

**US Army Special Forces Operational
Interoperability with the US Army's Objective
Force - The Future of Special Forces Liaison and
Coordination Elements**

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Abstract

US ARMY SPECIAL FORCES OPERATIONAL INTEROPERABILITY WITH THE US ARMY'S OBJECTIVE FORCE - THE FUTURE OF SPECIAL FORCES LIAISON AND COORDINATION ELEMENTS by Major Christopher D. Call, U.S. Army Special Forces, 68 pages.

Operational interoperability, the ability of units to provide services to and accept services from other units or forces and to use the services so exchanged to enable them to operate effectively together, is critical and central to effective joint operations. Liaison and coordination elements are central to ensuring operational interoperability between branches of the Army. Current US Army Special Forces (SF) doctrine addressing liaison and coordination elements has evolved over the past decades to meet past requirements for interoperability. However, higher degrees of interoperability, both technical and operational, are critical to enabling the Army and SF Objective Forces. The SF Objective Force must transform its liaison and coordination elements to ensure that it can maintain the high levels of interoperability required for future operations with the Army Objective Force.

The monograph provides recommendations to transform SF liaison elements in light of the transformation characteristics and requirements of the Army and SF Objective Forces. The paper does this by first examining the definition and current importance of interoperability for the Army as a whole and then specifically for SF. The paper then describes how the Army and SF are transforming their forces and how SF transformation concepts support the overall military transformation campaign. The monograph then examines how interoperability is an essential enabler in that process and how SF liaison and coordination elements are key to achieving the levels of interoperability required by the transformation concepts. Last, the monograph describes how the SF liaison and coordination elements should change to achieve the required levels of interoperability.

SF must make organizational changes within its liaison and coordination elements to ensure that they continue to be effective. The paper demonstrates that the increased requirements for interoperability between SF and the Army Objective Force are derived from the SF Objective Force operational characteristics and capabilities. Liaison and coordination elements are essential to achieving this higher level of interoperability because they provide a substitute for technical interoperability, are central to ensuring a common relevant operational picture (CROP), and allow integrated planning and coordination. SF liaison and coordination elements must be increased in size, utilized regularly at levels below corps, made more flexible and responsive, and include representatives from all of joint SOF.

US Army Special Operations Command (USASOC) must make accompanying changes in key areas of the Army functional areas (DOTLMSPF) (specifically material, leader development, and doctrine) as well as its organizational culture to enable the liaison and coordination elements to be efficient and effective organizations. It must transform its material acquisition process to ensure that increasing technical interoperability is a major factor. USASOC must transform its education and training to ensure that it fosters a culture of inclusiveness and develops officers and soldiers who work naturally in joint and coalition environments. The Army Objective Force must, likewise, develop organizations and doctrine to support its own set of liaison and coordination elements that can be incorporated in SF command and staff elements.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

We know well what happens when a single arm is opposed to two others.
Carl von Clausewitz¹

Introduction

Transformation is a term that still has no single agreed upon definition by all services of the US military. However, at the center of its definition, transformation is a fundamental and all-inclusive change in the way the military fights wars. In the past, the military has changed the way it fights by changing its war-fighting concepts, organizational structures, and operational capability through advances in technology.² Under the leadership present during the first years of the 21st century, global conditions, and organizational momentum transformation is inevitable within the Army. US Army Special Forces (SF) must match Army transformation with an enlightened and well thought-out transformation of its own to remain relevant and effective. Part of SF transformation means developing and instituting ways and means of ensuring interoperability between SF and other Army units and headquarters.

The intent of the monograph is to determine the changes necessary within the future SF organization to maximize interoperability with the future Army Objective Force. Specifically, this paper analyzes and determines what SF liaison and coordination organizational structures should be changed or created to meet the increased needs for seamless cooperation and integration with the Army Objective Force. The monograph analyzes and suggests changes in organization necessary for effective interoperability, and will avoid the technical aspects of equipment, communication networks, information systems and capabilities, except to support, reinforce or amplify analysis.

¹ Carl von Clausewitz and Peter G. Tsouras, eds., *The Greenhill Dictionary of Military Quotations* (London: Greenhill Books, 2000), 93.

² Colin Robinson, "Defining Transformation?", Military Reform Project Web Page, Center for Defense Information, <http://www.cdi.org/mrp/transform-pr.cfm>.

This monograph provides recommendations to transform SF liaison elements in light of the transformation characteristics and requirements of the Army and SF Objective Forces. The paper does this by first examining the definition and current importance of interoperability for the Army as a whole and then SF. The paper will then describe how the Army and SF are transforming their forces, and how SF transformation concepts support the overall military transformation campaign. The monograph then examines how interoperability is an essential enabler in that process, and how SF liaison and coordination elements are key to achieving the levels of interoperability required by the transformation concepts. Last, the paper describes how the SF liaison and coordination elements should change to achieve the required levels of interoperability.

This paper shows that interoperability is central to the full integration and effective cooperation of SF and the Army. Further, Army and SF transformation will not be possible without even higher levels of interoperability between all branches of the Army, the other services, and coalition and multinational partners. However, full interoperability is often expensive, especially when creating fully interoperable information and communication systems. A recent study on interoperability stated that, “Interoperability often comes at a price. These costs may be difficult to define and estimate insofar as they consist of military expenditures to enhance interoperability as well as the economic and political costs incurred. The issue, of course, is what sorts of inter-operability are worth what sorts of costs.”⁹ While the cost of building interoperability cannot be avoided certain methods of achieving operational interoperability are cheaper than others. SF liaison and coordination elements are effective alternatives to complete systems interoperability, and will become more vital to effective interoperability within the transformed Army conventional and special forces.

Furthermore, the steps a military force takes in order to achieve interoperability may come at the expense of the effectiveness of the system or organization as a whole. For example,

an improved data terminal that is designed to be interoperable with allied coalition systems may become so bulky that it can no longer be deployed in certain types of aircraft. The adverse impact on deployability can negatively affect the tempo of operations and reduce the flexibility and versatility of the ground force. SF liaison and coordination elements can be a solution to systems interoperability that becomes too expensive or too difficult to implement.

Even within the context of a future, transformed Army that is able to develop and field interoperable systems, technical interoperability will not always be possible. Coalition forces often have less advanced information and communications systems than their US counterparts, and US forces in remote and austere locations may not have full interconnectivity with their headquarters elements or with supporting units. The nature of future operations (as will be described in Chapter 3) make interoperability with forces outside the Army, to include joint, interagency and multinational (JIM) forces, essential to effective operations of the transformed Army force. This paper will show how SF liaison and coordination elements will not only provide solutions to interoperability between SF and the Army but also between the Army and its joint, agency, and multinational partners.

Robert Shaw, an SF major involved in 1994 US military operations in Haiti, concluded in an article he wrote addressing SF and conventional force integration in Haiti that, “Now that doctrine establishes various types of organizations, such as the Special Operations Command and Control Element and the Special Operations Coordination Element, the degree of cooperation between SOF and conventional forces should improve.”⁴ The liaison elements he listed are discussed in detail in the following chapters. They are the keys to interoperability between SOF and conventional forces at the operational level of war. The set of liaison and coordination elements that SF now fields only developed in the past fifteen years. The doctrine and organization of SF liaison elements now in existence is an effective solution for Army-SF

³ Myron Hura et al., *Interoperability: A Continuing Challenge in Coalition Air Operation* (Santa Monica, CA: Rand Corp., 2000), 7.

interoperability for the present. However, transformed conventional Army and special forces, using new operational concepts, will demand that SF coordination and liaison elements continue to evolve in order to provide much higher levels of interoperability in the future. “How should the SF liaison and coordination elements evolve?” and “What should transformed SF liaison and coordination elements’ organizational structure should look like?” are the questions this monograph will address.

⁴ Robert C. Shaw, “Integrating Conventional and Special Operations Forces,” *Military Review* JUL/AUG 1997, <http://www-cgsc.army.mil/milrev/english/julaug97/shaw.htm> 7.

INTEROPERABILITY

Definition of Interoperability

The term interoperable is a word that has gained increasing popularity of use by the military profession in the last decade. Information system engineers in the private sector created the word out of a perceived need to express something new, but essential. Interoperability, as envisioned by the technical engineers who first used it expresses a need to establish cooperation, coordination, and knowledge sharing between independent information systems. In this context, greater interoperability between information systems resulted in improved communication, productivity, reaction time, cost, and quality within organizations.⁵ It was a logical step to expand the meaning beyond its initial technical derivation to a broader definition encompassing relationships between independent organizations.

For the military, interoperability has strategic, operational, tactical and technical meanings. At the strategic level, interoperability is defined as the ability of militaries from separate countries to interact and operate together to achieve the military objectives of a campaign. Strategic interoperability maximizes the contributions of individual nations within overall coalition efforts, and aids the harmony of, “world views, strategies, doctrines, and force structures of the United States and its allies.”⁶ Technical interoperability relates to the mechanics of system technical capabilities and interfaces between organizations and systems. Technical interoperability focuses on the command, control and computer networks and information systems that are necessary for intra and inter Army command and control. At the tactical level interoperability means the coupling of units and capabilities into a coherent combined arms force. An example of tactical interoperability between Air Force and Army elements is adequacy of

⁵ International Association of Interoperability history page, http://www.iai-international.org/iai_international/Information/History.html

⁶ Myron Hura et al., 9.

close air support (CAS) tactics, the extent of shared terms, tactics, techniques and procedures, and the amount of shared training that an infantry battalion completes in conjunction with Air Force CAS. Operational interoperability, like the operational level of war, lies at the nexus of strategic and tactical. At the operational level, interoperability “is where strategic/ political interoperability and technological interoperability come together to help the NATO allies [and other allies] shape the environment, manage crises, and win wars.”⁷ While this monograph is mainly focused on operational interoperability, all other levels of interoperability affect the analysis.

This paper must further define operational interoperability to adequately analyze how to best implement operational interoperability between the SF and Army Objective forces.

Operational interoperability is a concept dealing with organizations and how they interact or are capable of interacting. A recent Rand study defined operational interoperability as follows:

Put simply, [interoperability] is a measure of the degree to which various organizations or individuals are able to operate together to achieve a common goal. From this top-level perspective, interoperability is a good thing, with overtones of standardization, integration, cooperation, and even synergy.⁸

Adapting this definition to a military context, interoperability is defined as, “The ability of systems, units or forces to provide services to and accept services from other systems, units, or forces and to use the services so exchanged to enable them to operate effectively together.”⁹

Operational interoperability involves more than just schematics of communications architecture, equipment connectivity, or information networks. It is a broader concept of organizational interaction that when introduced into true learning adaptive organizations can enable a level of teamwork and synergy that is absent in unilateral action.

The level of operational interoperability between organizations determines the level to which organizations can act in concert with one another. It is the fluidity with which units can

⁷ Myron Hura et al., 12.

⁸ Myron Hura et al., 7.

⁹ Joint Publication 1-02, *DOD Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms* (9 JAN 2003), Defense Technical Information Center Web Site, <http://www.dtic.mil/doctrine/jel/doddict/>.

interact and their consequent fungibility that is the true enabler of joint and combined operations.

According to a DOD policy review committee,

“Interoperability of C4I [command, control, communications, computers and intelligence] systems is a key enabler of the overarching operational goal of force integration--the fusing of the services and coalition partners into a unified military force that achieves high military effectiveness, exploiting and coordinating the individual force capabilities.”¹⁰

One can apply this statement about technical interoperability to operational interoperability as a whole. Operational interoperability between organizations enables force integration and aids effective joint operations. However, interoperability must be applied across the spectrum of doctrine, organizations, training, leadership, materiel, soldier systems, personnel and facilities (DOTLMSPF,) as well as organizational culture and climate to gain maximum advantage and effectiveness.

Importance of Interoperability for Special Forces

Interoperability applied within the limited context and scope of this paper is the ability of SF and conventional forces to, “provide services to and accept services from each other in a manner that enables them to operate effectively together.”¹¹ Interoperability is more a factor in the effective use of Special Forces than almost any other branch. The very nature of SF operations is joint and multinational.¹² In many cases SF serves as the conduit between the US military and other agencies, foreign militaries, and indigenous military and paramilitary groups. SF is at times reliant on support from all sectors of the military, as well as indigenous government or surrogate forces in a theater of operations for supplies, communications, and intelligence. FM 100-25, Doctrine for Army Special Operations Forces states that,

“During extended operations involving both ARSOF and conventional forces, combined control and deconfliction measures take on added significance. Thus it is critical to

¹⁰ Committee to Review DOD C4I Plans and Programs, National Research Council, *Realizing the Potential of C4I: Fundamental Challenges* (Washington, D.C.: National Academy Press, 1999), 2.1.1.

¹¹ *Joint Publication 1-02, DOD Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms* (9 JAN 2003), Defense Technical Information Center Web Site, <http://www.dtic.mil/doctrine/jel/doddict/>.

¹² Department of the Army, *Field Manual 3-05.20, Special Forces Operations* (Fort Bragg, NC:USJFKSWC, JUN 2001), 4-1.

integrate and synchronize ARSOF with other joint operations and conventional forces operations.”¹³

SF has a requirement for interoperability with all elements, both military and nonmilitary, that a military force interacts with on a regular basis. Interoperability with the Army is particularly important to SF because SF and its surrogate forces often provide support to the Army in the form of intelligence and combat power, and SF and its surrogate forces are often dependent on the Army for logistics support.

Interoperability between SF and the Army has been exacerbated by problems in four key areas: **culture, technology, compartmentalization, and organizational structures**. The history of SF is replete with examples of inadequate interoperability that have caused major problems in command and control, and have significantly reduced military effectiveness.¹⁴ Since its founding in the 1950s, SF has had challenges in integrating and operating in conjunction with conventional forces.¹⁵

Much of Special Forces’ experiences in Vietnam are framed within the context of the often difficult, normally ineffective and usually insufficient relationships between leaders within the special operations community and their conventional force peers. Cultural differences between SF and conventional forces have led to conflicting operational mindsets and misunderstandings of each other’s capabilities. “Many senior commanders were adamantly opposed to SF, primarily because they did not understand its purposes and functions. In fact, SF leaders throughout the Army were continually called to justify their very existence.”¹⁶ When senior leaders foster a culture of mistrust between branches in the Army, the result is a decrease in the ability and willingness of subordinate leaders in those branches to interact. In this case, the

¹³ Department of the Army, *Field Manual 100-25, Doctrine for Army Special Operations Forces* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. GPO, AUG 1999), 4-23.

¹⁴ *Realizing the Potential of C4I*, 2.1.2.

¹⁵ Directorate of History and Museums, USASOC, *To Free From Oppression: A Concise History of U.S. Army Special Forces, Civil Affairs, Psychological Operations, and the John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School* (Ft. Bragg, NC: USASOC, 1994), 56.

¹⁶ Shelby L. Stanton, *Green Berets at War: U.S. Special Forces in Southeast Asia 1956-1975* (Novato, CA: Presidio Press, 1995), 186.

lack of interaction between SF and the Army meant a separation of operations and a drop in the level of operational interoperability. The direct result was a decrease in effective collaborative mission planning and execution between the Army and SF, which negatively affected the overall effectiveness of operations during the war.

The tension and discord that existed between the 10th Mountain Division leadership and 3rd Special Forces Group during the 1994 and 1995 Operation Uphold Democracy in Haiti exemplified the continuing cultural and operational differences between SF and conventional forces. One SF officer wrote in *Military Review* that tension between the two groups centered on the differences in methods of achieving the same end state, specifically implementing a stable democratic government in Haiti. These differences stemmed from divergence in operational outlook and organizational culture. The conventional leaders focused on force protection and establishing an image of compelling strength, while SF leaders emphasized the need to gain and maintain contact with the population, and acquire the trust of key leaders and the population within the country.¹⁷

The integration of SOF and conventional forces at Camp d'Application was strained and problematic. Both techniques were valid, but neither force understood the reasons behind the techniques the other chose. Obviously, both forces thought they were conducting the mission appropriately, using an acceptable force protection level.¹⁸

The lack of knowledge of each others' tactics, techniques and procedures (TTPs), exacerbated by the general disdain for each others' organizational culture, led to tension and isolation instead of adoption of a single integrated and cohesive course of action.¹⁹ The separate efforts of the SF and conventional forces were often uncoordinated, inefficient and counterproductive. The two forces, often operating in the same area at different times, gave conflicting messages to the population. The JTF would have been better off marshalling its resources into a combined effort. As a result, the separate and partially coordinated policies and

¹⁷ Robert C. Shaw, 3.

¹⁸ Robert C. Shaw, 5.

actions of each had adverse impacts on both efforts (making the effects of the combined effort **less than** the sum of the two parts). Both SF and conventional forces must recognize and address their differences in culture and operational mindset in order to remove culture as an impediment to operational interoperability.

An additional concern, Special Forces' need for operational security (OPSEC), has often led to the over-compartmentalization of information, lack of coordination and planning between staffs, and disjointed execution of operations. The failure of Special Operations Forces (SOF) to coordinate with the 10th Mountain Division Quick Reaction Force in Mogadishu in 1993 is a good example of the dysfunctional relationship between SOF and conventional forces. The current Special Forces Operations Field Manual includes the phrase, "balance security and synchronization" in its list of special operation imperatives. "Security concerns often dominate SO. Too much compartmentalization, however, can exclude key personnel from participating in the planning cycle."²⁰ When the balance between security and integration tips in favor of security, the subsequent loss of interaction between SOF and conventional forces means a drop in the level of operational interoperability, and neither will contribute to the overall campaign as effectively as they should.

Lastly, prior to 1990, SF had no formal organizational structures to ensure interoperability with conventional forces. Without these structures, coordination between conventional and SOF forces was accomplished on an ad-hoc basis. Integration between SF and conventional army headquarters suffered because SF personnel were not present at the right times in conventional force headquarters to explain the capabilities and limitations of SOF forces, and to ensure that intelligence provided by SOF elements reached appropriate conventional force leaders.

¹⁹ Robert F. Baumann, John T. Fishel and Walter E. Kretchik, *Invasion, Intervention, "Intervention": A Concise History of the U.S. Army in Operation Uphold Democracy* (Ft. Leavenworth, KS: U.S. Army CGSC Press, 1998), 155-158.

²⁰ *Field Manual 3-05.20, Special Forces Operations*, 1-22.

One way of ensuring effective interoperability is through integration of staffs, processes, and C2 cells in conventional forces and SF organizational structures. The DOD Committee to Review C4I Plans and Programs wrote that, “Integration can be achieved through a variety of means, including “interoperable” command centers, with standardized communications and computerized data networks, intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) systems, and force elements, or through ad hoc techniques, procedures, and linkages that include extensive use of liaison officers.”²¹ Essentially, in the absence of perfect technical interoperability there must be an organizational solution to meet the operational interoperability requirements for combined operations. SF liaison and coordination elements provide a means by which SF can ensure operational interoperability between its forces and conventional Army forces in the absence of perfect technical interoperability. Furthermore, the face-to-face contact and in-depth coordination that is possible when SF liaison personnel interact with conventional staff and commanders cannot be fully replicated by technical means.

Special Forces Liaison and Coordination Elements

The Department of the Army published FM 31-20, *Doctrine for Special Forces Operations*, in April of 1990. This FM established the basis for the SOCCE as the primary liaison and coordination element with conventional Army forces, specifically the Army corps. The SOCCE was to advise the supported commander, provide communications links, synchronize SF operations with conventional force requirements, coordinate conventional force support of SF operations, and deconflict SF operations.²² United States Army Special Operations Command (USASOC) expanded the types of coordinating elements by creating Special Operations Coordination Elements (SOCOORD) in 1992, as a functional staff element of the corps G3. The SOCOORD’s purpose was to act as the day-to-day advisor to the corps commander and staff

²¹ Myron Hura et al., 12.

²² Department of the Army, *Field Manual 31-20, Doctrine for Special Forces Operations* (Washington, D.C.: Headquarters, Depart. of the Army, APR 1990), 5-18.

concerning ARSOF capabilities, and to aid in planning and coordination of ARSOF in corps operations.²³

During the 1990s, the role of SF liaison and coordination elements expanded to include joint SOF. Joint Publication (JP) 3-05, *Doctrine for Joint Special Operations*, regards SOCCEs as command and control and liaison elements for all joint SOF OPCON to or working in conjunction with supported land forces command elements. SOCCEs could also support Marine Expeditionary Force (MEF) headquarters or headquarters of land forces at other echelons in certain instances.²⁴ Additionally, the JP expanded the representation of the SOCOORD as the focal point for SOF liaison with the conventional ground component.

JP 3-05.1, *Joint Tactics Techniques and Procedures of Joint Special Operations Task Force (JSOTF) Operations*, narrowed the scope of SOF liaison elements to the SOCCE and the Special Operations Liaison Element (SOLE). The SOLE is the JSOTF's liaison to the Joint Force Air Component Commander (JFACC).

The FM 3-05.20, *Special Forces Operations*, published in June of 2001 provides the most current doctrine for SF coordination and liaison elements. It further delineates the functions and responsibilities of the various ARSOF coordination and liaison elements, including the SOCCE and the SOCOORD. It adds two additional elements to the list of coordination and liaison elements; the Special Forces Liaison Element (SFLE), and other liaison officers. The document provides broadened guidance to SF leaders for the implementation and execution of these elements during peace and conflict. Additionally, it supports the JP's guidance to make the SOCCE and the SOCOORD the "focal point" of all joint SOF coordination.

FM 3-05.20 reinforced the JP 3-05 pronouncement that the SOCOORD is not a SF command and control element, but it nonetheless works to integrate special operations into the seven battlefield operating systems of its assigned conventional echelon (usually corps or MEF).

²³ U.S. Army John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School, *Special Operations Coordination Element (SOCOORD) Handbook*, Draft (Ft. Bragg, NC: USJFKSWC, JAN 1992), 9.

A summary of the SOCOORD's responsibilities include: providing expertise to the corps or MEF staff and commander; coordinating SOF support requirements; assisting the SOCCE in integrating into the corps C4I structure; identifying requirements and liaison with the Theater SOC (TSOC) or the JSOTF; and writing appropriate annexes to the corps plans and operations orders.²⁵

There is a straightforward, symbiotic relationship between the SOCCE and the SOCOORD. "When the corps has ARSOF attached, the SOCOORD relationship to the SOCCE is the same as that of any functional staff officer to a subordinate commander."²⁶ When no SOF are OPCON to the corps, and no SOCCE is present, the SOCOORD is the "focal point" for coordination of SOF. When a SOCCE is present, the SOCOORD provides it with its expertise of corps staff operations, assists in integrating the SOCCE, supports SOCCE efforts at coordination, and resolves difficulties as they arise. The SOCCE must report the details of its coordination efforts with the corps staff to the SOCOORD.

FM 3-05.20 restates that the SOCCE is the "focal point" for the synchronization of SOF and conventional ground forces. It operates in a manner similar to a tactical operations center (TOC), in that it is the center of C2 for SF detachments OPCON or TACON to the corps. The SOCCE itself is usually OPCON or TACON to the conventional corps headquarters. According to the FM, the SOCCE's primary missions are to: keep the SOF and conventional commanders informed and integrated; serve as liaison between corps and the Theater Special Operations Command (TSOC) or the JSOTF; plan and coordinate linkup between SOF and subordinate conventional units; exercise OPCON or TACON of specified SOF detachments; advise the conventional force staff on SOF employment; and deconflict pertinent issues including terrain, airspace, and targeting priorities.²⁷ Unfortunately, the manual leaves undefined as to how the

²⁴ Chairman, Joint Chief of Staff, *Joint Publication 3-05, Doctrine for Joint Special Operations* (Washington, D.C.: Dept. of Defense, APR 1998), III-5.

²⁵ *Field Manual 3-05.20, Special Forces Operations*, A-1.

²⁶ *Field Manual 3-05.20, Special Forces Operations*, A-9.

²⁷ *Field Manual 3-05.20, Special Forces Operations*, B-3.

SOCCE will act as the focal point of coordination between joint SOF and the corps. Further, it provides nothing to the wider problem of how joint SOF will be represented as an integrated whole in various key conventional command structures.²⁸

The SF company headquarters, normally called the Special Forces Operational Detachment-Bravo (SFODB), is the basis of the SOCCE. It is tasked and deployed to establish a SOCCE with a specified conventional force headquarters. Although the SFODB has organic communications and logistics assets, it must be augmented with significant communications, information systems, logistics, and personnel support packages to function effectively as a SOCCE. The SOCCE can, in special circumstances, be deployed below corps to division or brigade level.

The SFLE replaces a number of obsolete SF liaison and coordination elements including the Coalition Support Team (CST). FM 3-05.20 states that the SFLE “conducts liaison and coordination activities among US, allied, or coalition military organizations to ensure mutual understanding and unity of effort, cooperation between commanders and staffs, and tactical unity and mutual support by operational units.”²⁹ The SFLE is central in ensuring that foreign military units participating in US-led coalition or multinational operations are adequately interoperable with US military forces. A Special Forces Operations Detachment Alpha (SFODA) forms the nucleus of a SFLE. The basic responsibilities for a SFLE include: monitoring operations of the JTF and the host nation forces; coordinating and synchronizing the host nation forces and other components plans; advising the JTF commander on the host nation’s capabilities; advising the host nation on JTF procedures; and assisting staff processes.³⁰ Talking about the liaison and coordination activities of the SFLE, the FM states, “These elements are a combination

²⁸ The JP 3-05 identifies the need for the SOCCE to be a focal point for joint SOF liaison and coordination efforts with the ground force component headquarters, but does not address if, when or how the joint SOF elements (such as SEALs) should contribute liaison officers to the SOCCE. The shortfall leaves it open to debate whether the SOCCE is really a representative for all of joint SOF.

²⁹ *Field Manual 3-05.20, Special Forces Operations*, C-1.

³⁰ *Field Manual 3-05.20, Special Forces Operations*, C-1.

of key aspects from several functional areas, ranging from standard LNO responsibilities to UW and FID tasks. Combined, they represent a new role for SF that is unique and challenging.³¹

Finally the FM states that individual or pairs of SF officers may serve as representatives of SF or other SOF elements to designated conventional force headquarters. They are usually tasked to fulfill a short-term requirement or to offer planning assistance during an emerging contingency.³² Likewise, liaison officers may be attached to SF C2 elements from conventional force headquarters. However, the manual and Army doctrine in general say nothing about the responsibilities of or requirements for Army liaison officers to SF C2 elements. Doctrine provides little guidance for how single or pairs of liaison officers should be employed, who should provide them, or how they should be incorporated into the staffs they support.

Chapter Summary

Interoperability between branches within the Army and across inter-service boundaries is critical to the operational effectiveness of the Army and thus the joint force. Additionally, interoperability between SF and the Army is central to SF's ability to contribute effectively to the operations of the joint force. Liaison and coordination elements are critical contributors to operational interoperability, especially when technical interoperability cannot be achieved. The core task of SF coordination and liaison elements is interoperability of SF with conventional Army units. The definition of interoperability, the ability of SF and conventional forces to provide services to and accept services from each other in a manner that enables them to operate effectively together, corresponds directly with the SOCCE and SOCOORD missions.

The current SF liaison and coordination elements, including the SOCCE, SOCOORD and SFLE, are effective organizations for maintaining operational interoperability between SF and conventional Army forces. SOCCEs and SOCOORDs facilitate operational interoperability between SF and the Army corps by providing means by which SF and conventional forces can

³¹ *Field Manual 3-05.20, Special Forces Operations, C-1.*

interact and operate in concert. SF liaison and coordination elements provide face-to-face communication and closely integrated interaction with conventional staff and command that cannot be replicated through other means. These elements have evolved over time to ensure that SF liaison elements are effective in their missions. However, there is no guarantee that SF liaison and coordination elements in their current form will remain effective in the light of the massive changes programmed for SF and the Army as part of the transformation process. SF coordination and liaison elements must evolve to meet the demands of the Army's Objective Force.

³² *Field Manual 3-05.20, Special Forces Operations*, 4-6.

CHAPTER 3

SPECIAL FORCES AND MILITARY TRANSFORMATION

*The major institutions of American national security were designed in a different era to meet different requirements. All of them must be transformed.*³³

NSS 2002

Transformation of the army is first and foremost about transforming the way we think – leveraging dominant knowledge, facilitating decision superiority, giving warfighters an actionable understanding of the battlespace. Simply, that's battle command.

General Eric Shinseki³⁴

Transformation of the military has occupied the attention of many leaders and experts within the military for a decade now. It will drive massive changes within all services of the military and all branches in the Army over the coming decade. Are current plans for future SF liaison and coordination elements adequate to meet the requirements of interoperability within the Army's Objective Force? This paper addresses how SF liaison and coordination elements must transform to meet the requirements of this new force. This chapter describes Army concepts for transformation and future war-fighting in the context of joint transformation plans. It also describes the Army Objective Force organizational construct. The paper then examines how SF transformation will change SF organizations and operating concepts to support the Army and the joint concepts. Lastly, the chapter discusses organizational plans for the SF Objective force and how they meet the Army Objective Force operational concepts.

Military Transformation Guidance and Concepts

Joint and Army transformation documents describing the Objective Force, the future joint force and future war-fighting concepts are in draft form, or have been written as permanent

³³ U.S. President, *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. GPO, SEP 2002), 29.

working drafts that may not assume final form for years. For example, LTG John M. Riggs (Director of the Army Objective Force Task Force) chose not to release *The Objective Force in 2015 White Paper* in final form, but released it as, "...a [final draft] since it is a living document that will change as our national and strategic focus changes."³⁵ At the Army Major Command level, transformation documents are in even more raw form, and include major concepts that are only available in briefing slides or meeting notes. The solution to the challenge of rapid change is to remain general in our insights and analysis, and broad in our conclusions. This author will look at general trends, concepts and guidance to establish the analytical grounding for his conclusions on the requirements for future force interoperability.

National Strategy Documents

The President and Secretary of Defense look at the nation's present and future strategic challenges and requirements to develop transformation plans and policy. The National Security Strategy (NSS) provides their guidance to the Joint Chiefs of Staff and Service Secretaries. The NSS and DOD's subordinate Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR) provide forecasts on the future military environment and the ends, ways and means of the use of military power to counter threats and meet national objectives. The 2002 NSS gives an overview of the international strategy goals for the US and describes eight ways to ensure that these goals are met. The last item on the list is, "transform America's national security institutions to meet the challenges and opportunities of the twenty-first century."³⁶ This is an echo of the guidance provided by the QDR 2001. The QDR 2001 provides four Defense Policy Goals to guide the maintenance and development of the military and its capabilities, and its deployment and use: assure the nation's

³⁴ Eric K. Shinseki, Remarks at Dwight D. Eisenhower Luncheon for the Association Of The United States Army, 22 OCT 2002.

³⁵ John M. Riggs, Preface to *The Objective Force in 2015 White Paper*, Final Draft (Arlington, VA: Dept. of the Army, DEC 2002), 1.

³⁶ U.S. President, 2.

friends, dissuade the nation's enemies, deter aggression, and when necessary defeat any adversary.³⁷

The 2001 QDR was the first national security document published since the events of September 11th, 2001, the advent of the War on Terror, and the election of George W. Bush as president. It was the primary document for military commanders and planners until the publication of the new NSS late in 2002. The QDR has been, by default, the main national strategic document guiding transformation policy in the last year. The QDR specifies 4 mission areas that will guide size and shape of future military forces:

- ❑ Defend the United States;
- ❑ Deter aggression and coercion forward in critical regions;
- ❑ Swiftly defeat aggression in overlapping major conflicts while preserving for the President the option to call for a decisive victory in one of those conflicts - including the possibility of regime change or occupation;
- ❑ Conduct a limited number of smaller-scale contingency operations.³⁸

Finally, the QDR states that DOD's approach to transformation rests on four pillars: strengthening joint operations, experimenting with new concepts, conceptualizing organizational constructs and approaches to warfare, and developing transformational capabilities.³⁹ The result of this guidance is a shift away from a Cold War approach to victory toward a new and different vision of success in the emerging and ambiguous international environment. All the pillars imply changes in the way the Army and SF operate together and thus the extent to which Army and SF command and control must be interoperable. For example, for the Army and SF to place greater emphasis on joint operations, they must place greater emphasis on interoperability with the other services, which in turn means developing new structures and concepts for Army and SF coordination and liaison elements.

The Department of Defense's bi-annual Defense Planning Guidance (DPG) provides, "goals, priorities, and objectives, including fiscal constraints, for the development of the Program

³⁷ Department of Defense, *The Quadrennial Defense Review* (Washington, D.C.: Dept. of Defense, SEP 2001), III.

³⁸ Quadrennial Defense Review, 17.

³⁹ Quadrennial Defense Review, 32.

Objective Memorandums.”⁴⁰ The DPG is the link between the strategic planning process and the planning, programming and budgeting system (PPBS) and the force management process. The DPG 2001 described six **Critical Operational Goals** for armed forces transformation that are intended to focus efforts in transformation: protect critical bases of operation, project and sustain US forces, deny enemies sanctuary, conduct information operations, enhance space systems, and leverage information technology for Joint C4ISR.⁴¹ The implication of these operational goals for Army and SF transformation is equally as great as the guidance from the QDR 2001. Leveraging information technology for Joint C4ISR is central to the challenge of technical interoperability. The Army and SF will only be able to meet this DPG guidance if they coordinate their transformation efforts with other services and subordinate their efforts to joint guidance.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff’s *Joint Vision 2020* (JV 2020), while dated (published in 2000), still provides relevant supporting guidance for the services. JV 2020 endeavors to ensure that the services transform in ways that support the joint fight, and creates a synergy of action that multiplies the operational effectiveness of the joint force. JV 2020 offers strategic context to the transformation process. It harnesses the advantages of **information superiority** by following the operational concepts of **dominant maneuver, precision engagement, focused logistics** and **full dimensional protection**.⁴² One of its key observations expands the definition of “joint” to include coalition and interagency. JV 2020 states that the keys to effective joint operations are people and interoperability.⁴³ People must have the desire for inclusion and an understanding of teamwork in a broader context for effective collaboration across branches, services, and militaries. This desire and understanding translates into a joint concept of “team” that will enable SF liaison and coordination elements to meet their goals of operational interoperability. The

⁴⁰ Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Joint Doctrine Encyclopedia*, JEL [CD ROM] (Washington, D.C.: Joint Chiefs of Staff, 1997), 229.

⁴¹ Department of Defense, DPG Press Backgrounder, 10 May 2002, (Power Point Presentation, Defense Link Website), http://www.defenselink.mil/news/May2002/t05102002_t0510dpg.html, slide 4.

⁴² Shelton, Henry H., *Joint Vision 2020* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. GPO, June 2000), 2.

branches, services and militaries must build commonality and technical interoperability between systems to create effective operational interoperability. Just as important, these organizations must augment their technical interoperability with emphasis on and employment of liaison and coordination elements, which, together with advances in technical interoperability, will greatly increase the level of operational interoperability between organizations.

Unified Command Guidance

The 2001/2002 Unified Command Plan designated Joint Forces Command (JFCOM) the generator of new transformational concepts to build the future joint force. As a result JFCOM assumed the missions of Joint Force Provider, Integrator, and Trainer, and Joint Concept Development and Experimentation.⁴⁴ An adjunct of JFCOM, the Joint C4ISR Battle Lab (an organization within JFCOM J8 (Joint Requirements and Integration Directorate)), develops guidance on the C4 architecture for the military that will ensure the interoperability and integration of the future force. Though JFCOM has no direct command relationships with the US Army Special Forces, the inherently joint nature of SF missions and taskings means JFCOM guidance has a significant impact on SF transformation.

USSOCOM provides guidance and large sums of money to ARSOF to plan, develop, and execute SF transformation. It has issued guidance to USSOCOM elements within the services in the form of working documents and reports, including *The USSOCOM Transformation Roadmap*, and the *USSOCOM Future Strategic Planning Environment Report (2011-2025)*. Policy documents generated by SF transformation planners must address the differences between the capability requirements of USSOCOM and the Army's guidance in order to ensure effective interoperability with the Army Objective Force.

⁴³ *Joint Vision 2020*, 17.

⁴⁴ U.S. Joint Force Command, *What is Transformation?*, <http://www.jfcom.mil/about/transform.html>.

Future Joint Warfighting Concepts

The April 2000 DPG tasked JFCOM to develop new joint war-fighting capabilities that will provide an overarching concept that the services will use to develop concepts that support the joint fight and guide their transformation efforts.⁴⁵ In the following year JFCOM developed and published a White Paper for Rapid Decisive Operations (RDO). RDO depends on the synchronous use of all arms, branches and services executing timely, focused, and effects-based operations to “rapidly and decisively coerce, compel, or defeat the enemy.”⁴⁶ The concept states that a joint force must quickly apply overwhelming force, and mass simultaneous effects against critical centers of an enemy’s system to induce operational shock and defeat his will and ability to fight.

RDO focuses on small-scale contingencies that pose a risk of combat at the high end of the spectrum. The objective of RDO is to overwhelm an enemy’s military, political and informational systems with extreme speed to force quick capitulation of enemy leaders and then transition to post conflict operations. If US forces are unable to force a quick capitulation, RDO shapes the environment for successful follow-on combat operations.⁴⁷

Network Centric Warfare (NCW) is a subsequent and subordinate JFCOM war-fighting concept developed out of JV2020 requirements for information superiority. The concept implements and takes advantage of joint force information superiority by using interconnected networks of sensors, command and control, and shooters to generate increased combat power. The joint force links command and control, intelligence and weapons platform information systems with robust, complex, and decentralized networks to form a Global Information Grid (GIG). The GIG enhances the future joint force by reducing the commander’s decision cycle and

⁴⁵ Dean W. Cash and U.S. Joint Forces Command, Preface to *Rapid Decisive Operations*, ver. 1 (Norfolk, VA: USJFCOM J9 Joint Futures Lab, 1 May 2001), Preface.

⁴⁶ U.S. Joint Forces Command, *Rapid Decisive Operations*, ver. 1 (Norfolk, VA: USJFCOM J9 Joint Futures Lab, 1 May 2001), i.

⁴⁷ *Rapid Decisive Operations*, ii.

compressing the reaction time from sensor to shooter.⁴⁸ Technical and operational interoperability between services and branches of the Army are critical to the success of these networks and the ultimate success of NCW and RDO.

Army Transformation Guidance

The *Army Vision*, published in October of 1999, provides the initial construct for the capabilities of the Army's Objective Force. It lists six characteristics that have subsequently become the Objective Force characteristics: **responsiveness, deployability, agility, versatility, lethality, survivability, and sustainability.**⁴⁹ The Army Staff and the Army Major Commands (AMC) have repeatedly used these guiding characteristics to test the validity of their supporting transformation concepts. In probably the most quoted declarative sentence issued by the Army in the last decade, General Shinseki, Chief of Staff of the Army wrote, "We will develop the capability to put combat forces anywhere in the world in 96 hours after liftoff -- in brigade combat teams for both stability and support operations and for war-fighting. We will build that capability into a momentum that generates a war-fighting division on the ground in 120 hours and five divisions in 30 days."⁵⁰ This statement added substance on the Army's transformation concept by stating the criterion for success (at least in the category of deployability), and declaring a concrete goal for SF transformation planners to aim for.

In 2001, the Chief of Staff published the *Army White Paper Concept for the Objective Force*. The *White Paper* laid out strategic, operational and tactical concepts for the Objective Force. These concepts are summarized in the following *Army Objective Force White Paper* statement:

Objective Force Units will *see first, understand first, act first and finish decisively as the means to tactical success*. Operations will be characterized by developing situations out of contact; maneuvering to positions of advantage; engaging enemy forces beyond the range of their weapons; destroying them with precision fires; and, as required, by tactical

⁴⁸ "Information Paper – Observations on the Emergence of Network Centric Warfare" (Defense Technical Information Center Website: Joint Staff, C4 Systems Directorate J6), <http://www.dtic.mil/jcs/j6/education/warfare.html>.

⁴⁹ Secretary of the Army, *The Army Vision* (Arlington, VA: Dept. of the Army, 1999), 3.

⁵⁰ *The Army Vision*, 4.

assault at times and places of our choosing. Commanders will accomplish this by maneuvering dispersed tactical formations of Future Combat Systems units linked by web-centric C4ISR capabilities for common situational dominance.⁵¹

The *Army Transformation Roadmap* was the first Army transformation document published after the publication of QDR 2001. It directly addresses the guidance given in QDR 2001, and the requirements listed in the 2001 DPG. The Roadmap provides timelines and resource requirements for development of the future force by outlining and introducing the Army Transformation Campaign Plan.⁵² It also answers how the Army will transform to support the joint fight by addressing each of the Defense Strategic Tenets put forth in the 2001 QDR. The Roadmap summarizes Army support to the joint fight by delineating a number of operational goals. First, the Army must possess strategically responsive, full spectrum capable, modular, scalable land forces. Second, the future force must be interoperable with the other services to leverage capabilities across the military. Last, the Army must lengthen its strategic and operational reach while portraying a reduced logistical footprint.⁵³ The document declares that the Army will ensure effective transformation by harnessing innovation. The Army will do this by creating a culture of innovation, experimentation, modeling and simulation. It will embed full interoperability in its C4ISR technology, and use science and technology to accelerate transformation. The Army will instigate a cultural transformation that energizes the Army Objective Force, and institutionalizes transformation to ensure effective support.⁵⁴ Most importantly, *The Roadmap* describes in detail how it will support each of the critical operational goals provided in the 2001 DPG.

Army Objective Force Organization

To answer how SF liaison and coordination elements will meet the requirements of interoperability with the Army Objective Force, the paper must first briefly describe the plans for

⁵¹ Secretary of the Army, *The U.S. Army White Paper: Concepts for the Objective Force* (Arlington, VA: Dept. of the Army, 2001), 6.

⁵² Department of the Army, *Army Transformation Roadmap* (Arlington, VA: Dept. of the Army, 2002), 20.

⁵³ *Army Transformation Roadmap*, 9.

⁵⁴ *Army Transformation Roadmap*, 10.

the organization of the Objective Force as they currently stand. The Objective Force is composed of units of purpose. Each echelon within the Objective Force must have its own operational purpose and contain a complete array of functional competencies to be critical to the structure as a whole.

The future force requirements for rapid decision cycles and increased tempo create pressures for transformation planners to flatten the command structure by eliminating echelons within the force. Whether the Army ultimately decides to remove an echelon of command, such as the division, is not yet determined. However, any positive effects would be balanced by the negative consequences of increased span of control. Increased span of control has negative consequences brought on by, “the increased complexity of operations at each level of effort, the expanding battle-space geometry, the differences in task and purpose that occur at each echelon, and the human capabilities (and limitations) of future leaders and staffs.”⁵⁵ An increased span of control within an echelon of the Objective force could have a negative consequence on interoperability with SF, and pose an increased challenge for future SF liaison and coordination elements. It could be more difficult for SF liaison and coordination elements to gain the attention and understanding of the commander and his staff, because of their preoccupation with command and control of their organic subordinate elements.

The current Army Objective Force organizational construct divides the echelons into two categories, the Unit of Employment (UE) and the Unit of Action (UA). The UE represents of current corps and division level echelons, and is characterized as engaging in the operational level of war. It is a combined arms, air-ground task force with the capability to conduct a wide variety of operations across the spectrum of conflict.⁵⁶ UEs maintain habitual relationships with supporting forces. UEs are highly tailorable, and are normally formed and used when conflict

⁵⁵ Department of the Army, *TRADOC Pamphlet 525-3-0, The U.S. Army Objective Force Operational and Organizational Concept*, Draft (Ft Monroe, VA: U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command, NOV 2001), 38.

⁵⁶ Department of the Army, *The Objective Force in 2015 White Paper, Final Draft* (Washington, D.C.:U.S. GPO, DEC 2002), 5.

approaches the high end of the combat spectrum or for larger operations or campaigns where numbers of units from across the joint, interagency and multinational (JIM) force are in the force package. UEs plan, coordinate, and command and control operations prior to, during and after the employment of the UAs.

The UA represents the tactical level of war-fighting and “accounts for functions and tasks at brigade and below.”⁵⁷ It is composed of three future combat system (FCS) combined arms battalions, one aviation detachment, one artillery battalion, and one forward support battalion.⁵⁸ The UA is a very flexible organization that, with enhanced C4I, maintains a wider span of control than legacy units, and thus can command and employ other combined arms and JIM force elements and enablers.

The FCS equipped battalion is the core building block of the UA. It has capabilities to close with and destroy the enemy in scenarios across the spectrum of conflict. It possesses balanced organic capabilities for direct and indirect fires, air defense, maneuver support, command and control and ISR. The FCS battalion can be employed independently and conduct initial combat operations with its organic assets.⁵⁹ The UA and FCS battalions are designed for employment in highly adaptable and flexible force packages that can move strategic distances and enter battle without pause.

ARSOF and SF Transformation

ARSOF and SF transformation concepts are designed to fully support the Army Objective Force concepts described above, while meeting joint guidance from the JCS, JFCOM and USSOCOM. USASOC published the first draft of its transformation vision, *Army Special Operations Forces Vision Beyond 2020*, three and a half years after *The Army Vision* was published. Similar to Army Vision, ARSOF Vision is a foundational document. It is the first in a series of planned ARSOF transformational documents that are currently in nascent form or yet to

⁵⁷ TRADOC Pamphlet 525-3-0, 39.

⁵⁸ *The Objective Force in 2015 White Paper*, 6.

be written. ARSOF future concepts, organizational constructs, and projected capabilities are still in their infancy and subject to radical change. This monograph supplements the existing drafts with information gathered from the ARSOF C4ISR war-game held in November of 2002, and with interviews with leaders from the SF community to round out the picture of current SF transformation thinking in relation to DOD and Army guidance.

The *ARSOF Vision Beyond 2020* describes in broad terms how Army SOF will transform to develop full spectrum operations capabilities to support the joint force. *ARSOF Vision* provides guidance to ARSOF transformation planners. It describes how ARSOF transformation will carry out the joint and Army concepts of transformation, and provides direction for personnel training and education. The *ARSOF Vision* foresees Objective Force ARSOF playing a critical role in deterrence through enhanced forward basing and pre-positioning.⁶⁰ When required, Objective Force ARSOF will transition from warrior-diplomats into warriors and integrate seamlessly into a joint or multinational force.⁶¹ Most significantly, *ARSOF Vision* integrates its transformation concepts by delineating how future ARSOF will support each of the QDR policy goals and Army Objective Force characteristics. It details seven operational parameters that ARSOF will use to plan for the future force: full spectrum forces with special purpose capabilities; knowledge-based operations; advanced C4ISR and information superiority; combined arms at the lowest tactical level; commonality; threshold capabilities; and modularity.⁶²

Finally, *ARSOF Vision* describes a number of ARSOF common transformational characteristics that highlight the unique capabilities of ARSOF, and that will be indispensable to the Army's Objective Force. First, the Objective Force ARSOFs are modular, self-contained, agile organizations. Second, Objective Force ARSOF are forward deployed and positioned with increased forward stationing and deployments to critical regions of the world. Third, Objective

⁵⁹ TRADOC Pamphlet 525-3-0, 35.

⁶⁰ USASOC, *Army Special Operations Forces Vision Beyond 2020*, 1st Draft (Ft. Bragg, NC: USASOC, 2003), 17.

⁶¹ USASOC, *Army Special Operations Forces Vision Beyond 2020*, 14.

⁶² USASOC, *Army Special Operations Forces Vision Beyond 2020*, 16.

Force ARSOFs have diplomacy skills that help them assure allies, dissuade competition, and deter aggression. They are capable of conducting security cooperation activities that establish linkages to the people, governments, and militaries of other nations. Fourth, Objective Force ARSOFs are Rapidly Deployable organizations with organic force projection capabilities from CONUS. Fifth, Objective Force ARSOF are integrated within USSOCOM using joint doctrine, tactics, techniques, and procedures. Sixth, Objective Force ARSOFs are fully integrated in the JIM force and routinely operate as part of interagency, coalition, and multinational teams. Seventh, Objective Force ARSOFs act as global scouts providing significant and unique contributions to the dominant situational understanding and knowledge of the JIM force. Last, Objective Force ARSOF provides unique capabilities to the JIM force, such as those defined as core SOF missions (direct action, special reconnaissance, psychological operations, foreign internal defense, psychological operations, civil affairs operations, information operations, and combating terrorism).⁶³ The combination of these characteristics and capabilities makes ARSOF unique from any other force and essential to the future JIM force and the Army Objective Force.

The ARSOF Organizational Concept is still in the process of being written and reviewed by USASOC. The USASOC Battlelab has finished writing the initial unpublished draft of Chapter 3, “*The Objective Force Concept for Special Force,*” of *The Objective Force Concepts for ARSOF*. While most of the concepts have not passed the review of USASOC leaders, however, Chapter 3 contains the general concepts that point to how future SF will look and operate in support of the Army Objective Force. The chapter describes a number of characteristics and capabilities that the SF Objective Force must adopt to ensure that SF will be able to meet the requirements of ARSOF and Army transformation guidance. The author merged the ARSOF characteristics, and the SF characteristics and capabilities mentioned in Chapter 3 of *The Objective Force Concept for ARSOF*, to develop a number of SF Objective Force operational capabilities and characteristics. The SF Objective force will be **forward deployed, global**

⁶³ *Army Special Operations Forces Vision Beyond 2020*, 22.

scouts, warrior-diplomats, integrated, self-sustaining, and information superior. The SF Objective force will have: **forward positioned capabilities** and **strategic responsiveness**.⁶⁴

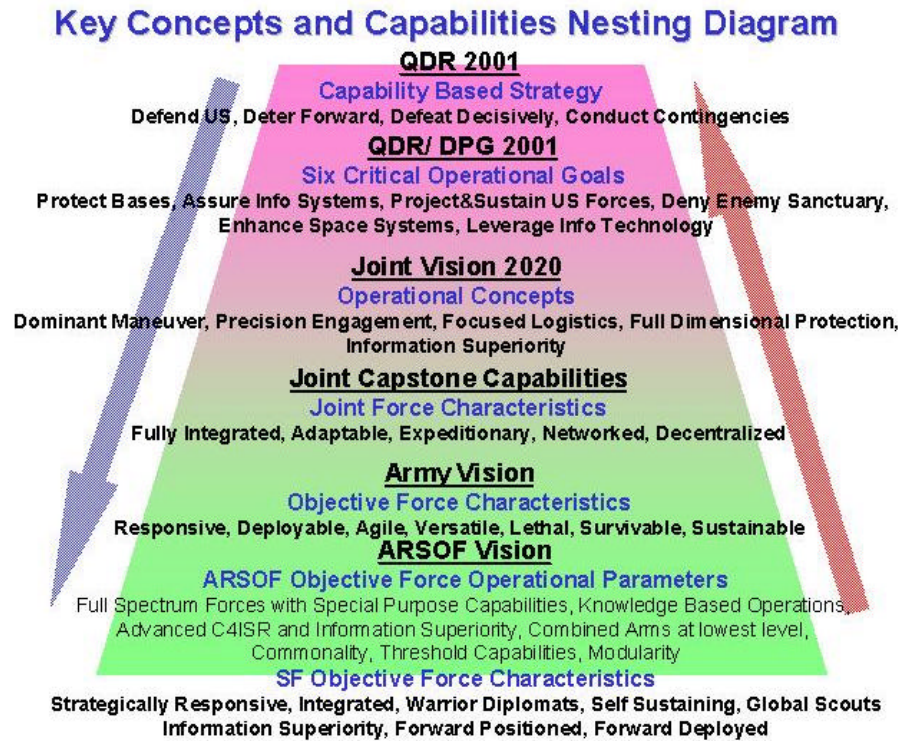


Figure 1 (Key Concepts and Capabilities Nesting Diagram)

SF Objective Force in Context of the Military and Army Transformation

How do ARSOF characteristics and operational parameters meet the guidance and characteristics of transformation developed by the Army and the Joint Force? The question is a difficult one to answer, because it takes both art and science to craft a real force of warriors from concepts based on predictions of the future. The science of transformation is building a future force with numbers of troops, duty positions, and equipment out of the original concepts. The art of transformation is developing future operating and war-fighting concepts for the SF Objective

⁶⁴ USASOC, “Chapter 3: The Objective Force Concept for Special Forces,” *The Objective Force Concepts for ARSOF* (Ft. Bragg, NC: ARSOF Battle Lab, JAN 2003), 3-8, and *Army Special Operations*

Force SF that ensures it will remain relevant and essential to Army and Joint Force operations. ARSOF concepts are nested within the architecture of key concepts and characteristics to ultimately support the National Security Strategy. First, this section shows how SF operational concepts support Army and joint concepts. The section then describes how SF transformation planners envision SF conducting the future fight to shed light on how the SF Objective Force will meet ARSOF and SF operational characteristics and capabilities. Lastly, the section details the organizational and stationing concept for SF Objective Force, which provides substance to the concepts and characteristics.

Figure 1 shows that SF is at least six levels of guidance down from the QDR. The nature of translating national strategy into requirements for transformation means that SF transformation planners not only look at the requirements embedded in the national strategy, but they must also add each level of transformation guidance to the list of characteristics SF must adhere to and capabilities SF must acquire. If one starts at the top of the pyramid and look at the *QDR 2001* capability based strategy of **detering forward** one can follow the logical chain of reason down to SF operational characteristics and capabilities, and show how each echelon of guidance is connected to the one above. *DPG 2001* supports the *QDR 2001* strategy of deterring forward by stating that projecting and sustaining US forces, and denying enemy sanctuary are critical operational goals. The Joint Capstone Capabilities state that the future joint force will be expeditionary and fully integrated. A joint force with both of these characteristics will be more capable of denying the enemy sanctuary and projecting and sustaining US forces in an effort to deter forward. The US Army's *Objective Force White Paper's* Objective Force characteristics of Sustainable, Versatile and Deployable directly support the *Joint Capstone Capabilities*, the DPG critical operational goals, and thus the strategy of deterring forward. It follows that if the SF Objective Force focuses on being forward deployed, strategically responsive and warrior diplomats with forward-positioned capabilities, it will directly support the *QDR 2001* strategy of

Forces Vision Beyond 2020, 22.

forward deterrence, and thus all the corresponding concepts. Figure 2 (SF Support to the Army Objective Force) below, expands on this discussion by showing how SF capabilities complement and support each of the Objective Force characteristics.

SF Support to the Army Objective Force

Army OF Characteristics	Future SF Supporting Characteristics	Supporting Remarks
Responsive	Forward Deployed and Positioned, Strategically Responsive, Global Scouts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Micro Regional Focus provides focus and support – situational knowledge reveal hostile decision making and intent
Deployable	Forward Deployed and Positioned, Warrior Diplomats, Global Scouts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Forward deployed TCSP and SJSOTF shape environment - use surrogate and indigenous forces to degrade anti-access efforts • CONUS based ARSOF deploy rapidly in support of OF
Agile	Warrior Diplomats, Global Scouts, Integrated, Information Superior	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SF Global presence and interaction with indigenous group provides early warning to changes in the environment, and leverage to shape those changes
Versatile	Forward Deployed and Positioned, Warrior Diplomats, Integrated, Global Scouts, Information Superior, Self-Sustainable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Warrior Diplomat groups uniquely suited for rapid transition between security cooperation and regional contingencies • Forward Deployed and SJSOTF prepared for operations anywhere on the spectrum and quick transition
Lethal	Global Scouts, Warrior Diplomats, Integrated, Information Superior	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SF is fully designed and equipped to fight as part of the joint force, and provides unique capabilities that contributes to overall effectiveness and dominance • Enables deep precision strikes
Survivable	Global Scouts, Self-Sustaining, Integrated	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regional knowledge provides advice and support to force protection efforts
Sustainable	Forward Stationed and Deployed, Warrior Diplomats, Integrated	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • develop in theater sources of supply • provide low visibility footprint

Figure 2 (SF Support to the Army Objective Force)⁶⁵

SF in the Future Fight

USASOC divides Special Forces operations within the full spectrum of conflict into three areas: Security Cooperation Activities and Operations, Smaller Scale Contingencies, and Major Combat Operations.⁶⁶ The SF Objective Force must be capable of meeting their objectives across the full spectrum of conflict. At the lower end of the scale, SF may be the only US military forces involved. As conflict moves towards Major Combat Operations, SF will be a small, but significant, contributor to the JIM fight. SF must transform in ways that it can best meet the requirements of these diverse operations in light of predicted future environmental changes, advances in technology and alterations of the joint operational war fighting concepts.

⁶⁵ Data for the slide was compiled from ARSOF Vision (1st Draft) and Chapter 3 of ARSOF Operational Concept (Initial Draft).

At the core of the SF Concept is the idea of Full Spectrum Special Forces Operations (FSSFO). The FSSFO concept is composed of three categories of operations that SF can conduct across the spectrum of conflict: Unconventional Warfare (UW), Foreign Internal Defense (FID), and Unilateral Operations. SF will conduct UW, FID and Unilateral Operations to shape and support the operations of the UE and UA.⁶⁷

The definitions of UW, FID and Unilateral Operations are not well known outside the SOF community, and have evolved over time within the community itself. This section briefly defines these three mission areas. The current definition of Unconventional Warfare is, "... a broad spectrum of military and paramilitary operations normally of long duration, and predominately conducted by indigenous or surrogate forces who are organized, trained, equipped, supported, and directed in varying degrees by an external source. It includes guerrilla warfare, and other direct offensive, low visibility, covert, or clandestine operations, as well as indirect activities of subversion, sabotage, intelligence activities, and evasion and escape."⁶⁸

FID is defined as the, "participation by civilian and military agencies of a government in any of the action programs taken by another government to free and protect its society from subversion, lawlessness and insurgency."⁶⁹ In many ways it is the opposite of UW in that it supports a government against an insurgency, whereas UW usually supports the insurgency itself. Many of the mission activities SF conducts in support of UW and FID operations are the same.

USASOC defines Unilateral Operations as, "overt, covert, or clandestine operations conducted by the US government without the involvement of other forces."⁷⁰ Unilateral Operations can include direct action missions, or special reconnaissance missions against strategic or operational targets.⁷¹ SF can conduct all of these operations alone or in conjunction with joint, interagency, coalition, or multinational forces including the Army Objective Force.

⁶⁶ "Chapter 3: The Objective Force Concept for Special Forces," 3.

⁶⁷ "Chapter 3: The Objective Force Concept for Special Forces," 2.

⁶⁸ *Joint Publication 1.02, DOD Dictionary.*

⁶⁹ *Joint Publication 1.02, DOD Dictionary.*

⁷⁰ "Chapter 3: The Objective Force Concept for Special Forces," 2.

All three of the FSSFO categories of operations require that SF integrate their activities with the Army Objective Force. Army UEs, in order to operate in an area where SF are already engaged, will need the support of SF liaison and coordination elements to ensure that the UE is receiving timely intelligence and operational advice. In a noncontiguous and nonlinear battlefield, stability operations and deep operations can occur within miles of major combat operations. JTFs and subordinate UEs often need SF to conduct UW, FID or Unilateral operations as economy of force or shaping operations in support of operations and in all phases of a campaign. As a result, SF will operate for extended periods of time in close proximity or in conjunction with UEs. Liaison and coordination elements will be essential in providing the high levels of interoperability required to conduct FSSFO in support of a UE conducting RDO on a nonlinear battlefield.

SF Operational Characteristics and Their Support of ARSOF Transformation

To ensure that the SF Objective Force is able to support the requirements of ARSOF and Army Objective Force characteristics and capabilities, SF must transform to achieve the Objective Force ARSOF characteristics. This section will describe how SF transformation plans achieve the SF Objective Force characteristics, and provide the Army Objective Force with unique capabilities that enable future SF to remain relevant and even indispensable.

SF leaders envision that they will be more forward deployed than ever over the next decade. Greater SF forward presence will strengthen the Geographic Combatant Commanders' Theater Security Cooperation programs. SF will be expected to develop ties with government, military and other indigenous organizations that provide the US military with channels for deterrence and assurance short of conflict, and intelligence and regional knowledge in the event of conflict. The goal is for SF to be present in all areas of the globe deemed strategically critical by national policy makers.⁷²

⁷¹ "Chapter 3: The Objective Force Concept for Special Forces," 2.

⁷² ARSOF C4ISR Conference (Fayetteville, NC, NOV 2002) Authors notes, 2.

Forward positioned capabilities are prepositioned equipment and supplies that are located in critical locations. They are easily available in the event of a crisis. The supplies may be communications equipment, vehicles, and other equipment stored in theater that provide the joint force or Geographic Combatant Commander with immediate resources. These assets are indispensable to the Theater commander during peacetime engagement or smaller scale contingencies because they provide him with high value, low cost military means of addressing strategic problems without the support of additional CONUS based elements.⁷³

Future SF forces will be global scouts for the JIM force. SF forces will continue to enhance their micro regional focus (an in-depth knowledge of the people, places, history, and institutions in a specific geographical region), creating soldiers and ODAs capable of providing real-time or near-real-time input into the joint force Common Relevant Operating Picture (CROP). Through their knowledge of the region, and their contact with key individuals, SF collect relevant information for joint force commanders to engage and prosecute operations in an area. Relevant information could include specifics on personalities, infrastructure, cultural and organizational attributes and prevailing attitudes of friendly, enemy and neutral forces. Future SF will be key in providing timely input to help friendly UE commanders get inside the enemy's decision cycle, and thus limit enemy courses of action.

Objective Force SF will be strategically responsive. Their small size and self-sufficient capability makes them deployable and sustainable with light, organic transportation platforms and other deployment means including commercial air. SF forces are trained to enter complex and rapidly changing environments, and make rapid assessments as to the best course of action to meet their objectives.⁷⁴

If SF is to be integrated into the Army Objective Force and a joint task force, SF elements must be capable of fighting a combined arms fight at the lowest level. As such they must have the highest level of technical and operational interoperability available to produce seamless

⁷³ "Chapter 3: The Objective Force Concept for Special Forces," 13.

integration with supported and supporting elements from both within and outside of USSOCOM.⁷⁵ SF missions could require combat arms support from a number of different services and branches in a short period of time. For example, an SF detachment conducting an SR or DA mission may require Army field artillery for indirect fire support, Air Force Special Operations MH-53s for infiltration and exfiltration, Air Force Special Operations AC-130s to suppress enemy fire or destroy targets, Navy FA-18s for target interdiction and close air support, or direct fire support from mounted elements of a UA. The SF detachment may need all or some of this support simultaneously or in quick succession. In either case, interconnectivity and integration at the tactical and operational levels, enabled by technical and operational interoperability, will be essential for the SF detachment to receive or provide effective support in a rapidly changing environment.

SF will be self-sustaining. Their access to indigenous and unconventional means of supply, their small size, and forward positioning of equipment and supplies means that they will have few logistical requirements from the joint force in times of crisis.⁷⁶

Special forces will contribute to and benefit from information superiority. They contribute by providing “precise, timely, and accurate information about the battle-space environment”⁷⁷ to the CROP. They can directly attack key points of the enemy information system. In conjunction with other members of the IO team they can influence key players or parties in the potential or ongoing conflict. Conversely, real time access to the CROP through a robust SF C4ISR architecture means that deployed SF elements will have access to key information that is denied their adversaries. The information acquired by SF detachments can be passed in real-time or near-real-time to UEs and UAs deploying into the area of operations. The UEs and UAs will gain direct benefit from SF actions to shape the IO environment. Additionally, SF detachments can directly support UAs and UEs with IO against enemy leaders. This type of

⁷⁴ “Chapter 3: The Objective Force Concept for Special Forces,” 4.

⁷⁵ “Chapter 3: The Objective Force Concept for Special Forces,” 11.

⁷⁶ “Chapter 3: The Objective Force Concept for Special Forces,” 4.

close cooperation is not possible if there is not an effective level of interoperability between SF detachments and the UAs, and between the SF C2 headquarters and the UEs.

Future SF will be warrior-diplomats. They will maintain long term contact with indigenous forces while maintaining their warrior skills. SF's mix of micro-regional focus, cultural and linguistic capabilities, and war-fighting potential is what makes SF unique from other SOF and ARSOF elements. This long-term contact will be more robust and distributed than in the past as they support future FID, UW or regional engagement strategies. SF forces, in conjunction with surrogate forces, provide critical support to the joint force and UEs by shaping the regional environment prior to or during decisive operations. SF can shape the regional environment in a number of ways. They may recruit indigenous forces to help defeat the enemy's anti-access strategy prior to the deployment of a UE. Degradation of the enemy's anti-access efforts will ensure that the UE can deploy into country faster and with less resistance. SF force can also influence neutral parties to passively or actively aid UE efforts. The shift of support towards US efforts may discourage or dissuade an enemy from outright confrontation against the UE.

SF can carry out effective economy of force operations in support of a major UE operation. SF can recruit surrogate forces to help secure UE lines of communication, thus freeing combat units engaged in security operations for transfer to the main effort. SF can also conduct UW or FID campaigns in areas away from the UE's lines of operation. This allows indigenous or surrogate forces to assume combat roles where more US force would have been necessary to reduce the risk of enemy success against areas in which the joint force was assuming risk. Historically, indigenous forces have proven to be a major source of human intelligence (HUMINT) for the Army. SF is the Army's primary military conduit to leverage indigenous information and support. Trained and resourced SFLEs are critical to ensuring that the Army

⁷⁷ "Chapter 3: The Objective Force Concept for Special Forces," 5.

Objective force maintains adequate linkages with indigenous forces, which in turn allows effective flow of information between the indigenous force and the Army UEs.

Each of the characteristics or capabilities described above is interconnected with all the others. For example, without long-term contact with indigenous forces, future SF will have less effect in contributing to information dominance and acting as global scouts. As a result, the Army UEs will lack critical human intelligence they will need to understand and shape the battlefield. What is unique about the future SF force is its combination of the capabilities and characteristics, a package that will provide the UE and joint force with more means with which to apply discrete force. When a combination of means is applied in conjunction, the resulting whole leads to synergistic effects much greater than just the sum of its component parts. SF liaison and coordination elements will ensure that the SF support to UEs is synchronized with the other components of the UE and are employed in a manner that best utilizes the unique SF contributions.

SF Objective Force Organizational and Stationing Concept

USASOC has established a preliminary set of organizational changes to meet the capabilities and characteristics required of the future SF. This section describes the general organizational structures of the proposed SF Objective Force to provide a basis from which to analyze the effectiveness of future liaison and coordination elements.

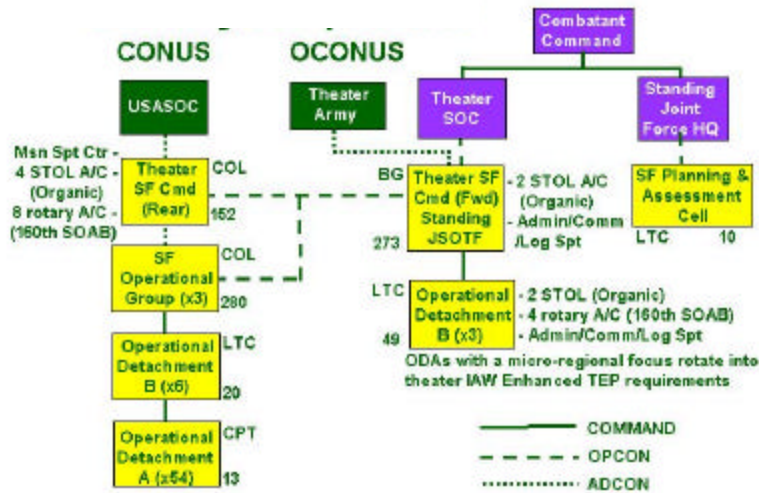


Figure 3 (SF Objective Force Task Organization)⁷⁸

USASOC's organizational and stationing concept creates a Theater Special Forces Command (TSFC) for each geographic region paralleling the Geographic Combatant Commands (as shown in Figure 3). The TSFC has no SF legacy organization equivalent. It is an echelon between the Theater SOC and the legacy Special Forces Group. The TSFC, commanded by a BG, is composed of two major elements, the Theater Special Forces Command (Rear) (TSFC(R)) and the Theater Special Forces Command (Forward) (TSFC(F)). The TSFC(F) is stationed in or near each geographic region. It is the base element of a Standing Joint Special Operations Task Force (SJSOTF). The SJSOTF can become operational on short notice, and deploy alone as the C2 for a small-scale contingency operation or in support of a conventional Standing Joint Task Force (SJTF) assigned to each region. The TSFC(F) usually command and controls from two to four forward deployed SFODBs and maintains its own support structure and aviation element.⁷⁹ The SFODBs may rotate into the region on temporary duty or may be permanently based with the TSFC(F).

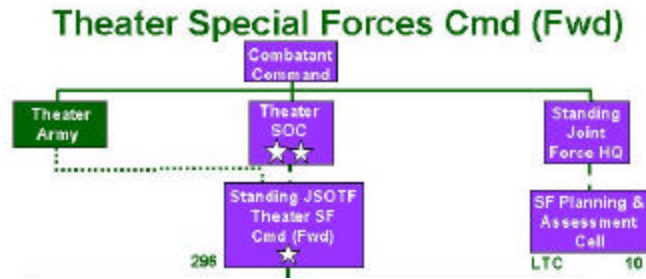


Figure 4 (Theater Special Forces Command (Forward))⁸⁰

The Special Forces Planning and Assessment Cell (SFPAC) provides ARSOF planning capability to the theater Standing Joint Task Force (SJTF)(shown in Figure 4). The SJTF is directly subordinate to the Combatant Commander, and is prepared to become the headquarters of a joint, coalition or multinational force in the event of a short notice contingency. It is a component of the joint force transformation concept developed by JFCOM. The SFPAC is ADCON to the TSFC(F) and OPCON to the SJTF. It is composed of 10 SF planners, led by a LTC, who provide experience and advice to the joint headquarters. It is a key organization in ensuring future SF is integrated into the JIM force, and is thus key to organizational interoperability between SF and the Army Objective Force.⁸¹

The Theater Special Forces Command (Rear) (TSFC(R)) for each region is located on major Army installations in CONUS (shown in Figure 5). It is commanded by a COL and contains a robust mission support package to augment training and deploying Operational Detachments, and to provide equipment and personnel augmentation to the theater SJSOTF. The TSFC(R) has administrative control of three Special Forces Operational Groups (SFOGs) that are collocated with it. The TSFC(R) focuses the sustainment and training of SF detachments.⁸²

⁷⁸ USASOC, ARSOF Battle Lab SF Transformation Brief ,Power Point Slides, draft (SF O&O UAMBL 22 JAN 2003).

⁷⁹ “Chapter 3: The Objective Force Concept for Special Forces,” 5.

⁸⁰ ARSOF Battle Lab SF Transformation Brief .

⁸¹ “Chapter 3: The Objective Force Concept for Special Forces,” 12.

⁸² ARSOF Battle Lab SF Transformation Brief.

Theater Special Forces Cmd (Rear)

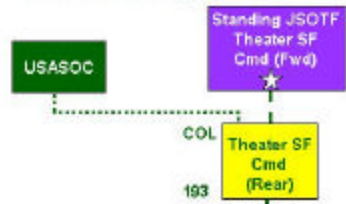


Figure 5 (Theater Special Forces Command (Rear))⁸³

The SF Organizational Concept eliminates one layer of command between Operational Detachments and the JSOTF/ TSFC. Instead of being commanded by a SFODB, SF battalion, and Special Forces Group (SFG), as in the legacy force, Operational Detachments are (in the Objective Force concept) commanded by a SFOG. The SFOG, commanded by a colonel, takes the place of the legacy Special Forces Group. The SFOG will be stationed on a CONUS base, and will command and control six SFODBs (see Figure 6). It is composed of an operations center, signal center, and support center. The SFOG is capable of deploying in support of a JSOTF, and commanding both SF detachments and other SOF and conventional forces.

Special Forces Operational Group

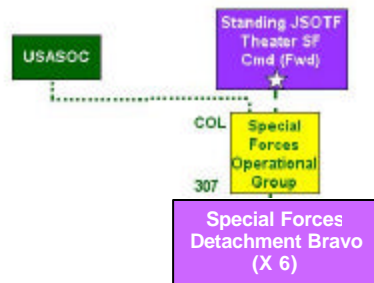


Figure 6 (Special Forces Operational Group)⁸⁴

SFODAs and SFODBs are the basic operational detachments of both the legacy and Objective Force. SFODAs are modified slightly to meet the requirements of a transformed force.

⁸³ ARSOF Battle Lab SF Transformation Brief.

⁸⁴ ARSOF Battle Lab SF Transformation Brief .

SFODAs grow from twelve to thirteen men, but remain under the command of a captain (see Figure 6). They add an intelligence NCO and retain the same core competencies as the legacy force – communications, weapons, combat engineer, medical, and operations. The SF Objective Force places more emphasis on SF skills of cultural understanding and awareness, language capabilities, regional knowledge, and intercultural communications. This will enhance the SFODA’s ability to provide the Army Objective Force with intelligence and information operations support.

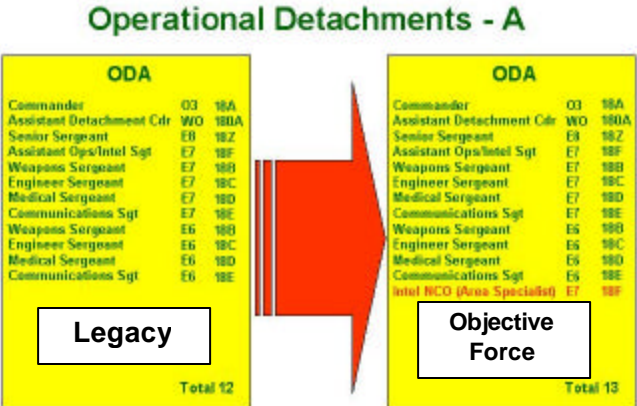


Figure 6 (Special Forces Operational Group)⁸⁵

Under the SF Objective Force concept the SFODB undergoes major changes (see Figure 7). The SFODB no longer can be equated with a conventional company as it was in the legacy force. The SF Objective Force SFODB is commanded by a LTC and has 20 men assigned (as opposed to the 10 man element commanded by a MAJ in the legacy SFODB). The increase in personnel creates redundancy in job positions and increases the flexibility of the SFODB to task-organize and conduct split team operations without a significant degradation of capability. SFODBs provide C2 of SFODAs, support mission planning and preparation of SFODAs, establish and run operational bases, execute SOCCE missions, and train, plan, deploy, operate

and coordinate with interagency, allied/ coalition, indigenous or surrogate forces. In most of these cases the SFODB is critical to interoperability between these forces and the future joint force headquarters, because it acts as the primary conduit of information between the forces and the joint force headquarters.⁸⁶



Figure 7 (The SF Objective Force SFODB)⁸⁷

The SF Operational Concept reallocates assets and logistics capabilities, including fixed wing administrative airlift, to provide support for a robust, forward deployed force. The TSFC(F), TSFC(R), and forward deployed SFODBs have organic fixed wing assets. CONUS based support centers under the TSFC(R) will provide personnel, intelligence, operations, logistics, plans, and communications support to SF elements conducting operations or training.⁸⁸

ARSOF has yet to publish documents detailing the SF Objective Force concept for battle command and C4ISR (which would directly address future liaison and coordination elements). Most of the references to future liaison and coordination elements in the SF Objective

⁸⁵ ARSOF Battle Lab SF Transformation Brief.

⁸⁶ ARSOF Battle Lab SF Transformation Brief.

⁸⁷ ARSOF Battle Lab SF Transformation Brief.

⁸⁸ "Chapter 3: The Objective Force Concept for Special Forces," 12.

Force Concept and the ARSOF Vision Beyond 2020 are indirect. ARSOF Vision 2010 states that, “Robust ARSOF units are organized, manned and equipped [to conduct] area control, conventional force coordination, coalition support, host-nation and interagency connectivity and other operations without augmentation.”⁸⁹ Thus, the document identifies the need for robust interoperability using standing, modular and self-contained organizations. The only new liaison and coordination element mentioned in ARSOF transformation plans is the Special Forces Planning and Assessment Team which is intended to support interoperability between a JTF and the future SJSOTF. While this element is a necessary addition to SF Objective Force organization, it does not address interoperability between SF and the Army Objective Force.

The addition of 10 personnel to the SFODB, the basic building block of the SOCCE, creates a much more robust element from which to create an effective command and control element for the Army Objective Force.⁹⁰ Doubling the size of the SFODB will no doubt increase the capabilities of the unit in all its mission areas including its role as a SOCCE. Improvements in the SFODB’s C4I systems, training and awareness of joint operations will increase its ability to execute its SOCCE mission, but it does not account for how the SOCCE will meet all the increased interoperability requirements demanded by Army and SF Objective Forces and SF. The few statements extrapolated from ARSOF documents imply that the evolution of coordination and liaison elements will continue. What is needed and essential for effective SF transformation is a complete concept of operations and organization for transformed SF liaison and coordination elements to ensure that SF remains highly interoperable with the Army Objective Force.

Chapter Summary

SF transformation is one part of US Army transformation. As such, SF must maintain its relevance in regards to the future joint and Army Objective Force. SF transformation concepts

⁸⁹ USASOC, *Army Special Operations Forces Vision Beyond 2020*, 24.

⁹⁰ ARSOF Battle Lab Transformation Brief.

support US Army transformation concepts. The SF Objective Force will be forward stationed, act as global scouts, increase its integration with the joint force, and act as strategically responsive warrior-diplomats. The transformed characteristics of the SF Objective Force support the Army Objective Force UEs by providing higher levels of human intelligence in near-real-time, regional knowledge and conducting shaping operations that set the stage for the interjection of the UE into theater. The large changes in SF organizational structure support the proposed SF operational characteristics and capabilities. While USASOC has described the future force structure for the SF Objective force, it has not determined how SF liaison and coordination elements will change to support the Objective Force. We must now show how critical interoperability is between the SF and Army Objective Forces to achieve Objective Force concepts of interoperability, and how central the SF liaison and coordination element's role will be maintaining that interoperability.

CHAPTER 4

TRANSFORMING SF LIAISON AND COORDINATION ELEMENTS

*We will re-shape ourselves from the 20th Century ideal of SOF-Warriors to a 21st Century ideal of SOF Warrior-Diplomats as our community becomes even more recognized as the joint and interagency military force of choice.*⁹¹

MG Philip Kensinger, CG USASOC

*USSOCOM is continuously striving to leverage information technology and innovation concepts to develop an interoperable, flexible joint C4ISR architecture and capability that allows rapid sharing of analysis and time sensitive information between the joint, interagency, and international communities.*⁹²

GEN Holland, COMSOCOM

This chapter determines the requirements for the future composition and organization of the SF liaison and coordination elements by analyzing the requirements for interoperability between the Army and the SF Objective Forces. The chapter shows how interoperability is even more important between the SF and Army Objective Forces than under the current legacy organizations. The chapter then discusses how future SF liaison and coordination elements are critical to future interoperability. Last, the chapter explains the key areas of change that SF liaison and coordination elements must address to maintain effective levels of interoperability for the Objective Force. The chapter provides the framework and background from which to recommend concrete organizational changes for SF liaison and coordination elements. The organizational changes are supported by changes within key areas of USASOC's functional areas to improve operational interoperability between the two Objective Forces.

Interoperability Between the SF and Army Objective Forces

Is interoperability a critical component of Army and SF Objective Force operations? The question can only be answered by analyzing the war-fighting concepts and operational

⁹¹ Philip R. Kensinger, CG, USASOC, Forward to *ARSOF Vision Beyond 2020*, 1st Draft (Ft. Bragg, NC: USASOC, 2003), ii.

⁹² Charles R. Holland, "Statement by Charles R. Holland Commander, USSOCOM, Before the Senate Armed Services Committee, On the State of Special Operations Forces" (Washington, D.C.: 12 MAR 2002), http://www.senate.gov/~armed_services/statemnt/2002/March/Holland.pdf, 18.

characteristics of the Objective Force revealed in the previous chapter. First, this section examines the operational concept of RDO to determine the level of interoperability required by the future force. Then the section examines a few of the critical SF operational characteristics and capabilities.

Chapter Three of this monograph examined the new operational war-fighting concept of Rapid Decisive Operations and its role in shaping Objective Force operations. Operations in support of an Army UE in the context of RDO require a very high degree of interoperability. RDO relies on an Objective Force that is knowledge-centric, coherently joint and fully networked.⁹³ Additionally, the concept requires that the pace and tempo of operations be faster than that of the enemy. For the Objective force to set the pace of operations it must, “compress the decision cycle in response to RDO requirements, while maintaining subordinates’ clear understanding of the commander’s intent and guidance.”⁹⁴ In an UE that is “coherently joint,” composed of a wide number of combined arms and supporting elements, the criticality of time requirements increases the need for seamless C2 links between the UE headquarters, its subordinates, and supporting headquarters, including SF. Seamless communications require interoperable systems and organizations. There is a further need for commanders and staff at each end of the communications channel to have the same understanding of the operational picture, including how the task and purpose of their missions are nested within the overall plan. “The leverage provided by a common operating picture and the rapid decision-making ability associated with it can dramatically change the pace, nature, and geographic range of engagement, providing major advantage to forces so enabled. Interoperability is a key to realizing these advantages.”⁹⁵ For the Army and SF Objective Forces to realize the advantages of RDO they must acquire a level of operational interoperability that allows a common relevant operational understanding.

⁹³ *Rapid Decisive Operations*, 6.

⁹⁴ *Rapid Decisive Operations*, 16.

⁹⁵ *Realizing the Potential of C4I*, 2.1.2.

Chapter Three of this monograph describes many of the characteristics and attributes within the SF Objective Force that are necessary for it to remain a relevant, unique and indispensable contributor to the Army Objective Force. For the sake of determining the criticality of interoperability for the SF Objective Force, this section examines two sets of SF Objective force characteristics and capabilities. First, to support the Army Objective Force the SF Objective Force is strategically responsive and forward deployed. Second, the SF Objective Force is integrated with the joint force and maintains information superiority. These characteristics and capabilities imply a high level of operational interoperability.

SF Objective Forces that are forward deployed and strategically responsive must have robust links to both the indigenous forces and the UE they are supporting. The main reason SF is forward deployed is to gain an understanding of the people, cultures, governments and militaries in the region in which they work, and to build close relationships through day-to-day collaboration with their foreign counterparts. The SF Objective Force then uses this knowledge to provide the supported UE with relevant information before the UE's deployment into theater, and with real-time intelligence once the UE is involved in operations. Additionally, the TSFC(F) may conduct shaping operations to prepare the way for the UE deployment and subsequent operations. To do this the TSFC(F) and the UE must have the ability to pass information and receive guidance and requests in near-real-time, and in a manner that is quickly understood and acted upon. The TSFC(F) and its detachments in the region must have at a minimum operational interoperability with the regional militaries they work with, and technical and operational interoperability with the CONUS-based UE they will support.

To be strategically responsive SF Objective Force must have the ability to rapidly tailor SOF forces for short response contingencies, and then employ them with a high degree of versatility and flexibility.⁹⁶ The TSFC must have the capability to communicate effectively with the requesting agency, the assets in the where they are about to deploy and with its subordinate,

⁹⁶ USASOC, *Army Special Operations Forces Vision Beyond 2020*, 15.

supporting and supported units. Rapid and coherent communications also requires high levels of interoperability. With rapid use of SOF forces comes the need for rapid planning and coordination within the TSFC, UE, and other joint levels of command. Integrated planning heightens the need for both technical and operational interoperability between component commands and all echelons of future SF. Greater technical and operational interoperability between the Army and SF Objective Forces allows a greater level of collaborative planning and shared understanding of the mission, enemy, troops and terrain.

The operational concept of the SF Objective Force requires that its organizations are integrated and are capable of generating and using information superiority. Future TSFCs and their SFODBs and SFODAs will have to prosecute operations in conjunction with, supporting, or supported by a wide variety of elements, both military and nonmilitary, across the JIM force. The units and elements SF will operate with will vary widely depending on where they are operating. For example, security and support operations will require that SF work with many more combat support elements, non-military organizations and international agencies. Operations at the higher end of the conflict spectrum will require SF to work with more combat arms-related organizations. Whatever the case, combined arms or combined effects require integration, coordination, and deconfliction both in planning and in execution. This can only be accomplished effectively with established systems, procedures and organizational structures that create high levels of interoperability. SF detachments will have to communicate and coordinate with both the supported UE or JIM force, and all the other nongovernmental or indigenous organizations. This is all the more important since the SF detachments will likely serve as the main conduit of C4I between the UE, and the indigenous organizations.

SF elements will be engaged with the UE during all phases of future operations to meet future requirements for integration with the Army's Objective Force. The UE will have an increasingly acute need for rapid planning, deployment and execution of operations within a swiftly changing and often ambiguous environment. The UE will also need information and

orientation from forward deployed SF detachments. SF detachments and C2 elements will likewise need information concerning the UE's plans. The UE will need SF support (in the form of intelligence, host nation support and shaping operations) throughout their combat operations, and into the transition to post-conflict stability and support operations. SF will need to be in constant contact and closely integrated with the UE. FM 3-05.20 states that, "Physical contact between conventional forces and SOF is typically short term. It usually ends with a passing of responsibility, the passage of friendly lines, or the extraction of SOF. The focus should therefore be on synchronization (not physical integration) of conventional forces and SOF on the ground."⁹⁷ In light of Objective Force operations and the SF supporting role, the quotation above may not hold true. In the future, SF will play a significant role in OF operations from beginning to end. SF liaison and coordination elements will be more critical than ever in synchronizing operations and ensuring the interoperability of the two organizations.

SF and Army Objective Forces must ensure they are able to gain and use a maximum level of information as rapidly as possible, while denying or feeding false information to their enemies. Effective prosecution of information operations (IO) will ensure that the UE will be able maintain information superiority. IO requires great amounts of integration and coordination starting at the strategic level. At the operational level of war, JTFs, UEs and JSOTFs must translate the strategic IO campaign into operational effects and assign tasks to subordinate and supporting elements. The nature of information operations requires concerted, and closely coordinated action by a wide variety of JIM forces, including combat arms, psychological operations, civil affairs, public affairs, electronic warfare, signals intelligence, as well as other government agencies. The coordination and control of all of these units requires centralized planning and decentralized execution within the compressed time requirements required by RDO. This type of planning and C2 requires networked communication systems and integrated C2

⁹⁷ Joint Publication 3-05, III-7.

elements that can only be realized with high levels of operational and technical interoperability between units.

Both Objective Force operational concepts and Objective Force characteristics and capabilities require high levels of interoperability. That interoperability can be achieved through technical or operational means. Technical means of interoperability are not always feasible or may be too expensive to implement. Operational interoperability can be implemented through changes in organizational design, changes in organizational culture, education and training, integrated and co-located command elements, or creation and use of liaison and coordination elements. Collocated command centers will be rarely possible given the decentralized nature of operations envisioned for the Objective Force. The next section will show that SF liaison and coordination elements are effective and efficient means of implementing organizational interoperability, especially when enabled by other means of interoperability such as education, training and cultural changes.

The Criticality of Future SF Liaison and Coordination Elements

Real operational interoperability cannot be fully realized without the liberal exchange of liaison and coordination elements between organizations. This section puts forth three arguments for why SF liaison and coordination elements are critical in achieve the required levels of interoperability needed for Objective Force operations.

First, SF liaison and coordination elements provide a substitute for interoperability between units when technical interoperability is not possible. The operational concept of the SF and Army Objective Force relies heavily on advanced information technology connected by a complex network of interoperable systems. The network of systems forms the GIG, and provides the Army and SF commanders with a CROP that allows them to exercise battle command faster and more confidently than ever before.⁹⁸ However, there are often circumstances when perfect or even high levels of technical interoperability are not possible. It will take decades to outfit or

upgrade the Objective Force with the C4I systems needed to reach the high levels of technical interoperability necessary for RDO.⁹⁹ Additionally, SFOGs or SF detachments operating in remote, austere locations may not have their full complement of C4I capability present, and this may result in degraded technical interoperability

An additional challenge is that Multinational or coalition partners may have second-generation C4I equipment that has limited interoperability US forces. SF liaison and coordination teams can provide an effective operational interoperability solution. SFLEs can collocate with foreign military C2 elements and provide appropriate communications equipment and doctrinal expertise. Thus, SF liaison and coordination elements are not only critical for interoperability between UE and SF C2 elements but also between UE and coalition force C2 elements.

Organizational interoperability can be an effective substitute or compromise for technical interoperability. SF liaison and coordination elements can be that substitute. The JV 2020 states that,

“Although technical interoperability is essential, it is not sufficient to ensure effective operations. There must be a suitable focus on procedural and organizational elements, and decision makers at all levels must understand each other’s capabilities and constraints. Training and education, experience and exercises, cooperative planning, and skilled liaison at all levels of the joint force will not only overcome the barriers of organizational culture and differing priorities, but will teach members of the joint team to appreciate the full range of Service capabilities available to them.”¹⁰⁰

Second, it is not enough for UE and TSFC commanders and staff to have all the information necessary for a complete CROP at their disposal, they must also have an adequate understanding of that information. One of the major conclusions involving C4ISR from the Army Transformation Wargame 2002 was that,

“Operational planning requires information superiority and information analysis. Interpretation is equally important to information acquisition. Real-time situational understanding prior and during deployment/execution is key. Human analysis will always be required. The Objective Force requires assured communications and a robust

⁹⁸ *Concepts for the Objective Force*, 13.

⁹⁹ *Rapid Decisive Operations*, 7.

¹⁰⁰ *Joint Vision 2020*, 21.

information network. Effective C4ISR is the Combatant Commander's most critical (material and organizational) capability. Without it he cannot command anything.¹⁰¹

A commander or his staff must understand the information presented (even when dealing with friendly forces) to be able to make appropriate decisions based on the information. For SF, full understanding means that decision-makers at the Army end have adequate knowledge of the situation and context in which the information is presented, and the obstacles or limitations the information gatherers are confronted with. Only an SF liaison and coordination element on location can provide the advice and background information that allows the commander adequate understanding of the situation and the key operational considerations necessary to act upon that information.

Lastly, SF liaison and coordination elements imbedded in UE or joint force headquarters are essential for integrated planning and coordination. The *RDO White Paper* states that if Objective Force headquarters elements are to conduct collaborative and parallel planning, they must have subject-matter experts, habitual relationships, pre-crisis knowledge and understanding, as well as adequate and interoperable information technologies.¹⁰² SF liaison and coordination elements can provide these required capabilities. First, the personnel that make up the SF liaison and coordination elements are expert on matters relating to special operations and can provide timely information to UE staff members. Next, SF liaison and coordination elements form habitual relationships with their staff counterparts through day-to-day contact and periodic training. The liaison and coordination elements can also coordinate and ensure that TSFC or SFOG C2 and UE C2 integrate and train together on a regular basis. Next, the efforts of SF liaison and coordination elements ensures that the UE staff will have critical pre-crisis information regarding SF operations and capabilities in the region of interest and information regarding the significant factors and events that led to crisis in the region. The SF liaison and coordination element maintains communications with SF C2 elements operating in potential crisis

¹⁰¹ U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command, Report on *The Army Transformation Wargame 2002: The Objective Force in a Global Strategic Setting, A Year in Concept Development*, Draft (JUL 2002), 36.

regions throughout the world. The SF element will use these communications channels to provide information to the UE staff on developments in crisis areas. SF communications channels could then provide a means of coordinating with SF C2 elements in theater as the UE plans and prepares to deploy. Finally, SF liaison and coordination elements provide face-to-face interaction, which aids mutual situational understanding to an extent that interoperable information systems cannot.

Interoperability - Key Areas of Change For SF Liaison and Coordination Elements

Before giving recommendations as to what that future template should look like, this section needs to determine what critical characteristics and capabilities the liaison and coordination elements should have to optimize interoperability between the SF and Army Objective Forces. This section examines the factors that determine the level of interoperability that future SF liaison and coordination elements are capable of providing to the SF and Army Objective Forces. By analyzing these factors the paper can determine the characteristics and capabilities that SF liaison and coordination elements should have. Further, the section determines what enabling characteristics and capabilities are necessary across the SF and Army Objective Forces to ensure that liaison and coordination cells are effective instruments of interoperability. This will allow us to, in Chapter Five, provide recommendations to the Army's transformation planners for the transformation of SF liaison and coordination elements.

The factors that affect the level of interoperability provided by the SF Objective Force liaison and coordination elements exist throughout the DOTLMSPF. Each of these factors are interconnected and mutually supporting, so that the presence or lack of provisions for interoperability in one key area affects the presence or lack of provisions for interoperability in all areas, and thus the overall effectiveness of SF liaison and coordination cells. For example, if SF officers are not trained in Army coordination procedures and lack training on the latest C4I

¹⁰² *Rapid Decisive Operations*, 17.

systems, it doesn't matter how well a SF coordination and liaison cell is equipped and organized. Its personnel will be unable to carry out the duties required as liaisons and the SF liaison and coordination cell will be ineffective. A study by the Command and Control Research Program reflected the necessity of making changes in key areas across the DOTLMSPF when it stated,

“... the opportunities that new, improved, and interoperable weapons and command and control systems offer cannot be successfully exploited unless we rethink our concepts of operations and our approach to command and control, change processes, doctrine, and organizational structures, and provide the required personnel the education, training, and experiences they need.”¹⁰³

It is of course upon the organizational aspects (specifically liaison and coordination elements) that the eye of this monograph rests, but the paper must look at the effect in the other key areas of the DOTLMSPF to gain a full understanding of what measures the SF Objective Force should take in regards to designing organizations to account for interoperability.

Organization has the greatest relevance in determining the future structure of SF liaison and coordination cells. We will discuss four factors within organization that impact on the effectiveness of SF liaison and coordination elements.

First, SF transformation planners must shape SF liaison and coordination elements in ways that reflect and support the characteristics of the Army and SF Objective Forces. Liaison elements must be modular, self-contained, small enough to deploy with minimum support requirements and footprint, and yet flexible enough to adapt to any situation. SF liaison cells must integrate more than ever with the UEs and UAs with which they work. Contact between liaison cells and Army echelons should occur before deployments and afterwards, and should be regularly incorporated into training. Major SF commands must establish standard operating procedures for liaison and coordination cells to include, SOCCE, SFLE and temporary liaison cells. SF must make liberal use of liaison officers to facilitate cooperation and understanding in a rapidly changing environment. Liaison and coordination cells should be standing organizations that have habitual relationships with other liaisons from all the components of USSOCOM.

Second, SF liaison and coordination teams must strengthen their ability to be the “focal point” for all SOF coordination with their assigned conventional units. SF is the force most suited to serve as a focal point for joint SOF liaison and coordination activities with UEs because they have a larger pool of manpower from which to draw, and traditionally work closer with Army ground forces than any other SOF element.

SF liaison and coordination elements must serve as the basis to represent joint SOF. This includes, psychological operations, civil affairs, Rangers and SEALs. Different SOF liaison cells operating independently of each other in a UE headquarters will represent a span of control problem for both the conventional force commander and the JSOTF who must keep track of the liaison cells. Different SOF liaison cells and officers operating independently within the same conventional headquarters makes for complex organizations, disjointed coordination, and confusion over which SOF liaison a conventional commander or staff officer should be coordinating with. There is greater efficiency and effectiveness when SOF provides one liaison element for all of SOF. For example, if the SOCCE is the base element for liaison and coordination between the JSOTF and a deploying Army UE, then incorporating other SOF liaisons (including SEALs, Psychological Operations, Civil Affairs) into the SOCCE would keep the SOF liaison organization simple and thus gain efficiencies in shared systems and space. To make this work, all components of the joint SOF force that are relevant to the conventional force headquarters must have representatives assigned to the SOCCE.

Third, coordination cells cannot be limited in doctrinal orientation to just operational elements within the Army Objective Force. There must be sufficient representation of SF in the other functional components of a JTF (and their subordinate commands) to ensure adequate planning coordination, deconfliction and execution. Equally, SF must provide robust coordination and liaison cells to other governmental agencies, coalition partners and indigenous/surrogate forces. Adequate interoperability with other services not only increases the

¹⁰³ David S. Alberts, *Information Age Transformation: Getting to a 21st Century Military* (Washington,

responsiveness and interconnectivity of the JIM force, but also reinforces the integration of Objective Force Army and SF forces. It increases the capability of SF liaison and coordination elements to enhance interoperability with the UE, by providing common channels of SF communication between the various supporting and subordinate elements of a JTF. Within a future JTF executing RDO, supporting and supported relationships may assume unexpected configurations. The interconnectivity and integration between the UE and outside supporting elements (such as other government agencies) are aided by the presence of an SF liaison element not only with the UE, but also with the other government agency as well.

There will always be limitations to technological interoperability in coalition, multinational, or indigenous force operations. SF liaison cells, when matched with the right communications and information systems equipment, can provide adequate interoperability by serving as the medium of information transfer between these non-US forces and the Army Objective Force.

“During joint operations, interoperable communications systems among services are rare. Current joint communications systems do not meet all operational requirements. Therefore, Army liaison teams must have communications systems that can rapidly exchange information between commands to ensure the actions of Army forces and forces of other services are coordinated and synchronized, and that they support the joint force commander's plan.”¹⁰⁴

Lastly, liaison and coordination is a two-way street. The SF Objective Force liaisons will benefit from the presence of Army Objective Force liaisons to the SF C2 elements. Liaisons from the Army UE would provide the TSFC staff with advice on the capabilities, requirements and limitations of Army ground force elements. This advice is the duty of the geographically separated SF liaison element in the absence of an Army liaison element with the SF C2 element. The SF liaison and coordination element will definitely be less effective, than the UE liaison in this situation. Additionally, it is possible that elements of the UE could be attached or in support

D.C.: DOD Command and Control Research Program, JUN 2002), 36.

¹⁰⁴ Department of the Army, *Field Manual 6.0, Mission Command* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. GPO, 2003), E-6.

of the TSFC, especially in the early stages of deployment of the UE. UE liaisons with the TSFC will aid interoperability efforts by their SF liaison counterparts.

The JP 1-02 defines **doctrine** as the, “Fundamental principles by which the military forces or elements thereof guide their actions in support of national objectives. It is authoritative, but requires judgment in application.”¹⁰⁵ The doctrine addressing SF liaison and coordination elements cannot be so restrictive as to specify exact liaison and coordination arrangements for every situation. Flexibility must be built into the doctrine for SF liaison and coordination activities to account for unexpected situations and various command arrangements. There must be a concerted effort to ensure that SF doctrine is directed by, follows, and supports the hierarchy of doctrine. Transformation planners must change and add to SF doctrine to address all the key areas of interoperability to include training and material. Specifically, SF doctrine must change to address relationships, responsibilities and procedures for establishing and executing the various forms of liaison and coordination elements to ensure and enhance interoperability.

An example of a doctrinal change to support interoperability and SF liaison and coordination elements is incorporating measures to reduce compartmentalization between the SF and Army Objective Forces using liaison and coordination elements. Compartmentalization is a significant factor in degrading interoperability between the Army and SF Objective Forces. The existence of liaison and coordination elements embedded within the UEs and UAs of the Army OF will ameliorate many of the compartmentalization problems identified in Chapter 1. Liaison and conventional headquarters must have adequate access to future classified systems, maintain adequate information systems to process classified material, and provide sufficient storage facilities. Additionally, liaison and coordination elements will be charged with implementing a classified material screening and management system that supplements classified systems automated management within the GIG. The challenge for doctrine guiding future SF liaison and

¹⁰⁵ *Joint Publication 1-02, DOD Dictionary*, 253.

coordination elements will be to balance the need for an adequate CROP for conventional special operations forces and the concern for operations security.

Material is another key area of DOTLMSPF that has significant impact on the effectiveness of SF liaison and coordination cells in maintaining interoperability with the Objective Force. Material equates most closely with technological interoperability. For SF liaison and coordination elements it applies to the information systems, communications systems, sensor systems and even weapon systems and their ability to integrate effectively. For SF liaison and coordination elements to effectively integrate and coordinate they must utilize technologically interoperable systems that can only be developed as part of a joint effort at force development. Systems interoperability factors must be at the forefront of development. “At the operational level our force and its capabilities must be born joint, allowing us to invest up front in true joint capabilities rather than fixing DOTMLPF interoperability problems after the fact.”¹⁰⁶ Second, SF liaison information and communications systems must be effective gateways to the GIG. SF must have access to gain an effective CROP for itself and the forces it is supporting, and to provide critical timely information to the GIG that will impact on the CROPs of other key conventional and SOF commanders. Lastly, Technical interoperability is vital to SF liaison information and communications to ensure that SF and its supported units are effective players in the joint targeting process. Liaison and control elements must play an essential role in deconfliction, synchronization and coordination of fires with their respective conventional units. Liaison and coordination C4I systems must complement targeting and fire control efforts, and be interoperable with both conventional and SOF C4 systems.

The effectiveness of SF liaison and coordination elements relies in part on how well its personnel are trained to assume liaison duties. SF and Army **training**, both within schools and units, should focus on preparing personnel to assume liaison duties by emphasizing training in three key areas. First, The Army and USASOC must orient individuals and units towards the

¹⁰⁶ *Rapid Decisive Operations*, 7.

joint fight. The more the Army practices integration and combined arms in different scenarios across the spectrum of warfare, the more prepared the Army will be in constructing and implementing interoperable C/JTFs. Second, both SF and Army schools and units must teach and practice liaison and coordination planning, preparation and execution. Only through thorough training, practiced collaboration, and experienced personnel will SF liaison and coordination elements reach an adequate level of efficiency. Third, SF must continue to emphasize their core competencies, especially intercultural communications, interpersonal skills, nonverbal skills, language proficiency, area and cultural orientation, interagency/joint/combined/multinational operations, political awareness, and advanced technology.¹⁰⁷ The competencies that make SF soldiers effective warrior-diplomats who excel at cross-cultural communications, also make them effective liaisons for an Army UE.

Leader development and the organizational culture that develops from it is a critical enabler to effective SF liaison and coordination efforts at interoperability. Army and ARSOF leader development must focus on developing leader skills that will best reflect the requirements of the future force. The RDO White Paper states that, “Successful joint action will rely on fully integrated joint command and control systems, interoperable combat systems, and a coherence of thought and action enabled by increased joint training and leader development.”¹⁰⁸ The challenge of SF educators will be to break down the counterproductive culture of elitism and service parochialism that can inhibit inter-service integration. SF leader education must expose junior officers to the joint world early and establish a curriculum that instills a culture of understanding and inclusion. The Commanding General of US Army Special Forces Command (USASFC), when asked what critical areas SF needs to concentrate on to ensure future interoperability, remarked that officer education was probably the greatest leverage we have at this moment. He stated that SF must focus on developing leaders who understand the meaning of “jointness” and

¹⁰⁷ *Field Manual 3-05.20, Special Forces Operations*, 1-6.

¹⁰⁸ *Rapid Decisive Operations*, 7.

comprehend the importance of interoperability in the joint fight.¹⁰⁹ Officers must include the full array of weapons available to of the joint or coalition force in their war-fighting mindset, and welcome if not actively seek information and advice from individuals outside their own components to realize the potential of operational interoperability. Just as TRADOC intends to use the officer education system of the Army to initiate and inculcate a new cultural paradigm into the organization, SF must do the same. SF is a small part of the future JIM force, but it can only work effectively if officers maintain an understanding of teamwork in the broader context of the joint force and develop a culture of inclusiveness. Likewise, SF liaison and coordination elements must operate within an environment of inclusion within a larger joint team to be effective at maintaining operational interoperability between the Army and SF Objective Forces.

Finally, USASOC must ensure that SF leaders are capable of using and knowing the requirements and capabilities of the high technology they have at their disposal. To support the requirements of SF liaison and coordination elements SF officer must be knowledgeable of the C4ISR information systems that integrate the joint force. David Alberts writes, “This involves significant changes in the curriculum so that all students (not just the ones that are in technical specialties) become current in information technologies (including their advantages, vulnerabilities, limits, and applications) and familiar with their likely impact on military affairs.”¹¹⁰ The SF leaders within the liaison and coordination elements must be efficient at coordination and integration using all the tools at their disposal before the SF liaison and coordination element can be effective in what it does.

Summary

Until USASOC focuses on interoperability as an effective component of SF transformation USASOC will fail to realize many of the characteristics and capabilities that will make SF relevant to the Objective Force. SF transformation planners must take into account

¹⁰⁹ Geoffrey Lambert, CG USASFC interview by author, NOV 2002, notes, Ft. Bragg, NC.

¹¹⁰ David S. Alberts, *Information Age Transformation*, 123.

characteristics and requirements of the Army Objective Force to help USASOC frame the shape, structure and purpose of future SF liaison and coordination elements. The answer to future liaison and coordination elements must be much broader than doubling the size of the SFODB. It must include plans for interoperability with each echelon that SF is engaged with. We must focus on the organization and doctrine of SF liaison and coordination elements, with critical enablers from culture, technology, and training to determine the most effective solution for the shape of future SF liaison and coordination elements. The basic doctrinal components of SF liaison and coordination elements are in place in the form of SOCCEs, SOCOORDs, and SFLEs, but they must be augmented, enlarged and reconfigured to meet the enhanced requirements of Objective Force interoperability.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SF LIAISON AND COORDINATION ELEMENTS

At the operational level, at which joint and combined interdependence must be routine, both command and control and sustainment should be designed from the outset for the support of and by sister service, allied and interagency organizations.¹¹¹

Huba Wass De Czege

“First, break down the wall that has more or less come between special operations forces and the other parts of our military, the wall that some people will try to build higher. Second, educate the rest of the military — spread recognition and understanding of what you do, why you do it, and how important it is that you do it. Last, integrate your efforts into the full spectrum of our military capabilities.”

**ADM William J. Crowe, USN
Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff
Address during the USSOCOM Activation
Ceremony, 1 June 1987**

Recommendations

USASOC is still in the initial stages of developing its supporting concept for the Army Objective Force. Its current answer, called Full Spectrum Special Forces Operations, relies on a number of concepts that require greatly enhanced interoperability. SF liaison and coordination elements will remain essential in realizing the level of interoperability needed for effective operations between SF and the Army Objective Force. It is essential that SF liaison and coordination elements transform in conjunction with the SF Objective Force to meet the requirements of enhanced interoperability. This chapter provides recommendations for SF liaison and coordination element transformation based on criteria gained from the analysis of the impact of interoperability and liaison and coordination teams on the SF operational characteristics and capabilities. This section describes a set of interconnected changes in organizational structure, equipment, doctrine, training, and culture.

First and foremost, SF liaison and coordination elements must undergo a number of organizational changes while retaining the basic organizational structures of the SOCCE, SOCOORD, SFLE, and liaison officers. The core of the SOCCE should remain the SFODB.

The USASOC plan to double the size of the SFODB makes it a much more capable liaison and coordination element. However, each future TSFC should have an SFODB on standby (similar to an infantry division's Designated Ready Force (DRF)). The TSFC should augment the SFODB with personnel and a core package of equipment, and additional equipment as the situation dictates. Other ARSOF and joint SOF organizations should assign representatives or liaison and coordination cells, with adequate equipment, to the SFODB that is on standby. The "Ready SOCCE" should train with all designated representatives from other joint SOF organizations to prepare for a short notice SOCCE mission tasking. Each SFOG should insert the task of establishing and operating a SOCCE as a primary task on one of their SFODBs' mission essential task lists (METL). It should be from this pool of SFODBs that the "Ready SOCCE" mission should rotate.

The SOCOORD must be enlarged from its current 2-4 personnel to 10-15 personnel. This will allow the SOCOORD to assign SOF representatives to critical staff organizations within the Army UE, such as the joint targeting cell, planning cells, logistics, and communications cells. The SOCOORD must take an active role in the development of OPLANS and OPORDS -- it must do more than just develop supporting annexes. In the absence of the SOCCE, the SOCOORD builds on its role as the "focal point" for all joint SOF liaison and coordination with the UE, thus presenting a single POC to the UEs. The SOCOORD should be able to request, temporarily or on a permanent basis, representatives from all areas of joint SOF as planning and coordination requirements within the UE dictate. The larger size of the SOCOORD should allow it to designate personnel as liaisons to subordinate echelons down to the level of the UA. These representatives will establish learning and training relationships with the subordinate commands that will set the stage for understanding and collaboration with SF detachments for future operations. SOCOORDs should maintain a robust relationship with a designated TSFC. "Ready

¹¹¹ Huba Wass De Czege and Richard Hart Sinnreich, "Conceptual Foundations of a Transformed U.S. Army" (Institute of Land Warfare, Association of the U.S. Army), 20.

SOCCEs” should train frequently with a specified UE and its SOCOORD in order to maintain the benefits derived from a close relationship.

The UE must be responsible for maintaining contact between SOF and conventional forces as well. When both organizations exchange liaisons, effective interoperability is increased by the interaction of both liaison and coordination cells within their respective headquarters. This in turn allows the SF liaison and coordination cell to be more efficient in its duties, by distributing the workload of interoperability requirements. The UE should establish liaison cells (augmented with appropriate C4I equipment) to be integrated within joint SOF and C2 structures such as the TSFC(F) or SJSOTF. There should be permanent liaison officers from the UE that are assigned to each TSFC that can be augmented with liaison cells as the UE becomes involved in planning and coordination for operations in the theater.

The SF Objective Force must adopt new methods for ensuring maximum technical interoperability with the Army Objective Force. USASOC must develop standard C4I equipment packages that maximize technical interoperability with the UE. SFOGs must maintain these equipment packages and provide experts and training to SFODBs and SFODAs to ensure these elements are prepared to operate as SOCCEs or SFLEs. The SOCCE’s C4I equipment must connect to the joint force GIG and joint SOF C2 systems. The SOCCE must ensure it is providing and screening information to create an adequate CROP for both the UE and the JSOTF. Additionally, the information equipment must provide as seamless connectivity as is possible between Army Objective Force and joint force targeting networks. To ensure connectivity within all of the JIM force SF liaison and coordination elements (including SFLEs), USASOC must develop exportable liaison network links to establish connectivity at the operational level headquarters of other governmental agencies and foreign militaries. The connectivity is initiated through theater security relationships that are put in place prior to crises.¹¹² SF acquisition and force development planners must actively match the Army’s efforts at a single battle command

¹¹² Joint Capstone Concept, ver. 2.6 (Washington, D.C.: Joint Chiefs of Staff, 25 NOV 2002), 21.

system using Army, USSOCOM and JFCOM guidance. Last, Future SF liaison and coordination elements must use the same systems in garrison, training and war.¹¹³

Future SF doctrine must reinforce modularity, flexibility, and habitual relationships, all of which are essential characteristics of the Army and SF Objective Force. By codifying the evolving relationships and requirements of SF liaison and coordination elements, future SF doctrine will focus the advantages of future SF (forward presence and micro-regional awareness) through the channels of liaison and coordination elements into concrete advantage for the UEs and UAs in the Army's Objective Force. USASOC future doctrine should describe the new structures, equipment, employment, duties and responsibilities for all of the SF liaison and coordination elements without restricting the flexibility of such units to adapt to unique circumstances. SF doctrine must incorporate joint doctrine and concepts and guidance from JFCOM. Moreover, SF doctrine must expand on the duties and requirements of interconnectivity for SFLEs. We must broaden the mission of SFLEs to include acting as a component of the SOCCE, acting as a liaison cell for smaller US land force components, or acting as liaison for small-sized JTFs involved in contingency operations. SFLEs can be used anywhere throughout the JIM force where interoperability with UE and SF needs to be augmented. For example, the SFLE may serve as the liaison and coordination element for the division level UE where the division is widely separated from its controlling corps echelon and attached SOCCE. USASOC must provide more guidance in greater detail to SF command echelons on the employment, capabilities and requirements for SFLEs to ensure they maximize connectivity with the JIM force. The guidance should assist SFLEs in ensuring that the coalition forces have a maximum level of integration with UE and SF C2.

Future SF training must emphasize habitual relationships and interconnectivity both across joint SOF and between SOF and the Army Objective force. The objective of future training is to ensure that SF fights as an effective component of the joint force, and enhances

¹¹³ *TRADOC Pamphlet 525-3-0.1*, 101.

interoperability across the joint force. UEs and UAs should train habitually with SF counterparts through the coordination and with the cooperation of their dedicated SF liaison elements. SF liaison elements should conduct periodic training with the lower level echelons of UAs and UEs to ensure they understand the capabilities of SF and how they interact with the UA to create synergistic effects. SOCOORDs should request SFODAs, with micro-regional experience in regions of interest for the UE, to brief the UE and its UAs on the area assessment and on-going operations in that region. USSOCOM and USASOC should increase SOF representation and liaisons at various conventional schools in the Army, as well as other services, to spread knowledge on SF operations, capabilities, requirements, and limitations. Last, TSFCs should train for and execute formal planning procedures for the best implementation and utilization of SF liaison and coordination cells within JIM forces allocated for impending operations. To meet the high levels of interoperability required by the Army Objective Force and the future JIM force, the TSFC or JSOTF must make maximum use of its liaison and coordination cells, and this is best accomplished through a deliberate planning process.

Changes in the organizational culture of the joint force are central to overcoming the challenges of service parochialism and to empowering liaison and coordination elements in their efforts at interoperability. No matter how embedded SF liaison elements are in the headquarters of the supported organization if the leaders and the culture of both conventional and SF organizations do not promote an atmosphere of inclusion, teamwork and shared cooperation with the other organization, the SF liaison and coordination elements will be only marginal in their effectiveness. Only a culture that reflects the values of the Objective Force will enable the operating characteristics of the Objective Force. Major General Lambert (CG, USASFC) stated that the answer to SF interoperability rested levels above DTLOMSPF, within the pervading organizational cultural present within the joint force. He recommended that officers across the joint force share some the same core competencies that are present within SF.¹¹⁴ USASOC must

¹¹⁴ Geoffrey Lambert.

utilize officer education to inculcate changes in the culture of SF that will in turn, enable the development of a command climate of inclusion within a joint team. SF and conventional Army officer education must include joint curriculum, and joint schools. USASOC and USSOCOM must place more emphasis and better funding in the Joint SOF University. If the Army UE is to operate closely in conjunction with SOF it must understand SOF, its capabilities, limitations, and culture. SF must have the same level of understanding of the Army Objective Force.

Conclusion

The Army's Objective Force is expected to deploy one UA anywhere in the world, "within 96 hours, using multiple austere points of entry, and begin operations immediately upon arrival normally under the C2 of a UE."¹¹⁵ These deployment time requirements drive the concepts for the Army Objective Force, the SF Objective Force, interoperability requirements, and the critical role of SF liaison and coordination elements. There is a strong linkage between the requirements for interoperability of the Army and SF Objective Forces and the critical role of SF liaison and coordination elements in meeting those requirements.

Operational interoperability (the ability of SF and Army Objective Force units to provide services to and accept services from other units, or forces and to use the services so exchanged to enable them to operate effectively together) is critical and central to effective joint operations. Current SF doctrine addressing liaison and coordination elements has evolved over the past decades to meet increasing requirements for interoperability. However, higher degrees of interoperability, both technical and operational, are critical to enabling the Army and SF Objective Forces. The SF Objective Force will have to change significantly to meet the requirements of future war fighting concepts and to stay relevant to the future JIM force. Current SF Objective Force plans are still in their infancy and include only general concepts for operational and organizational changes. The concepts are enough, however, to show how SF will fit into the overall direction and plans for Army Objective Force transformation.

Technical interoperability will not, for the foreseeable future, replace the need for liaison and coordination elements. On the contrary, SF liaison and coordination elements will become even more essential for increasing operational interoperability to the high levels necessary for effective Objective Force operations. USASOC must transform liaison and coordination elements, in conjunction with its core C2 organizations, to ensure that they are able to achieve higher levels of interoperability with the Army Objective Force and across the JIM force. SF must make changes across the DOTLMSPF to ensure that liaison and coordination elements are as effective as possible in maintaining operational interoperability. In conclusion, interoperability is essential to future operability. Liaison and coordination elements are essential to interoperability. Only transformed liaison and coordination elements can satisfy interoperability requirements for a transformed Army.

¹¹⁵ *The Objective Force in 2015*, 1.

Annex A

GLOSSARY OF TERMS AND ACRONYMS

Acronyms

C2 – Command and Control

C4ISR – Command, Control, Communications, Computers, Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance

CROP – Common Relevant Operating Picture

DOTLMSPF – Doctrine, Training, Leader Development, Organization, Material, Soldier systems, Personnel and Facilities

FID – Foreign Internal Defense

IO – Information Operations

JIM Force – Joint Interagency Multinational Force

MPC – Missions Capability Package

SF – US Army Special Forces

SOF – Special Operations Forces

SPF – Special Purpose Forces

SFOA – Special Forces Operational Detachment Alpha

SFOB – Special Forces Operational Detachment Bravo

SOCCE – Special Operations Command and Control Element

SOCOORD – Special Operations Coordination Element

SFLE – Special Forces Liaison Element

UW – Unconventional Warfare

SR – Special Reconnaissance

TERMS

Full Spectrum Special Forces Operations. FSSFO are operations conducted primarily through, with, and by indigenous forces to achieve US objectives in peace, contingencies, and war. FSSFO are composed of three broad types of operations: unconventional warfare, foreign internal defense, and unilateral. FSSFO may be the main military effort or they may support conventional operations. They are often low visibility operations that frequently occur in politically sensitive remote locations and require close coordination with Department of State, Central Intelligence Agency, and other organizations. (“Chapter 3: The Objective Force Concept for Special Forces”, *The Objective Force Concepts for ARSOF*)

Global Information Grid. The Global Information Grid (GIG) is the globally interconnected, end-to-end set of information capabilities, associated processes, and personnel for collecting, processing, storing, dissemination, and managing information on demand to warfighters, policy makers, and support personnel. The GIG is envisioned as a single, secure grid comprised of a variety of information systems such as the GCCS, GCSS, and DIIS and supporting computing and communications capabilities. (“Chapter 3: The Objective Force Concept for Special Forces”, *The Objective Force Concepts for ARSOF*)

Global Scout. While executing the regional combatant commanders' TSCP, conducting contingency operations, or participating in MCO, forward-stationed and deployed ARSOF perform the function of "global scout" by observing and reporting information of tactical, operational, and strategic significance. This develops ground truth information that is generated over time and establishes the pulse of a region--diplomatic/government, information, military, and economic and cultural and social aspects. The information establishes and sustains ground truth information for the Common Relevant Operational Picture that is essential to the President, Secretary of Defense, combatant commanders, and joint and service operational units. (“Chapter 3: The Objective Force Concept for Special Forces”, *The Objective Force Concepts for ARSOF*)

Information Superiority. That degree of dominance in the information domain, which permits the conduct of operations without effective opposition (JP 1-02). The capability to collect, process, and disseminate an uninterrupted flow of information while exploiting or denying an adversary's ability to do the same in order to have greater and more accurate knowledge than our opponents. (“Chapter 3: The Objective Force Concept for Special Forces”, *The Objective Force Concepts for ARSOF*)

Interoperability - The ability of systems, units or forces to provide services to and accept services from other systems, units, or forces and to use the services so exchanged to enable them to operate effectively together. (“Chapter 3: The Objective Force Concept for Special Forces”, *The Objective Force Concepts for ARSOF*)

Special Forces Operational Group. The SFOG replaces the legacy Special Forces Battalion. The SFOG is a robust unit, organized for operations. It is under the OPCON of the TSFC (Forward) and stationed in CONUS. It is organized into operational centers rather than the legacy design of an S staff in order to create an agile organization able to manage peacetime security cooperation operations and respond immediately to crises and other operational requirements. It commands Operational Detachments B and Operations Detachments A. (“Chapter 3: The Objective Force Concept for Special Forces”, *The Objective Force Concepts for ARSOF*)

Special Forces Planning and Assessment Team. The Theater SOC will provide from the TSFC (Fwd) a specifically organized Special Forces Planning and Assessment Cell (SFPAC) that is attached to the SJFHQ. The SFPAC provides the Theater SOC and the SJFHQ commander an SF planning element. The SFPAC is a standing organization that does not have to be formed “out-of-hide;” therefore, it does not detract from the Theater SOC or TSFC’s mission or capabilities. The SFPAC is a key asset to the SJFHQ for planning and preparation of Operational Net Assessments (ONA). The SFPAC provides regional expertise, a senior staff, a reach-back capability and, most importantly, real time access to information from the region due to the conduits through the Theater SOC and TSFC (Fwd) to the SF operational detachments performing security cooperation missions. The SFPAC can also deploy as an assessment team. (“Chapter 3: The Objective Force Concept for Special Forces”, *The Objective Force Concepts for ARSOF*)

Standing Joint Force Headquarters. A permanent joint organization under command of a flag or general officer, assigned to a combatant commander, and embedded in his staff. It is manned with joint personnel, who collaboratively plan, prepare, and train with other combatant command elements and components for specified contingencies within the theater. It develops standardized JTF procedures for operations, operational net assessments, and contingency plans. It provides uniform SOP, TTP, and technical system requirements, including standardized joint C4ISR architecture that provides a CROP for joint and combined forces. When contingency requires the establishment of a JTF, the SJFHQ becomes the core of the JTF command structure. (“Chapter 3: The Objective Force Concept for Special Forces”, *The Objective Force Concepts for ARSOF*)

Standing Joint Special Operations Task Force. The Standing Joint Special Operations Task Force is a joint organization commanded by an O7. It is a lean, fully operational, rapidly deployable command and control headquarters that is immediately available to deploy to Theater Special Operations Commands to extend their OPCON in security cooperation, emerging contingency situations, or major combat operations. While the CONUS-based SJSOTF is fully staffed for operations, it requires administrative and logistic support when employed. (“Chapter 3: The Objective Force Concept for Special Forces”, *The Objective Force Concepts for ARSOF*)

Theater Special Forces Command. The Theater Special Forces Command Special Forces is a warfighting organization designed to provide significant forward-stationed and deployed headquarters and forces, plus CONUS-based operational forces able to execute a rigorous security cooperation campaign, contingency operations, and major combat operations with strategic responsiveness, agility, and lethality. Each active Army TSFC has a TSFC (Rear) in CONUS and a TSFC (Forward) OCONUS. (“Chapter 3: The Objective Force Concept for Special Forces”, *The Objective Force Concepts for ARSOF*)

Theater Special Forces Command (Forward). TSFC is a robust flag officer headquarters that is forward-stationed and organized, manned, and equipped to function as a Standing Joint Special Operations Task Force without task organization or significant augmentation. TSFC (Fwd) provides day-to-day OPCON of Army and other SOF executing security cooperation or other missions, as directed by the Theater SOC. (“Chapter 3: The Objective Force Concept for Special Forces”, *The Objective Force Concepts for ARSOF*)

Theater Special Forces Command (Rear). The TSFC (Rear) is CONUS based and functions as a mission support center. It facilitates the CONUS training of assigned SFOGs, performs Title 10 responsibilities, and provides a rotational base for the TSFC (Forward). (Chapter 3: The Objective Force Concept for Special Forces”, *The Objective Force Concepts for ARSOF*)

Unit of Action. Unit of Action (UA) is an Army Objective Force echelonment term that refers to a unit with the functions, tasks, and purposes of brigades and below. UAs accomplish discrete sets of functions at the tactical level in accordance with prescribed mission-essential tasks. UAs are designed as modular organizations that can be combined and integrated as the basic building blocks of combined arms combat power to form larger formations. (“Chapter 3: The Objective Force Concept for Special Forces”, *The Objective Force Concepts for ARSOF*)

Unit of Employment. Unit of Employment (UE) is an Army Objective Force echelonment term that refers to a unit with the functions, tasks, and purposes of corps and divisions. UEs are highly tailorable, higher-level echelons that integrate and synchronize Army forces for Full Spectrum Operations at the higher tactical and operational levels of war/conflict. The UE is capable of command and control of all Army, Joint, and multinational forces. It will be organized, designed, and equipped to fulfill command and control functions as the Army Forces Component, Joint Land Component Command, or the Joint Task Force. The UE will also have the inherent capacity to interact effectively with multinational forces as well as with interagency, non-governmental organizations and private volunteer organizations. UE represents the field army, corps, and divisions. (“Chapter 3: The Objective Force Concept for Special Forces”, *The Objective Force Concepts for ARSOF*)

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