dates.

only logical that, as a cruise proceeds, the basic combat skills within the MEU(SOC) suffer some degradation.

Third, it must be remembered that the Marines, like the Army, are a conventional force. Marine standards may be high, but they do not have the independent selection and retention authority possessed by the special operations forces. It is just as difficult for the Marines to separate below average soldiers as it is for the Army.[32] Thus, though the Marines undoubtedly have a well-motivated force, it is difficult for them to compare with the proficiency and professionalism maintained by some SOF elements.

Fourth, MEU(SOC)s are forward deployed forces. As such, they are able to respond very rapidly only if they are in the correct location. If not, deployment to another location could entail several days of sailing. They do not, therefore, have the advantage of rapid strategic deployability. If the MEU(SOC)s were to serve as the military's special operations ground direct action force, this situation would impose significant limitations on the flexibility of the NCA to react to a crisis.

Fifth, though all Marines undergo MOUT training, primary responsibility for such combat within the MEU(SOC) is given to the Maritime Special Purpose Force (MSPF), another ad hoc element within that organization. This element numbers approximately fifty personnel and is extensively trained in special operations. The remainder of the force has no more training in MOUT than other conventional units.[33]

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[32]Major Marcus Smith, interview with author, Ft. Leavenworth, KS, 5 March 1998.

[33]Major John Love, interview with author, Ft. Leavenworth, KS, 4 March 1998.

These same considerations apply to the Marines' capability for disciplined target discrimination.

Finally, though the MEU(SOC)s advertise the capability to conduct counterproliferation of WMD, this focus is certainly not as intense as it is within the special operations community. The MEU(SOC)s do not train any skills beyond basic NBC warfare techniques.[34]

Thus, we see that, even though a MEU(SOC) has many of the capabilities required for the ground direct action mission, it certainly does not possess the entire range of capabilities required. It can, if necessary, be tasked with such missions, but its effectiveness will be less than that of a focused special operations direct action force. Especially critical, the Marines do not possess the capacity for strategic mobility and strategic forcible entry offered by airborne forces.

Nonetheless, the MEU(SOC)s represent a forward deployed force that can provide extensive crisis response capabilities. Though the factors described above prevent them from being the force of choice for strategic direct action raids, they make critical contributions in other areas. They are ideal for a broad spectrum of operations, to include noncombatant evacuation operations, which they are often called upon to perform. MEU(SOC)s are also important enablers for some forcible entry operations, capable of securing lodgements for heavier follow-on forces. Additionally, the limited special operations capabilities within the MEU(SOC) make them a viable in extremis force, provided that they are on station within operational range of the target area.

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[34]Ibid.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

> The [Ranger] Regiment provides the National Command Authority [*sic*] with a potent and responsive strike force continuously ready for worldwide deployment. The Regiment must remain capable of fighting anytime, anywhere, against any enemy, and WINNING.[1]
>
> General Gordon R. Sullivan, "Sullivan's Charter"

From the foregoing analysis, the hypothesis that the 75th Ranger Regiment is the best choice for a large-scale special operations ground direct action force stands. The Ranger force possesses all the requisite capabilities for such a unit. It meets both the generic requirements developed from Admiral McRaven's principles of special operations and the specific requirements which flow from the U.S. geopolitical situation and the U.S. national security strategy.

In the course of this analysis, the national security strategy played a critical role. The NSS describes the ends of U.S. national security policy and the ways by which the four instruments of power--diplomatic, military, economic, and informational--are to be employed to achieve those ends. It is, therefore, the basic foundation from which the military determines its requirements. Ultimately, the Armed Forces of the United States must provide the President with the capabilities required for the successful execution of the NSS.

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[1]Gordon R. Sullivan, "Sullivan's Charter," in 75th Ranger Regiment, *Ranger Regiment Command Brief* (Ft. Benning, GA: 75th Ranger Regiment, 1995).

To support the national security strategy, the armed forces exercise the Joint Strategic Planning System (JSPS). One of the critical documents in this process is the national military strategy. Like all strategies, the NMS discusses ends, ways, and means. Specifically, this document addresses the military instrument of power and translates the objectives of the national security strategy into a military strategy. The ends of the NMS are the national military objectives, the ways are the elements of this strategy (shape, respond, prepare), and the means is the joint force. The NMS proceeds to address the characteristics of this joint force and the capabilities (in a macro sense) that this force must possess in order to achieve its strategic ends.

Vision, in turn, projects these concepts into the anticipated future environment and thus drives the requirements determination process. General Shalikashvili, the Chairman of the JCS, provided this guidance through *Joint Vision 2010*. In turn, the services and warfighting commanders-in-chief (CINCs) have done the same, to include, in this case, *SOF Vision 2020*.

In this cascading manner, the national security strategy provides the foundation for the JSPS and one of its most significant outputs, the national military strategy. This document, in turn, provides the guidance for planning by the services and the various CINCs. The Chairman's vision statement similarly guides the vision statements of the services and the CINCs.

Doctrine, for its part, describes the ways in which the military tools can be used to implement the national military strategy. While the NMS outlines the strategic ends and the broad ways to arrive at them (along with some general guidance on

means), doctrine elaborates on the ways the military tools should be employed. Doctrine does not need to change with every change in strategy; as long as the ways the military tools are used remain consonant with the accomplishment of the desired strategic ends, doctrine may be considered to be effective.

The tools, of course, are the various Army battalions, Air Force wings, and Navy carrier battle groups, among many others. Like doctrine, these tools can be applied in support of a variety of strategies--as long as they can achieve the ends of those strategies.

Special operations forces provide the NCA with a variety of ways and means which support the national security strategy. The ways are the nine principal missions and seven collateral activities for which U.S. Special Operations Command is responsible. Direct action is one of the principle missions.

As noted in the definition in chapter 1, the term direct action refers to a wide variety of strike and offensive operations. These include such operations as raids, ambushes, stand-off attacks, employing mines, the provision of terminal guidance for other systems, and sabotage. Among the means, or tools, at the disposal of USSOCOM and other commands for the accomplishment of these missions are AC-130 aircraft, PGMs launched from aerial and maritime platforms, SEALs, Special Forces teams, and the 75th Ranger Regiment.

Recent advances in technology have produced a situation in which many direct action missions can be accomplished as stand-off attacks. The accuracy of precision-guided munitions, especially when coupled with ground laser target designation, now

allows aerial, maritime, and ground platforms to effectively destroy targets at long ranges. This presents the NCA with a very tempting option, as stand-off attacks generally entail significantly less military and political risk--the chances of American prisoners being paraded by the enemy in front of CNN are considerably reduced.

However, as has been seen, precision-guided munitions cannot effectively deal with all types of situations. Aircraft and cruise missiles cannot confirm battle damage assessments, nor can they bring back evidence. Additionally, capabilities naturally generate a set of countermeasures--potential adversaries realize U.S. technological capabilities and are undoubtedly designing defenses to counter them.

Actions by small teams cannot fully compensate for the deficiencies in stand-off attacks. Such a solution also falls short when the mission requires control of the target area for a specified amount of time. The bottom line is that there will be times when the United States will need to put a large direct action force on the ground in the objective area in order to accomplish the purpose of the operation. The preceding analysis has shown that this will probably occur in the form of either a strategic direct action raid or as a "tip of the spear" mission for a conventional forcible entry operation. The Son Tay raid, the Israeli rescue mission at Entebbe, and TF RANGER operations in Mogadishu provide examples of the former; the JSOTF operations during the invasions of Grenada and Panama are examples of the latter.

These two mission groups share the common threads of strategic sensitivity and relatively short duration. Especially in regard to first of these commonalities, the extremely adverse consequences of failure make it essential that any direct action

mission have the greatest possibility of success. The capabilities required to maximize the potential for success have been derived from a combination of generic special operations principles and imperatives arising from the U.S. strategic situation. These include: (1) the capability for short- or no-notice employment, (2) staff proficiency in joint special operations raids, (3) habitual JSOTF relationships, (4) rapid or undetected infiltration, (5) basic combat drill proficiency, (6) joint fire support synchronization, (7) an independent selection and retention process, (8) rapid strategic deployability, (9) expert proficiency in MOUT, to include CQB and demolitions, (10) disciplined target discrimination, and (11) the ability to operate in a NBC environment.

The Rangers are the force capable of most completely fulfilling the direct action role. Reincarnated as an elite airborne light infantry force in 1974, the Rangers quickly moved over into the special operations community in order to fill the requirement for large-scale direct action operations.

The 75th Ranger Regiment is even more significant because presently no other element in the U.S. Armed Forces is capable of as effectively duplicating this capability. Within U.S. Special Operations Command, other ground SOF operate only in small teams. Though extremely effective in the small unit commando and unconventional warrior roles, these forces are not designed for operations requiring significant ground combat power. Special Forces teams cannot quickly form an effective large combat unit. The same applies to the Navy's SEALs.

Conventional forces are also unable fill this role because of the wider spectrum of missions they must be prepared to execute in the course of sustained conventional

combat. The 82nd Airborne Division is a light force like the Ranger Regiment, has the same strategic mobility, is also designed for forcible entry, and has (for the most part) similar weapons and equipment at battalion level. However, the 82nd Airborne's conventional missions and personnel policies inhibit the narrower focus which makes the Rangers expert at direct action. The 82nd Airborne Division is designed for forcible entry followed by sustained combat operations and possesses the capabilities to support that mission. The Rangers, on the other hand, are designed for sharp, short raids followed by rapid withdrawal.

Certainly, with sufficient resources and effort, the 82nd Airborne Division could be converted into a Ranger-type force. However, this would be at substantial cost and would probably adversely affect that division's capability to execute its conventional missions.

Unlike the 82nd Airborne, the Marine Expeditionary Units (Special Operations Capable) are not designed for sustained combat beyond fifteen days and instead are much more of a raid force. They are forward deployed, which has both advantages and disadvantages. If a MEU(SOC) is close to a trouble spot, it can certainly be quick to react. If not, however, it does not have the strategic mobility possessed by airborne forces and consequently cannot rapidly shift from one theater to another. Additionally, the demands and constraints of six-month cruises serve to degrade the MEU(SOC)s combat capability as those deployments progress, something not experienced by home-based rapid deployment forces. Finally, despite its "special operations capability," the

MEU(SOC) is admittedly not a special operations force.[2] It is basically a conventional force sharing the same personnel and training policies as the rest of the conventional military.

Thus, there appears, at present, no suitable substitute for the 75th Ranger Regiment.

The NCA could certainly still decide to do without such an organization. Without a doubt, a series of second-best options can be provided to allow the NCA to accomplish the national strategy without the Rangers. More targets could be turned over to stand-off attacks from aerial and maritime platforms. Where some additional BDA would be necessary, this could be attempted by small SOF teams. For "in extremis" situations, the NCA could call upon a MEU(SOC) or a task force from the 82nd Airborne Division. All of these options have worked, to some extent, in the past. They might work in the future. However, as already noted, they provide less than the optimal solution. If the NCA do not possess a large-scale direct action force which can be utilized on very short notice, then they must be prepared to accept that risk.

A key point, of course, is that the missions that would require the employment of such a direct action force are strategically sensitive and the consequences to failure could be serious. The most notable examples of such missions are those in support of counterproliferation of weapons of mass destruction and counterterrorism. The stakes

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[2]13th Marine Expeditionary Unit, "Marine Expeditionary Unit Overview (Mission & Composition)," in *Marine Expeditionary Units (Special Operations Capable)* (available from http://www.hqmc.usmc.mil/meu.nsf; Internet; accessed 3 April 1998).

involved in such missions are too high to be executed with second-best options. If the decision is to use force, it lies in the best interests of the United States to "stack the odds" in its favor.

This discussion is very significant as the United States juggles roles and missions in days of a shrinking defense budget. At the same time, the NSS is attempting to respond to new threats to U.S. national security in a changing world environment. It has already identified transnational threats, such as the proliferation of WMD and international terrorism, among others, as the most significant threats America will face in the coming years. The military instrument of power, in turn, provides the nation with a number of tools for dealing with those dangers. One of the tools that is a crucial element of the U.S. response to these emerging threats is the 75th Ranger Regiment.

As touched upon at the conclusion of chapter 3, this situation also presents many important implications for the Rangers. If the principle role of the 75th Ranger Regiment is to be a large-scale special operations direct action force, then that should be the primary focus of this unit. Topics for further study include an analysis of the specific implications of these missions for the Regiment in the areas of doctrine, training, leader development, organization, materiel, and soldier systems (DTLOMS). Ranger doctrine desperately needs to be updated; what should the new doctrine include in the light of this analysis? Does the present Ranger METL adequately support the focus on strategic raids and forced entry operations? What training regimen does this require of the Ranger Regiment? Is the present method for developing Ranger leaders

adequate? Do they have enough interaction with the components of other special operations forces?

The organization of Ranger units also needs further study. For lack of a better model, the Rangers are organized very much like conventional light infantry. Such a method of organization has been proven to be effective and is advantageous both from the perspective of personnel transition and ground combat doctrine. However, the Rangers, being a relatively small force, have the capability to request adjustments to their Table of Organization and Equipment that will not have major repercussions throughout the Army. There are already some differences. The requirements for further changes should receive some attention.

Further study should also be devoted to the materiel requirements of the Ranger Regiment. The short duration of typical Ranger missions allows commanders to take risks with the sustainment load in order to maximize lethality. What weapons and equipment developments should be incorporated into Ranger units? How much of the Land Warrior technology could be used to enhance the effectiveness of Ranger operations? How much heavy equipment should Ranger companies and battalions have?

Finally, what changes, if any, should be made in soldier systems to allow the Ranger Regiment to be most effective in the environment of the twenty-first century? What systems should be retained at all costs?

As one can see, many areas remain for further intensive study. This research has only skimmed the surface on many related topics. Without a doubt, the constantly

changing international environment will continue to pose new questions and present new dilemmas in the future.

The national security strategy of the United States carries an implied requirement for a direct action force that is subsequently specified in the national military strategy and subordinate documents. To be effective, this direct action force must possess a specific constellation of capabilities. As has been shown, the 75th Ranger Regiment is presently the only unit in the U.S. Armed Forces with these requisite capabilities. Continued focus on the two primary direct action missions, the refinement of the capabilities necessary to accomplish these missions, and an awareness of the DTLOMS implications of those capabilities should keep the Ranger Regiment a critical force in meeting threats to U.S. national security in the future.

Michael Howard argued that armed forces cannot "get it right" in a time of relative peace. Perhaps he can still be proved to have been wrong.

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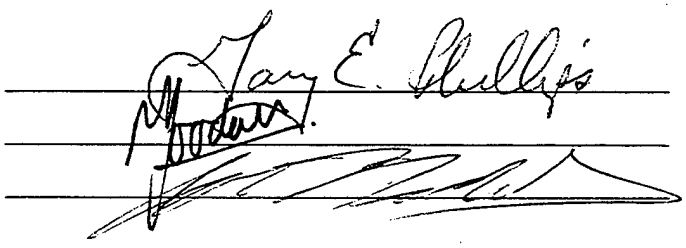

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