



NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL

MONTEREY, CALIFORNIA

THESIS

**OPTIMIZING FUTURE OPERATIONS FOR SPECIAL
FORCES BATTALIONS: REVIEWING THE CONOP
PROCESS**

by

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June 2013

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REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE			<i>Form Approved OMB No. 0704-0188</i>	
Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instruction, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to Washington headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports, 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington, VA 22202-4302, and to the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reduction Project (0704-0188) Washington, DC 20503.				
1. AGENCY USE ONLY (Leave blank)		2. REPORT DATE June 2013	3. REPORT TYPE AND DATES COVERED Master's Thesis	
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE OPTIMIZING FUTURE OPERATIONS FOR SPECIAL FORCES BATTALIONS: REVIEWING THE CONOP PROCESS			5. FUNDING NUMBERS	
6. AUTHOR(S) Edward "Judd" Sanford				
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) Naval Postgraduate School Monterey, CA 93943-5000			8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER	
9. SPONSORING /MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) N/A			10. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY REPORT NUMBER	
11. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES The views expressed in this thesis are those of the author and do not reflect the official policy or position of the Department of Defense or the U.S. government. IRB Protocol number: NPS.2013.0031-IR-EP7-A.				
12a. DISTRIBUTION / AVAILABILITY STATEMENT Approved for public release; distribution is unlimited			12b. DISTRIBUTION CODE A	
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14. SUBJECT TERMS CONOP; Concept of the Operation; CONOP Procedure; Targeting in Special Forces battalions			15. NUMBER OF PAGES 155	
			16. PRICE CODE	
17. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF REPORT Unclassified	18. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF THIS PAGE Unclassified	19. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF ABSTRACT Unclassified	20. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT UU	

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**OPTIMIZING FUTURE OPERATIONS FOR SPECIAL FORCES BATTALIONS:
REVIEWING THE CONOP PROCESS**

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF SCIENCE IN DEFENSE ANALYSIS

from the

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ABSTRACT

Evidence obtained in this study shows that a successful CONOP product contains minimal informational requirements for approval and an effective CONOP procedure is supported by a targeting methodology with lower delegation of authority for CONOP approval.

The CONOP is used by special operations forces (SOF) and other units to gain concurrence for an operation by its higher headquarters. It is typically a PowerPoint slide presentation submitted by a Special Forces Operational Detachment-Alpha (SFODA) or another similar combat unit in order to describe the type of operation, the operation's level of risk, the assets required to conduct the operation, and when the operation is to take place. Concurrence can typically take up to 72 hours for a high-risk operation or up to 48 hours for a medium-risk operation after the CONOP is submitted through the chain of command. SOF uses the CONOP procedure to deconflict operations, assign resources, and to demonstrate how the operation is nested within the operational priorities of the battle space owner as well as the Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force (CJSOTF) commander. This study examines what makes a successful CONOP and what constitutes an effective CONOP procedure.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AKO:	Army Knowledge Online
AOB:	Advanced Operations Base; Also known as an SFOD-B
AOR:	Area of Responsibility
BSO:	Battle Space Owner
CAT:	Civilian Affairs Team
CERP:	Commander's Emergency Response Program
CJSOTF:	Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force
CONOP:	Concept of the Operation
COMRC:	Regional Commander
FUOPs:	Future operations
GRG:	Gridded Reference Graphic
JCET:	Joint Combined Exchange Training
MCCC:	The Maneuver Captains Career Course
MOS:	Military Occupational Specialty
OPORD:	Operations Order
IED:	Improvised Explosive Device
IRB:	Institutional Review Board
NPS:	Naval Postgraduate School
OPTEMPO:	Operations tempo
RC:	Regional Command (Afghanistan Theater)
SFODA:	Special Forces Operational Detachment-Alpha
SFOD-B:	Special Forces Operational Detachment-Bravo
SOF:	Special Operations Forces
SOTF:	Special Operations Task Forces
TPT:	Tactical Psychological (PSYOP) Operations Team
USASFC(A):	United States Army Special Forces Command (Airborne)

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This study provides an analysis and evaluation of the current Concept of the Operation (CONOP) procedure and CONOP product used by Special Operations Task Forces (SOTFs) to approve Special Forces Operational Detachment-A (SFODA) operations. The methods utilized for this study are statistical summaries, correlation, and regression analyses. The results of the data show that there are elements of the CONOP procedure and its product that can be improved to accelerate the CONOP approval process, and increase flexibility and agility for SFODAs. A brief summary of the findings of this study are:

1. Frequent reformatting and reorganization of slides by staff are significant factors in CONOP delay. Constant changes to the format not only delay approval times, but make familiarization and teaching the CONOP procedure challenging.
2. Delays in staffing requests for non-organic resources, specifically rotary-wing and ISR assets, are the most significant reason for delay of CONOP approval for medium-risk and high-risk operations.
3. Despite well-developed targeting procedures employed throughout Special Forces units, SOTF staffs and SFODAs do not usually forecast operations more than one week in advance. Due to the lack of long-range forecasting of Special Forces operations, staffs and SFODAs have been at a disadvantage when competing with conventional forces for rotary-wing and ISR assets.
4. The most significant variables affecting CONOP approval are: staff feedback to the SFODAs; the SFODAs adaptability to the CONOP procedure and its product; non-organic resource scarcity; nesting (aligning) the CONOP with CONOPS at higher echelons; staff oversight of critical resource requirements for the operation; and the amount of informational requirements for the CONOP product.¹

¹ A nested concept is a planning technique to achieve unity of purpose whereby each succeeding echelon's concept of operation is aligned by purpose with the higher echelon's concept of operations. Department of the Army, *The Operations Process: Field Manual (FM) 5-0*, (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 2010), 2-95.

These variables impact the SFODA's ability to achieve CONOP approval, and consequently to conduct operations in a timely manner, that by extension, provides effects to the commander and the battle-space owner in a timely manner. To this end, this study recommends the following be implemented by CJSOTF commanders to streamline the CONOP approval process:

1. Replace the low-risk and medium-risk CONOP with the 5W format (Who, What, When, Where, Why).² Retain the high-risk CONOP for operations that require high-demand resources, have strong potential for political repercussions, and present high risk to the force. Medium-risk CONOPs can be prepared for the SOTF commander if there is especially keen competition for resources. Use the format recommended in this study for the medium-risk and high-risk CONOPs.
2. Assign approval authority for the 5W format to the detachment commander. Medium-risk CONOPs can be approved by the AOB commander, but the SOTF commander should approve medium-risk CONOPs requiring rotary-wing and ISR assets. Assign approval authority of the high-risk CONOPs to the SOTF commander, with the caveat of keeping the CJSOTF commander informed of the operation.
3. Implement a targeting procedure by the SOTF staff to closely track critical high-demand resources, specifically rotary-wing and ISR assets. Utilize the targeting procedure to drive the CONOP process, in order to maximize visibility of critical resources, and increase the SOTF's competitiveness for non-organic assets.
4. Attach more rotary-wing and ISR assets to the SOTFs. There is creditable evidence in this study that Special Forces units require more of these non-organic resources in order to maintain operational agility in combat, which would also further accelerate CONOP approval.

² The 5W is a simple text document that states the Who (the SFODA), What (the mission), When (the time of the operation and specific timeline), Where (the place of the operation), and Why (the purpose) of the operation. The 5W also addresses MEDEVAC and communications frequencies for an SFODA operation.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

As the primary author of this study, I relied upon the expertise of Professor Kalev Sepp and Doowan Lee. Although the errors are mine, I would like to thank Dr. Kalev Sepp, my primary thesis advisor, for his guidance and support while writing this thesis. Additionally, this study would never have come to fruition without the consistent input of my second reader, Doowan Lee. I found their mentorship to be invaluable and I hope to emulate their high standards in future endeavors.

I would also like to thank the staff at the United States Army Special Forces Command (Airborne), specifically Major Seth Wheeler, for all of the guidance and input, without which, this study would not have been possible.

Finally, I would like to thank my family and my peers in the Special Forces community for the support and constructive criticism they provided during my thesis efforts.

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I. INTRODUCTION

*For the first few years of the GWOT we seemed to survive quite well with a 5W process that was transmitted over PDC and SATCOM. The CONOP process did not go viral until everyone had access to SIPR terminals and PowerPoint.*³ –Sergeant Major, Special Forces veteran

The concept of the operation (CONOP) process continues to be the method for deconfliction, synchronization, assigning assets, and demonstrating how the operation is nested with the battle space owner. Given the proliferation and expansion of the CONOP process in the U.S. military and its doctrinal emphasis in special operations forces (SOF), the CONOP procedure deserves attention in order to achieve further optimization and standardization.

A. BACKGROUND

The CONOP is used by SOF and other units in Afghanistan to gain concurrence for an operation by its higher headquarters. It is typically a PowerPoint slide presentation submitted by a Special Forces Operational Detachment-Alpha (SFODA) or another similar combat unit in order to describe the type of operation, the operation's level of risk, the assets required to conduct the operation, and when the operation is to take place. Concurrence can typically take up to 72 hours for a high-risk operation or up to 48 hours for a medium-risk operation after the CONOP is submitted through the chain of command.

SOF uses the CONOP procedure to deconflict operations, assign resources, and to demonstrate how the operation is nested within the operational priorities of the battle space owner as well as the Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force (CJSOTF) commander.

³Subject 69. Anonymous Sergeant Major, Special Forces, 18Z, Afghanistan veteran, question 61.

B. STATEMENT OF PURPOSE AND SCOPE

The purpose of this thesis is to review the CONOP procedure used by Special Operations Task Forces (SOTFs) in support of current and future operations and determine if the CONOP process or the CONOP product can be improved.

This study does not address how CONOP approval affects mission success or mission failure. This is beyond the scope of this thesis. In addition, mission success or failure is dependent on a significant amount of causal variables. This study focuses on the independent variables that attribute to CONOP approval in order to streamline the CONOP procedure. Nevertheless, this study does state that a sensible, well-timed CONOP approval process is desired in the Special Forces community.

Speed is of value in its own right because it equates to precious time for the detachment and intelligence for the operation. Slow CONOP procedures, due to an increase in informational requirements and higher approval authority, can distract the SFODA because the focus of the SFODA can become the CONOP product in order to achieve approval. Precious time for the SFODA is spent on activities for the CONOP product rather than activities for the operation, such as rehearsals and a detailed OPORD. Time, when it is given to a lengthy CONOP procedure, can degrade intelligence, attributing unforeseen factors to the mission and allowing enemies to prepare.

Is a lengthy CONOP procedure of value? Commanders can take more time to make decisions with high-risk CONOPs. Additionally, given more time with the CONOP product, the SOTF staff and the SFODAs can strengthen the CONOPs with doctrine and imagery and increase the chances for approval. Despite these considerations, not one subject in the survey stated that current CONOP procedure and the CONOP product is fine the way it is; however, there were numerous comments from the subjects that stated the CONOP procedure needs to be streamlined for the SFODAs. Time does not equal staff feedback to the detachment nor does it equal integration between the staff and the SFODA. These procedures should hasten a CONOP procedure, not slow it. Therefore, speed, based on the comments from the subjects, is vital for an efficient CONOP procedure while slowness is considered adverse.

C. RESEARCH QUESTION

Can the CONOP procedure be improved?

D. THE BENEFITS TO THE REGIMENT FOR CONDUCTING THIS STUDY

This study will examine the CONOP product and what constitutes an effective CONOP procedure. A comprehensive review of the CONOP and related doctrines will potentially increase the efficiency of future SOTF operations. In addition, this study will capture lessons from the CONOP procedure and analyze how and why the CONOP has evolved into its current state. Finally, this study will examine if there is any potential to codify the CONOP and its procedure and establish them in doctrine.

E. LITERATURE REVIEW

Doctrinal sources will provide the frame of reference for terminology as well as a structure for the targeting methodology offered at the end of this thesis. There are scarce references in literature or conventional doctrine that will support any examination of the CONOP process. However, there is published doctrine that supports developing a targeting method in order to streamline and speed the CONOP procedure. U.S. Army doctrine offers the best sources to reference the practice in the targeting methodology (see Table 1). Doctrine further provides the reference to intelligence practices that support targeting as well as definitions for the terminology that will be referenced in this thesis.

Author	Reference	Contribution
Department of Defense ⁴	FM 3–60, <i>The Targeting Process</i>	Describes the targeting methodology used today within the United States Army
Department of Defense ⁵	FM 2–0, <i>Intelligence</i>	Provides guidance to commanders and staff for intelligence operations
Department of Defense ⁶	FM 3–05, <i>Army Special Operations Forces</i>	Provides the commander and the staff a broad understanding of Army Special Operations Forces (ARSOF) and the guidance to conduct the target nomination process
Department of Defense ⁷	JP 1-02, <i>Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms</i>	The reference for common military definitions and terminology found in this thesis

Table 1. Doctrinal References.

F. METHODOLOGY

This study will survey members of the U.S. Army Special Forces in order to examine the CONOP process. The survey will be divided into CONOP procedures and the CONOP product. First, the survey will collect qualitative data from the subjects. Next, the survey will gather data that covers actions by the SFODA and the staff prior to

⁴ Department of Defense, *The Targeting Process: Field Manual (FM) 3-60*. Headquarters Department of the Army, November 2010.

⁵ Department of Defense, *Intelligence: Field Manual (FM) 2-0*. Headquarters Department of the Army, March 2010.

⁶ Department of Defense, *Army Special Operations Forces: Field Manual (FM) 3–05*. Headquarters Department of the Army, December 2010.

⁷ Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms, *Joint Publication (JP) 1-02*. Department of Defense, November 8, 2010.

CONOP submission and then collect data covering detachment planning and coordination with the staff post CONOP submission. Finally, the survey will collect data on the CONOP's structure and characteristics within the CONOP that demonstrate the operational picture to the commander and staff. By conducting a large-scale survey, this study aims to provide a comprehensive and analytic review of the CONOP process. To this date, such systematic research has not been conducted in order to consider how to optimize the CONOP process.

This survey will follow the procedures of the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at the Naval Postgraduate School.⁸

G. ORGANIZATION OF STUDY/CHAPTER REVIEW

This study is organized into several parts: survey results, analysis of the survey, and recommendations to the CONOP procedure. Following the introduction, chapter II begins with the survey results. This chapter highlights the survey design, survey distribution, and an overview of the survey data. Chapter III discusses the CONOP and the CONOP procedure. During this chapter, Afghanistan and Iraq CONOP procedures are compared. In Chapter IV, this study focuses on the delays to CONOP approval for Afghanistan and Iraq low-risk, medium-risk, and high-risk CONOPs. Chapter V focuses on staff oversight and resource allocation for CONOPS in Afghanistan and Iraq. Chapter VI discusses codifying the CONOP product and argues why the CONOP product should be standardized and put into doctrine. Next, chapter VII discusses the components to the recommended CONOP product, which included as an appendix in this study. Chapter VIII includes a model that discusses the independent variables that affect CONOP approval delay across low, medium, and high-level risk CONOPs for Afghanistan and Iraq. Finally, chapter IX concludes the study with recommendations and final thoughts.

⁸ Concurrence to conduct the survey was required by the United States Army Special Forces Command (Airborne) in order to complete the administrative requirements at IRB. The survey was posted online to Sakai, a website that allows the user to design and administer the survey with fast and efficient results. The survey was administered for twelve days and then the results were compiled.

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II. SURVEY RESULTS

If there is going to be a CONOP there needs to be one structured Format. Too many different officers on the way up the Chain decide that they want something else and kick back the CONOP for style reasons. If there was one structured format this would cut down on wasted time and man-hours of work by eliminating personal preference for a functional dictated format.⁹

A. SURVEY

1. Survey Design

The survey was designed into specific sections regarding the CONOP procedure. Part one of the survey collects data regarding actions of the staff and SFODAs prior to CONOP submission. Part two of the survey asks questions regarding synchronization of CONOPs, staff oversight of CONOPs, and resource allocation of CONOPs. Part three covers areas regarding nesting of CONOPs, concurrence of CONOPs, and approval authority of CONOPs. The survey concludes with part four, the CONOP product. The majority of the questions in the survey were designed around a likert scale of one to ten, with a few exceptions of questions regarding the CONOP product and the qualitative data regarding the subjects.

2. Survey Distribution

The survey was posted to the Sakai platform at the Naval Postgraduate School. After receiving concurrence to conduct the survey from IRB, the United States Army Special Forces Command (Airborne) (USASFC-A) Commander, and the Defense Analysis (DA) department at the Naval Postgraduate School, the hyperlink to the survey and a brief synopsis was forwarded back to USASFC(A). From there, the survey was disseminated to the Special Forces community. Additionally, an advertisement was posted to the home page of Army Knowledge Online (AKO) with a hyperlink to the survey. Subjects had approximately twelve days to participate in the survey. Following

⁹ Subject 86. Anonymous Sergeant First Class, Special Forces, 18D, OEF-P veteran (Operation Enduring Freedom-Philippines), question 71.

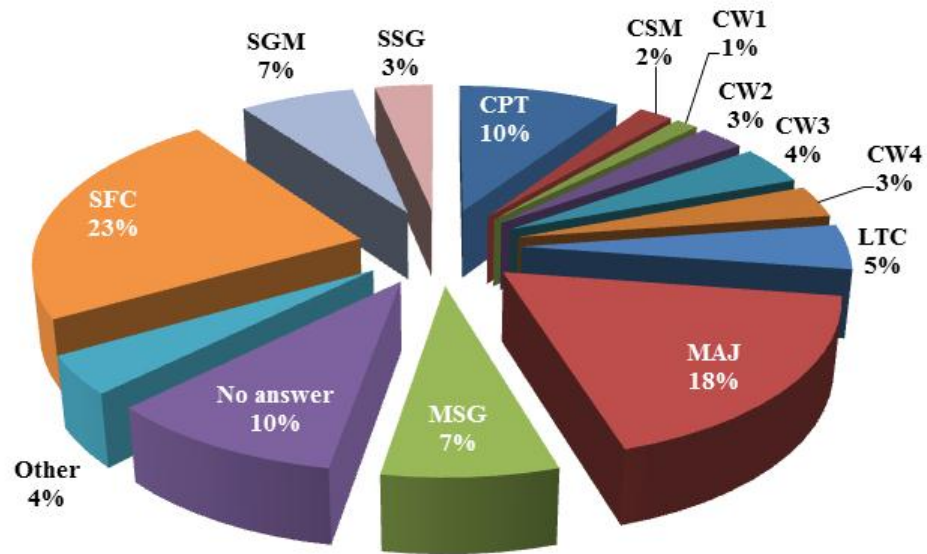
the initial email of distribution for the survey, a reminder to participate in the survey was forwarded by USASFC(A) seven days later. On the twelfth day the survey closed and the data was exported to an Excel document using Sakai. Presently, only the primary and secondary persons conducting this study will have access to the data.

B. OVERVIEW OF THE SURVEY DATA

1. Participation

Approximately 150 subjects submitted results for the survey. Subjects who participated consisted of a balance of active duty officers, warrant officers, and non-commissioned officers, with a small percentage of retirees. Subjects represented all of the military occupational specialties (MOSs) in the SF branch. 65% of the individuals that participated are captains, majors, warrants, and non-commissioned officers that are directly impacted by the CONOP procedure. Senior ranking non-commissioned officers that participated were sergeants major and command sergeants major. Senior warrant officers consisted of CW3 and CW4's. The highest ranking officers that participated in the survey were lieutenant colonels. Senior ranking NCOs, warrants, and officers make up 21% of the subjects that participated. Figure 1 demonstrates the distribution of rank and MOS of the subjects that participated in the survey.

Distribution of Rank



Distribution of MOS

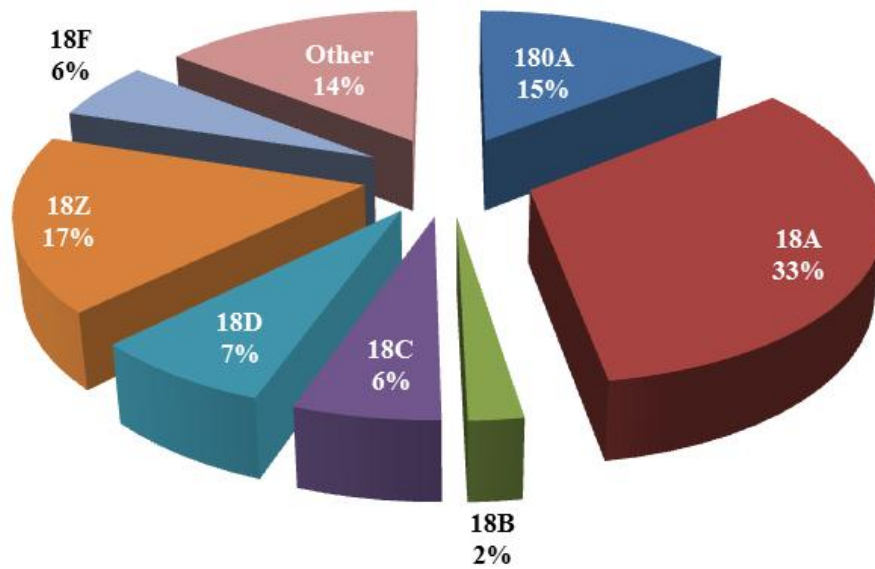


Figure 1. Distribution of Rank and MOS.

2. Deployment Distribution

The majority of subjects that participated in the survey stated Afghanistan as their most recent deployment. Iraq comes in second. A small percentage of the subjects that did not state Iraq or Afghanistan as their most recent deployment primarily deployed in support of joint combined exchange training (JCETs) in the Pacific or South America. Figure 2 demonstrates the deployment distribution of the subjects that participated in the survey.¹⁰

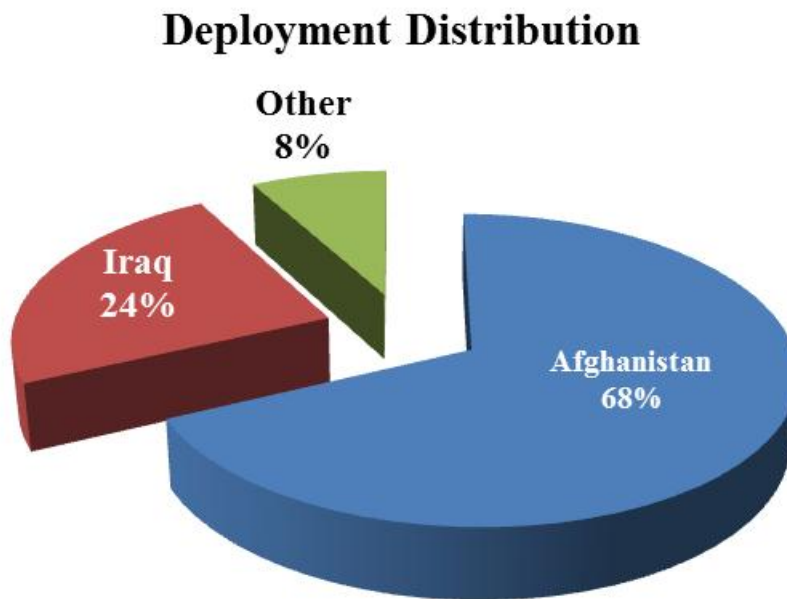


Figure 2. Most Recent Deployment Distribution.

¹⁰ Question 1 of the survey asked subjects where they deployed most recently; 102 of the total subjects that participated in the survey responded with Afghanistan, 36 of the subjects responded with a deployment to Iraq, and 12 of the subjects responded with "other."

III. THE CONOP AND CONOP PROCEDURE

I hope tactical commander's input will be taken into account in this survey. The entire CONOP process is broken and has become a burden on ODAs, has stripped authority (and consequentially legitimacy in the eyes of HN/FID partners) from ODA commanders, and is a huge time sink for staffs. The process and format of CONOPs are supreme, the mission they attempt to convey and gain approval for has become secondary.¹¹ CW3, Special Forces Veteran.

A. APPROVAL TIME FOR THE CONOP

Time is a key factor when conducting operations. SFODAs are required to submit CONOPs for concurrence prior to the conduct of any operation. CONOPs that are delayed can postpone or even cancel operations. The data indicates significant differences between Iraq and Afghanistan and the average time it took for SFODAs to receive concurrence for their CONOP. Afghanistan and Iraq differed with how each theatre of operations labeled the CONOP. Table 1 shows how each level of CONOP was labeled. For the purpose of this study and in order to maintain simplicity, CONOPs are referred to as low-risk, medium-risk, or high-risk.

¹¹ Subject number 65. Anonymous CW3, Special Forces, 180A, Afghanistan veteran, question 74.

CONOP	Afghanistan	Iraq	Definition
Low Risk	Level 0	Level 3	Low risk to the force; typically characterized as a patrol outside the fire base; low potential for political repercussion
Medium Risk	Level 1	Level 2	Medium risk to the force; typically characterized as a daylight cordon and search type operation, may require rotary wing transport and ISR support, some potential for political repercussion
High Risk	Level 2	Level 1	High risk to the force; typically characterized as a night time raid, typically requires rotary wing transport and ISR, strong potential for political repercussion
** Due to the difference in numerical characterizations of CONOPS in Afghanistan and Iraq, this study will refer to CONOPs as low risk, medium risk, or high risk.			

Table 2. Afghanistan and Iraq CONOPs.

For the low-risk CONOP, typically characterized by a combat reconnaissance patrol, concurrence was received within about twelve hours in Afghanistan; however, SFODAs that conducted patrols in Iraq received approval in about six hours. Figure 3 demonstrates the summary statistics of question 46.¹² Note the mean, which is the average of the total samples taken from Iraq and Afghanistan.¹³ This data can be found in the descriptive statistics of Figure 3. Additionally, Figure 3 shows a visual representation of the data collected from the subjects on several histograms.

¹² See Appendix C to see the survey questions.

¹³ The mean, also known as the arithmetic mean, is the average or central measure. See Thomas H. Wonnacott and Ronald J. Wonnacott, *Introductory Statistics*, 3rd ed. (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1977), 16.

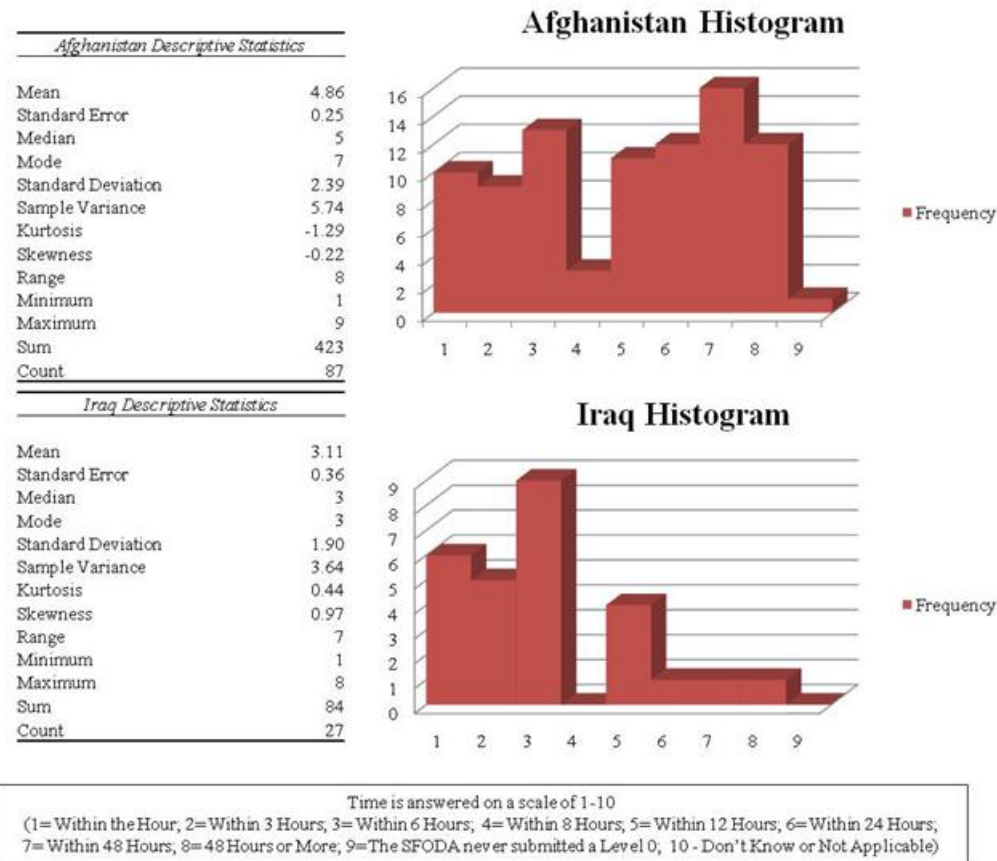


Figure 3. Question 46: Average Time for Approval for the Low-Risk CONOP.

A histogram is a visual picture of bars that represent frequencies throughout the range.¹⁴ The data collected from Afghanistan demonstrates a bell curve shaped histogram. In short, the skew looks relatively even if a line were drawn over the bars. This clearly indicates the wide spectrum of approval times in Afghanistan. On the other hand, Iraq's histogram is skewed right, with the majority of the values between one and three and the larger values, although fewer, bringing up the average slightly. This indicates that the approval times for low-risk CONOPs in Iraq were rapid and more standardized than the approval times for low-risk CONOPs in Afghanistan.

¹⁴ Wonnacott, *Introductory Statistics*, 14.

Question 47 denotes the average time for concurrence for a medium-risk CONOP, which might requires rotary wing support and with some potential for political repercussion.¹⁵ Figure 4 shows the difference between Iraq and Afghanistan.

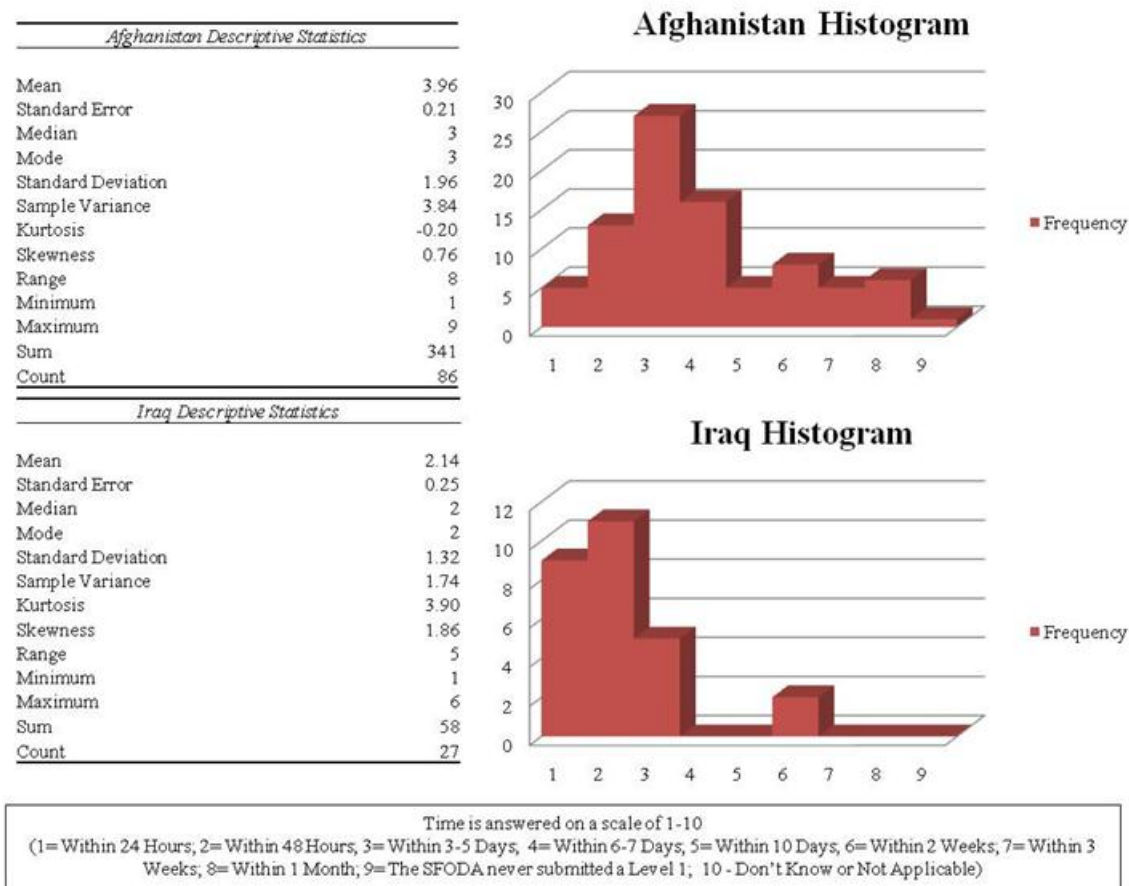


Figure 4. Question 47: Average Time for Approval for the Medium-Risk CONOP.

SFODAs that deployed to Afghanistan and submitted a medium-risk CONOP on average received approval within six to seven days. Approval was much more rapid for SFODAs that participated in Iraq; medium-risk CONOPs were approved within forty-eight hours. Note the skew of both histograms.¹⁶ Iraq is heavily skewed to the right because there is almost no distribution of larger values. Afghanistan, although it is

¹⁵ See Appendix C to see the survey questions.

¹⁶ Skew is the visual distribution of the peaks in a histogram. Wonnacott, *Introductory Statistics*, 19.

skewed to the right, varies slightly more due a few more of the larger values. The larger values indicated by Afghanistan's histogram will pull up the average time for approval. Approval times in Iraq were clearly rapid and more standardized while approval times in Afghanistan varied more.

Question 48 denotes the average time for concurrence for a high-risk CONOP.¹⁷ High-risk CONOPs, which are characterized as operations that are high-risk to the force, require rotary wing transport, with strong potential for political repercussion, take the longest to receive concurrence and receive the most scrutiny from high headquarters.

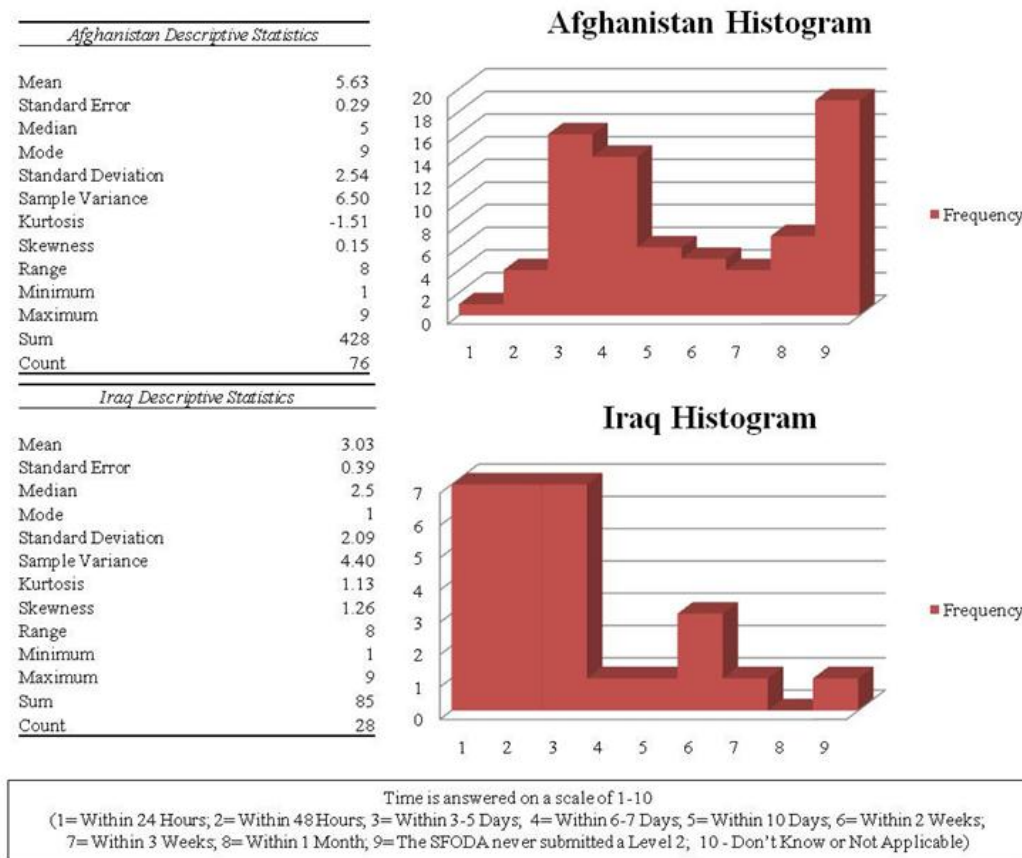


Figure 5. Question 48: Average Time for Approval for High-Risk CONOP.

¹⁷ See Appendix C to see the survey questions

Subjects that deployed to Afghanistan and submitted a high-risk CONOP received approval in less than two weeks; however, high-risk CONOPs that were submitted in Iraq received approval within three to five days. There are clear differences between the two histograms as well. Again, Iraq's histogram has a strong right skew indicating rapid and more predictable approval times. Afghanistan's histogram has a bi-modal shaped histogram demonstrated by the values to the left and to the right. This indicates approval times for high-risk CONOPs were unpredictable and more time consuming compared to Iraq's approval times.

The histograms for the low-risk, the medium-risk, and the high-risk CONOPs clearly indicate a pattern. First, detachments that served in Iraq could expect approval sooner. Given the skew of every histogram for Iraq for figures 3–5, the pattern was clear predictability for approval times. This is not the case for Afghanistan. Detachments that served in Afghanistan probably could not predict when they would receive approval given the skew of each histogram. The skew for Afghanistan varied too widely, proving that predictability of approval times was seriously in question.

There are several possible explanations for this. First, a higher operation tempo (OPTEMPO) can force commanders and staff to approve CONOPs quicker. Although this is speculative, it does give some explanation. On the other hand, information requirements for the Iraq CONOPs were significantly less compared to Afghanistan. This indicates a more rapid staffing procedure and quicker approval times. A final explanation may point to the individual SOTF and CJSOTF commander. Different commanders have different standards for CONOPs, therefore changing procedures, standardization, and information requirements with each deployment. Evidence revealed in figures three through five demonstrates that Afghanistan had a higher standard deviation than Iraq. What this means is a higher standard deviation indicates that the commanders matter more in theater. Conversely, a lower standard deviation indicates that the commanders did not matter as much and remained relatively less involved with the CONOP product and the CONOP procedure. The question is why? This might be explained by the relationship between the commander and the detachments. This theme is clarified further in the concluding chapter of this study.

Now let's compare the differences between the information requirements for Iraq CONOPs and Afghanistan CONOPs. An anonymous Master Sergeant stated in the survey that...

Principles should not be broken but information overload and providing all that information to a CONOP should NOT be the responsibility of the ODA....Team SG T is NOT an admin position but it is becoming one due to the current eye wash requirements.¹⁸

This quote echoes the theme that SFODAs are currently burdened with the enormous amount of information requirements in the CONOP product. Figure 6 shows the average number of slides that were contained in a low-risk CONOP in Afghanistan and Iraq. Note the mean, which is shown in the descriptive statistics.

¹⁸ Subject 105. Anonymous Master Sergeant, Special Forces 18Z, Iraq veteran, question 71.

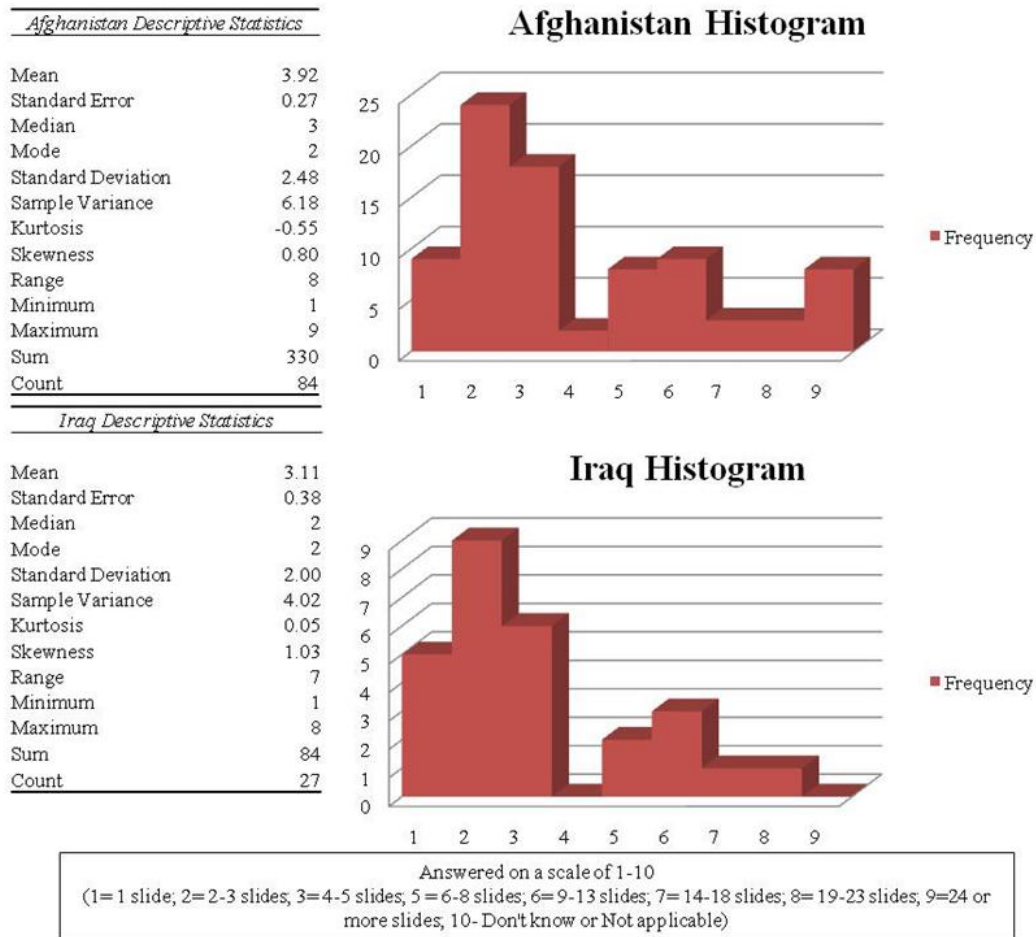


Figure 6. Average Number of Slides in a Low-Risk CONOP.

The average number of slides that were required in Afghanistan for a low-risk CONOP was about five slides. Iraq, on the other hand, had fewer slides with an average of about four slides. The histograms in Figure 6 show both Iraq and Afghanistan with a skew to the right. This demonstrates similar information requirements, although Afghanistan had slightly more information requirements for the low-risk CONOP.

Figure 7 shows the average number of slides that were contained in a medium-risk CONOP in Afghanistan and Iraq.

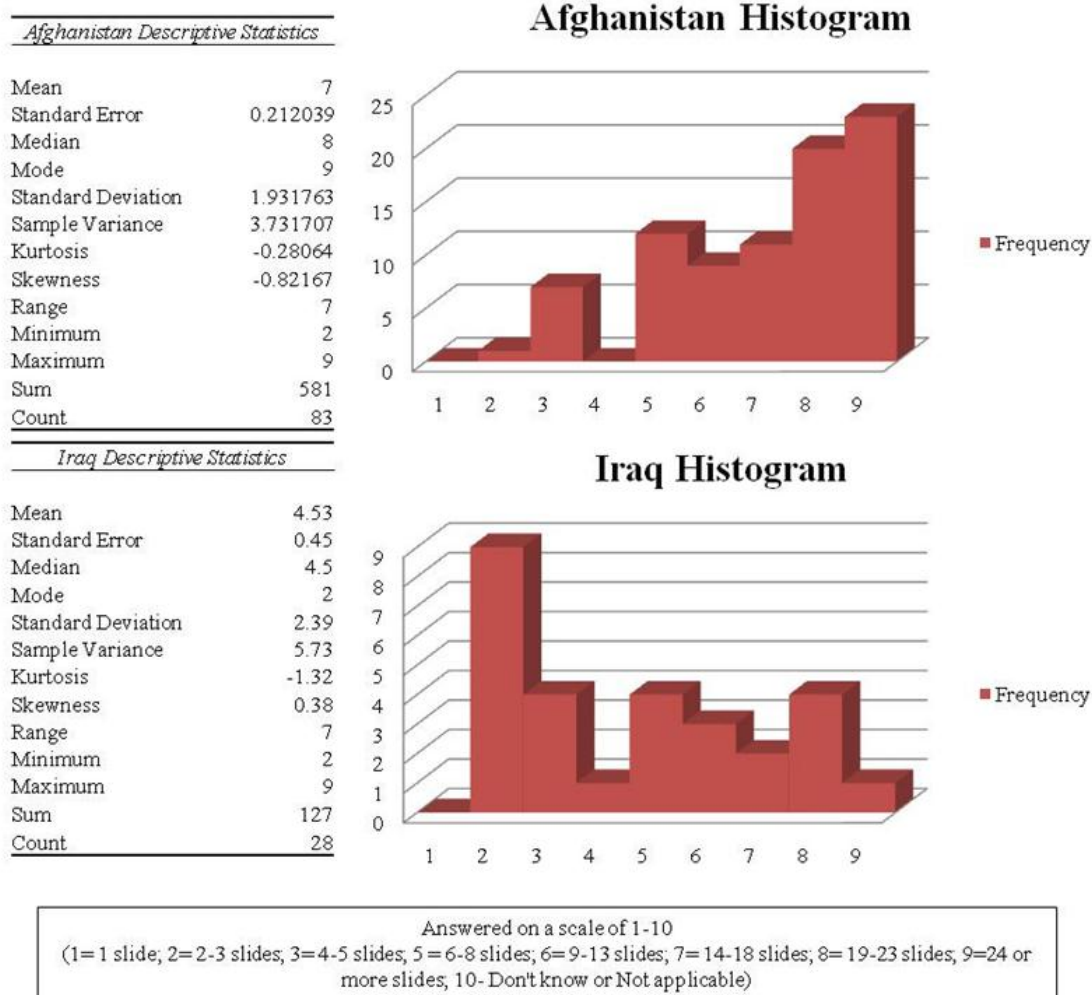


Figure 7. Average Number of Slides in a Medium-Risk CONOP.

Information requirements increase for Iraq and Afghanistan medium-risk CONOPs. Afghanistan's CONOP information requirements, indicated by the average number of slides, are substantially higher than Iraq. The average number of slides for a medium-risk CONOP in Afghanistan was around fourteen slides. Iraq had fewer information requirements with an average of five slides. Skew is another indicator of the amount of information requirements required by the SOTF. Afghanistan's histogram demonstrates skew heavily to the left because most of the values are high numbers. This shows that there was little indication that the information requirements for a medium-risk

CONOP ever dropped below the mean. Iraq, with a skew to the right, evens out as information requirements increase. This indicates that the mean varied from operation to operation and from detachment to detachment.

Figure 8 shows the average number of slides that were required in a high-risk CONOP in Afghanistan and Iraq.

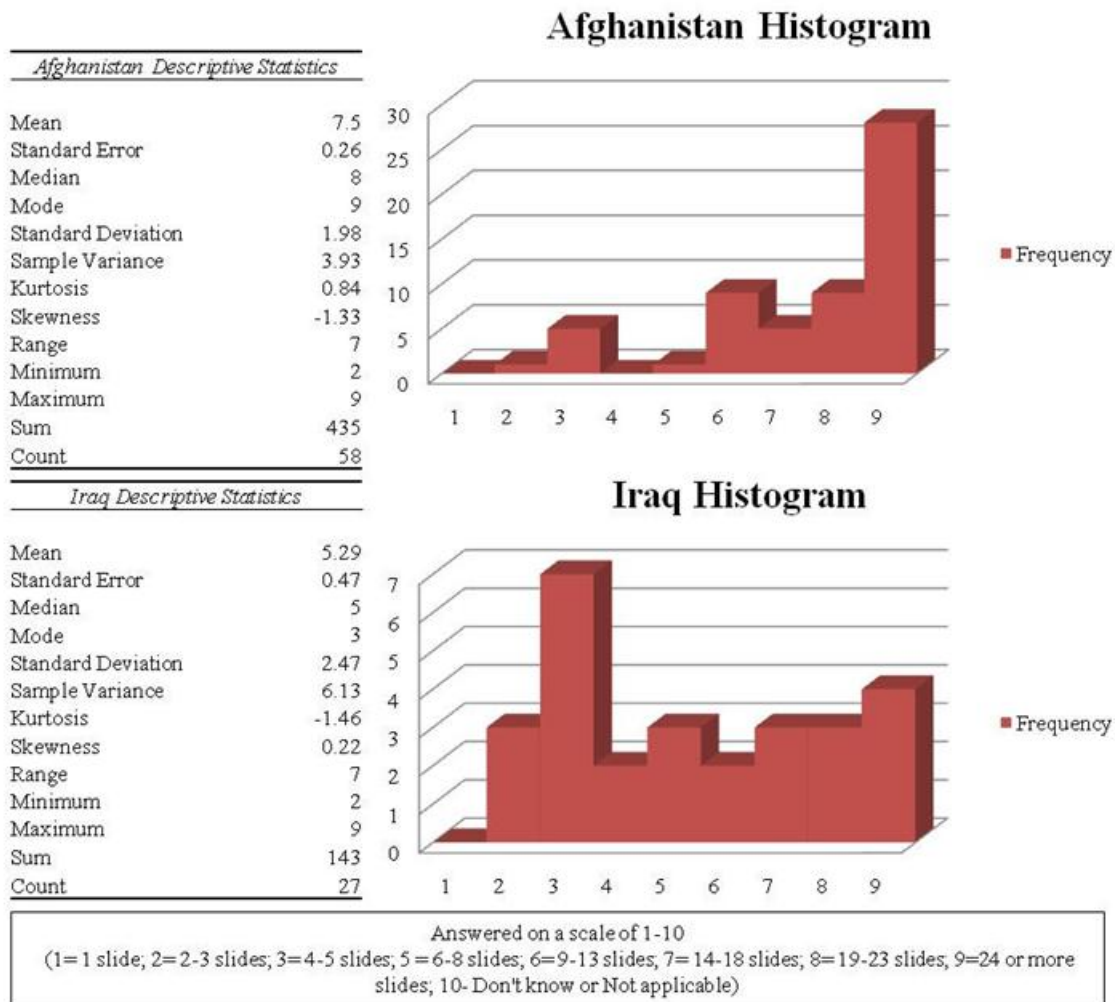


Figure 8. Average Number of Slides in a High-Risk CONOP.

Information requirements increase for Afghanistan and Iraq for the high-risk CONOP; however, there are substantially more slides required in Afghanistan. The average number of slides required in Afghanistan is between fifteen and seventeen slides.

The average number of slides required in Iraq was between five and six slides. The skew demonstrated on Afghanistan's histogram indicates that the information requirements for high-risk CONOPs in Afghanistan remained relatively high and similar to the medium-risk CONOP information requirements. Iraq's histogram shows a right skew which evens out as information requirements increase. This indicates that the information requirements, indicated by the mean, vary once again in Iraq when compared to Afghanistan. Nevertheless, SOTF and CJSOTF commanders in Iraq did not require nearly the amount of information for a high-risk CONOP as SOTF commanders do in Afghanistan.

Simple correlation was used to determine the amount of informational requirements for each level CONOP and the amount of time it takes for approval.¹⁹ Afghanistan demonstrated strong correlation between these variables for low-risk, medium-risk, and high-risk CONOPs. Figure 9 demonstrates the relationships between the variables of information requirements and the time for approval in Afghanistan.

	<i>Q 63 Afghanistan Low Risk</i>	<i>Q 46 Afghanistan Low Risk</i>
Q 63 Afghanistan Low Risk	1	
Q 46 Afghanistan Low Risk	0.9	1
	<i>Q 64 Afghanistan Medium Risk</i>	<i>Q 47 Afghanistan Medium Risk</i>
Q 64 Afghanistan Medium Risk	1	
Q 47 Afghanistan Medium Risk	0.84	1
	<i>Q 65 Afghanistan High Risk</i>	<i>Q 48 Afghanistan High Risk</i>
Q 65 Afghanistan High Risk	1	
Q 48 Afghanistan High Risk	0.75	1

Figure 9. Afghanistan: Correlation between Q63–65 and 46–48.

¹⁹ Correlation coefficient measures the degree of linear association between two variables. Linear correlation coefficient is the quantity between -1 and +1. This quantity is denoted by R. The closer to R +1 the stronger positive (direct) correlation and similarly the closer to R -1 the stronger (negative) inverse correlation exists between the two variables. See Larry D. Schroeder, David L. Sjoquist, and Paula E. Stephan, *Understanding Regression Analysis: An Introductory Guide* (Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications, 1986) 24–25.

Iraq demonstrated similar relationships between these same variables. Figure 10 demonstrates the correlation between information requirements and approval times.

	<i>Q 63 Iraq Low Risk</i>	<i>Q 46 Iraq Low Risk</i>
Q 63 Iraq Low Risk	1	
Q 46 Iraq Low Risk	0.97	1
	<i>Q 64 Iraq Medium Risk</i>	<i>Q 47 Iraq Medium Risk</i>
Q 64 Iraq Medium Risk	1	
Q 47 Iraq Medium Risk	0.83	1
	<i>Q 65 Iraq High Risk</i>	<i>Q 48 Iraq High Risk</i>
Q 65 Iraq High Risk	1	
Q 48 Iraq High Risk	0.91	1

Figure 10. Iraq: Correlation between Q63–65 and Q46–48.

The correlation for Afghanistan and Iraq between information requirements and approval time is strong. Indeed, the relationship demonstrates that the more informational demands we place on our detachments, the more time it takes for approval. As time increases for CONOP approval, operational agility can potentially decrease.

Approval time increases in proportion to the informational requirements for each level CONOP, yet SFODAs and SOTF staffs continue to submit CONOPs with the similar informational requirements and within the similar time windows. With that said, what exactly are the primary factors for CONOP delay? These factors can be found in the informational requirements demanded upon the detachments. They are discussed in the following chapter.

B. DELAYS TO CONOP APPROVAL

1. The CONOP is a briefing tool not a planning tool. 2. The mission commander conducts detailed planning IOT meet the mission requirements not the CONOP requirements. We fail to maintain the initiative because we adjust missions to meet the CONOP process requirements. Commanders cannot react to the enemy, an attack or opportunity target, with a lengthy CONOP format and approval process. The enemy knows this weakness and exploits it. 3. There is no need to brief SOPs or common data in the CONOPs. The type of rifle each soldier is carrying is a waste of time and effort. 4. The CONOP should facilitate

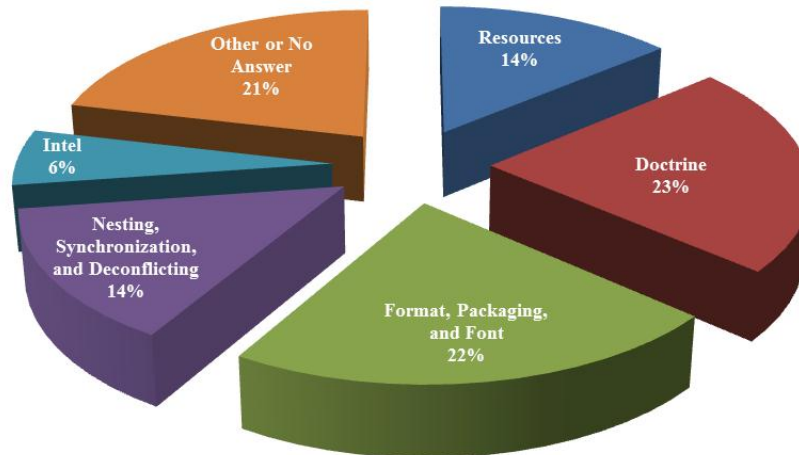
operations and not become an obstacle. 5. Minimum slides is better. 6. Do not standardize a format. Each commander should tailor the CONOP to meet his unique environment and requirements. –CW2, Special Forces Veteran.

It is certain that almost every detachment has submitted a CONOP that did not receive immediate approval. With every CONOP that was returned to the detachment unapproved, man hours increase in order to staff and correct the product so that detachment may execute its mission. Some staff member will correct the deficiencies, whatever they may be, on the spot so that the detachment's timeline for mission execution is not delayed. On the other hand, those who have served on staff and received numerous CONOPs with imperfections can become overwhelmed with the staffing process. These CONOP are normally returned to the detachment through the AOB in order to fix the errors. The mission now runs the risk of "sliding to the right," which can also potentially cause assets to be reallocated to other operations.

1. The Low-Risk CONOP

The low-risk CONOP is primarily a combat reconnaissance patrol outside the fire base. These can be packaged into a power point presentation with a minimal amount of slides. Figure 11 demonstrates the primary factors for low-risk CONOP approval delay. These factors are broken down into a pie chart for quick visual reference. Below the pie chart is the comprehensive list that was given to the subjects for question 49.

Low Risk CONOP Approval Delay



Low Risk CONOP Approval Delay Distribution

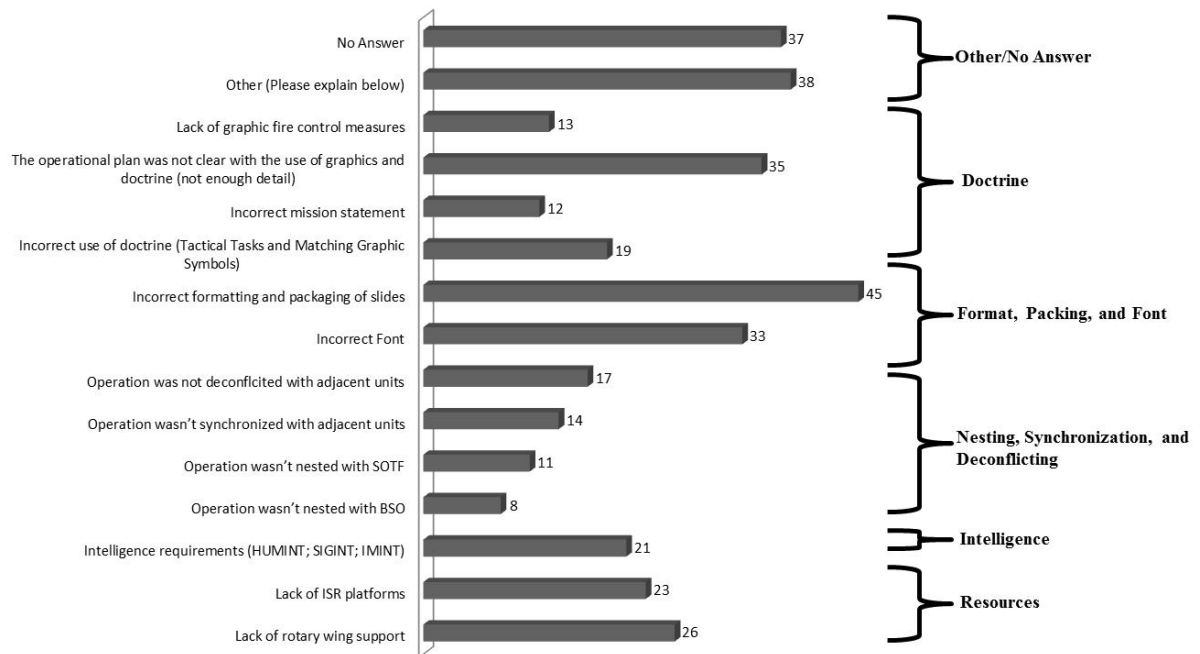


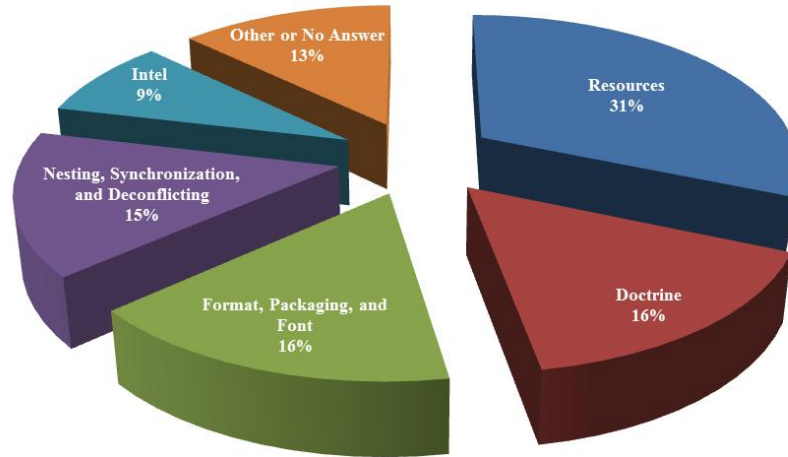
Figure 11. Low-risk CONOP Approval Delay.

Interestingly, formatting/packing of slides and incorrect font make up 22% of low-risk CONOP rejection. This begs for some standardization or simplification of the low-risk CONOP package. Additionally, poor doctrine, which is 23% of CONOP rejection, make majority of the chart of Figure 11. Resources and nesting make up 28% of CONOP delay. Finally, a small percentage stated that their CONOP was rejected because it exceeded the criteria of the low-risk (the detachment was submitting medium-risk or a high-risk CONOP under a low-risk CONOP package) or the staff was inefficient and simply “sat” on the CONOP. These comments were taken from subjects who clicked “other.”

2. The Medium-Risk CONOP

The medium-risk CONOP is considered medium-risk to the force, typically requires rotary wing transport, with some potential for political repercussion. As the information requirements increase with each level of risk, the CONOP package becomes larger. The medium-risk CONOP takes considerable more time to prepare by the detachment and reviewed by the SOTF staff when compared to the low-risk CONOP. Figure 12 represents the primary factors for medium-risk CONOP delay.

Medium Risk CONOP Approval Delay



Medium Risk CONOP Approval Delay Distribution

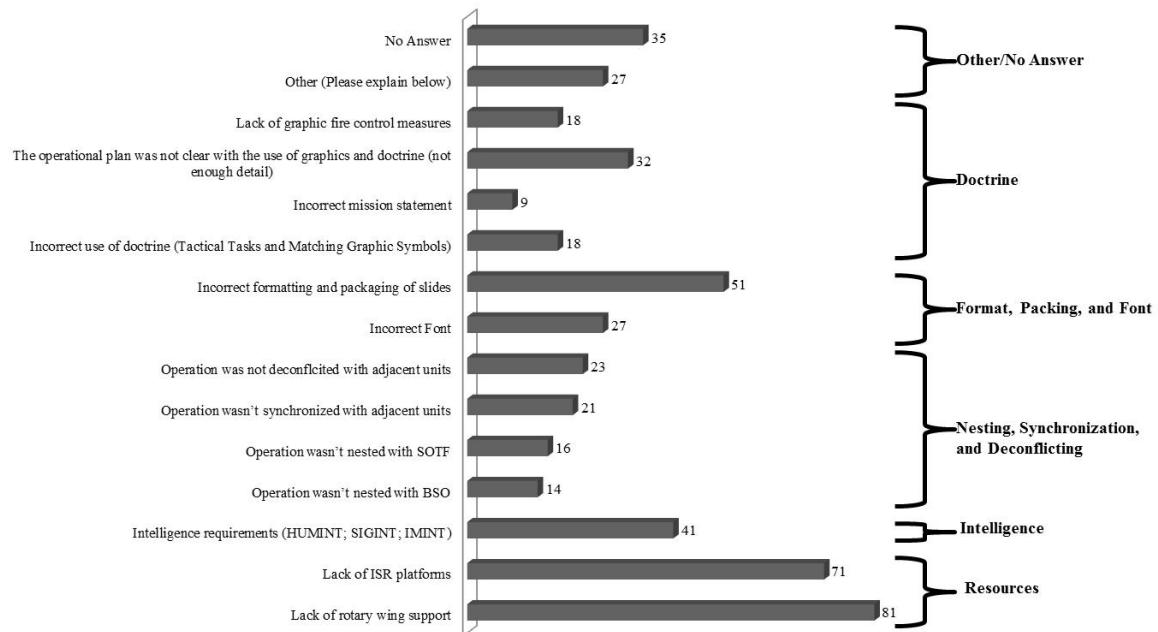


Figure 12. Medium-risk CONOP Approval Delay.

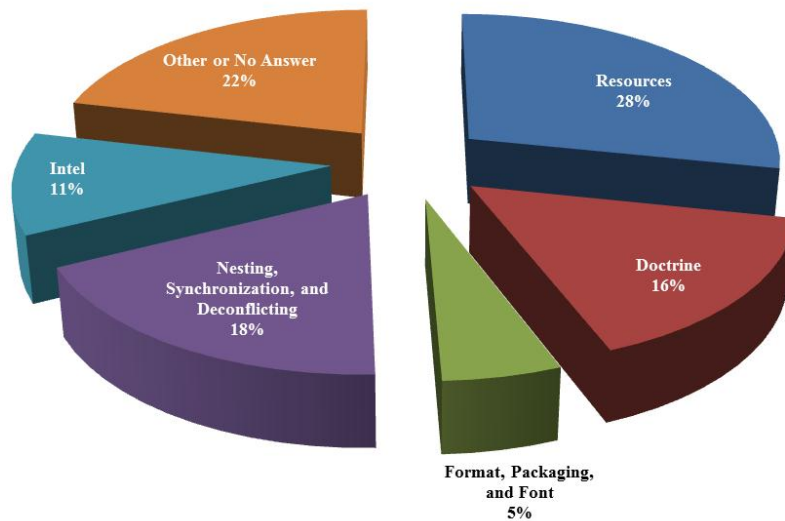
Interestingly, format, packing, and font, which make up 16% of Level 1 CONOP delays, do not become the primary factors of rejection despite that information requirements increase, but they are still significant. Resources become the most significant factor for delays to medium-risk CONOPs. Detachments compete with each other and with other coalition forces across the AO when submitting medium-risk CONOPs, specifically CONOPs that require rotary wing and ISR assets. Resources make up 31% of the delays for medium-risk CONOP approval. The detachment's use of doctrine in the CONOP is also worth mentioning here. Detachments submitting medium-risk CONOPs for approval are delayed 16% of the time due to doctrinal infractions.

3. The High-Risk CONOP

The high-risk CONOP is considered high-risk to the force, usually requires rotary wing transport, with strong potential for political repercussion. These take considerable time to prepare by the detachment and staff at the SOTF. These CONOPs can be submitted to levels of approval beyond the CJSOTF as they can be politically sensitive. These operations, if they are not time sensitive, can be forecasted out for weeks due to the time it takes for approval.

Figure 13 shows the primary factors for delays to the high-risk CONOP approval. Resource allocation is still a primary factor for high-risk CONOP approval delay. High-risk CONOPs were delayed due to resources, specifically rotary wing and ISR, 28% of the time. Nesting and doctrine still make up a significant aspect of CONOP delay. Again, this begs for simplification and standardization of the CONOP product so that detachments can familiarize themselves with appropriate doctrine and formatting prior to deployments.

High Risk CONOP Approval Delay



High Risk CONOP Approval Delay Distribution

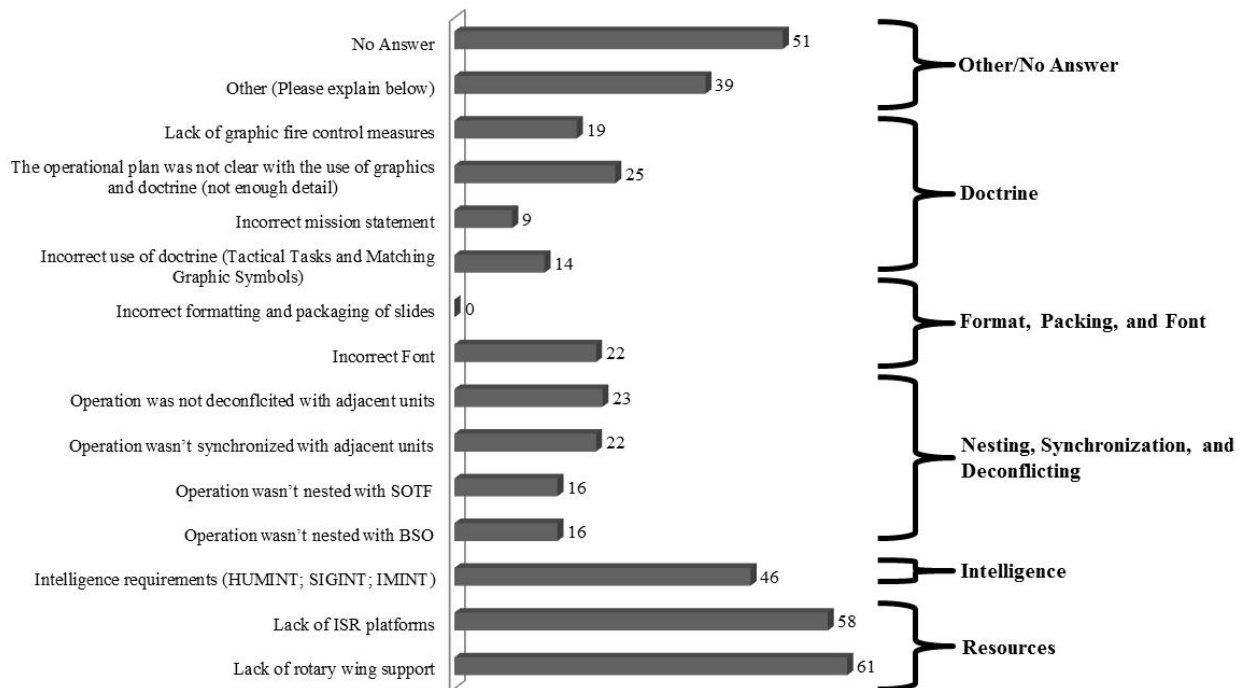


Figure 13. High-risk CONOP Approval Delay.

C. CHANGING THE CONOP DURING DEPLOYMENTS

For each deployment, the detachment can expect the format to change multiple times while in theatre and with each rotation. Figure 14 demonstrates the average number of times subjects reported the CONOP format changing while in theatre.

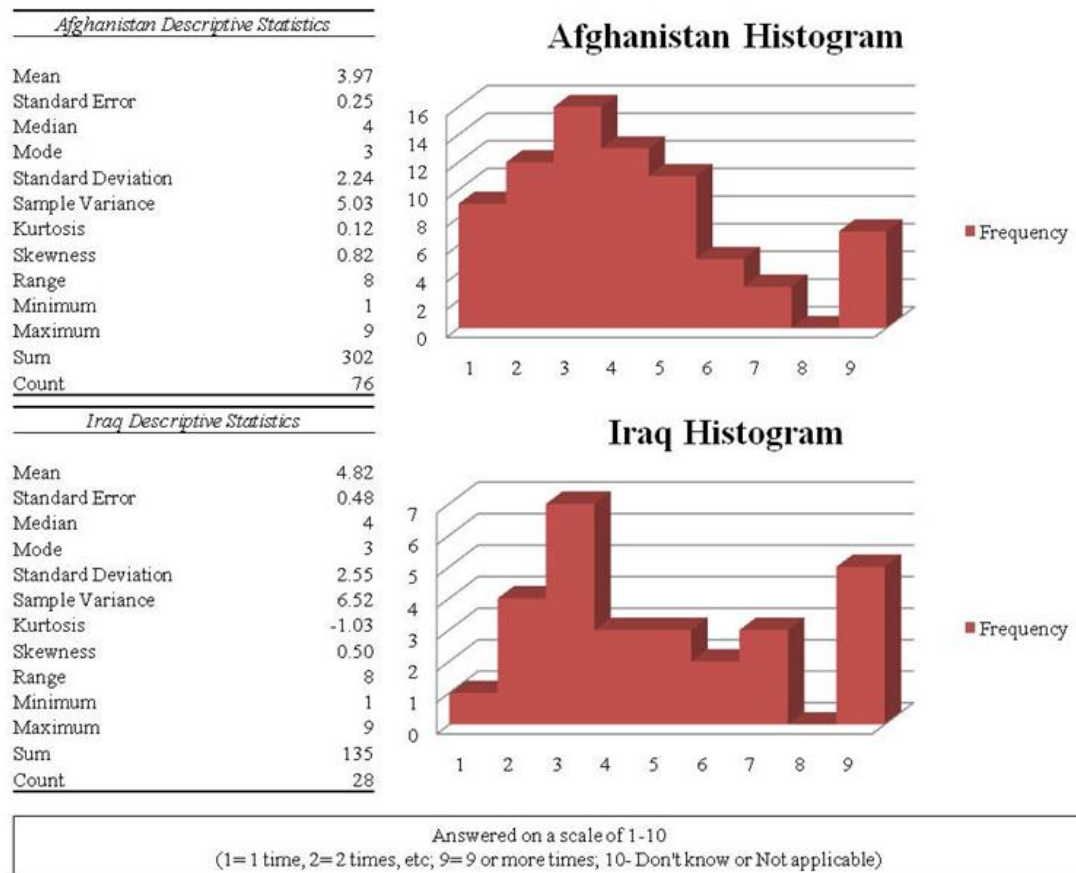


Figure 14. Number of Times the CONOP Format Changed While Deployed.

The mean, or the average, for Afghanistan was 3.9, suggesting that the CONOP format changed nearly four times during a deployment. Iraq's format, with a mean of 4.8, changed nearly five times. When the CONOP configuration changes as often as it does while Special Forces are deployed, delays can be expected for CONOP approval. The skew for Afghanistan and Iraq show an interesting range of the data. Afghanistan is skewed right. Iraq is quite close to a bi-modal distribution. It is worth mentioning, that

some detachments indicated that the format changed more than nine times in Afghanistan and Iraq.

The data in Figure 11 and Figure 12 state that formatting and packing of slides were significant factors to CONOP approval delay. Constant changes to the CONOP format not only delay approval, but make familiarization and teaching the CONOP methodology prior to deployments challenging. Battalions conducting pre-mission training deployments will undoubtedly have their detachment submit CONOPs to the staff as part of the training. Yet, these CONOPs will not be the same product the battalion will see when they deploy. Standardization and simplification of the CONOP will decrease approval time for the detachments and shorten the man hours for the preparation for each CONOP and the staffing process during the CONOP procedure.

D. CONOP APPROVAL AUTHORITY

The purpose of a CONOP is NOT to provide a detailed, tactical plan to operational and strategic leadership...yet this is what we have been using CONOPs to accomplish. When a Three-Star Commander asks “How many men on this ODA have their Ranger tabs?” we have completely lost sight of what we are using this process for. CONOPs should be used to permit these headquarters to assess the operational/strategic impacts (and risks) of these operations and determine whether or not the potential gains offset the potential risks.²⁰

The general trend for CONOP approval according to the survey is that approval authority should drop one level down. Despite support for delegating approval authority to lower levels, most of the subjects caveated with the CONOP submitted to higher for situational awareness.

Indeed, as commanders assume more risk during operations, the higher the level of scrutiny over the CONOP product and the detachments. Prior to any AOB, SOTF, or CJSOTF commander’s approval, the staff at each particular level will dissect the CONOP before it goes in front of the commander for approval. Additionally, high-risk CONOPs will go beyond the CJSOTF level and potentially up to the theatre commander for approval. During the CONOP staffing process, errors will be corrected, resources will be

²⁰ Subject 43. Anonymous Major, Special Forces, 18A, Iraq veteran, question 74.

secured, and deconfliction and synchronization will be verified. Throughout all of the staffing process, time once again becomes the critical factor. In general, the higher the level of approval authority, the longer it takes for a CONOP to receive approval from the commander.

The low-risk CONOP, those low-risk operations, is typically the combat reconnaissance patrols outside the fire base. In order to conduct any patrol, the detachment submits a power point slide of his CONOP at least twenty-four to forty-eight hours prior to his departure time. The detachment must wait to depart until he receives concurrence from his higher HQ. The overwhelming majority of the subjects stated that the detachment commander should have approval authority of low-risk CONOPs. Figure 15 shows the level of support for approval authority for the low-risk, medium-risk and the high-risk CONOP. For the low-risk CONOP, 43% of the subjects support the detachment commander to approve his own patrols while 34% support approval authority under the AOB commander.

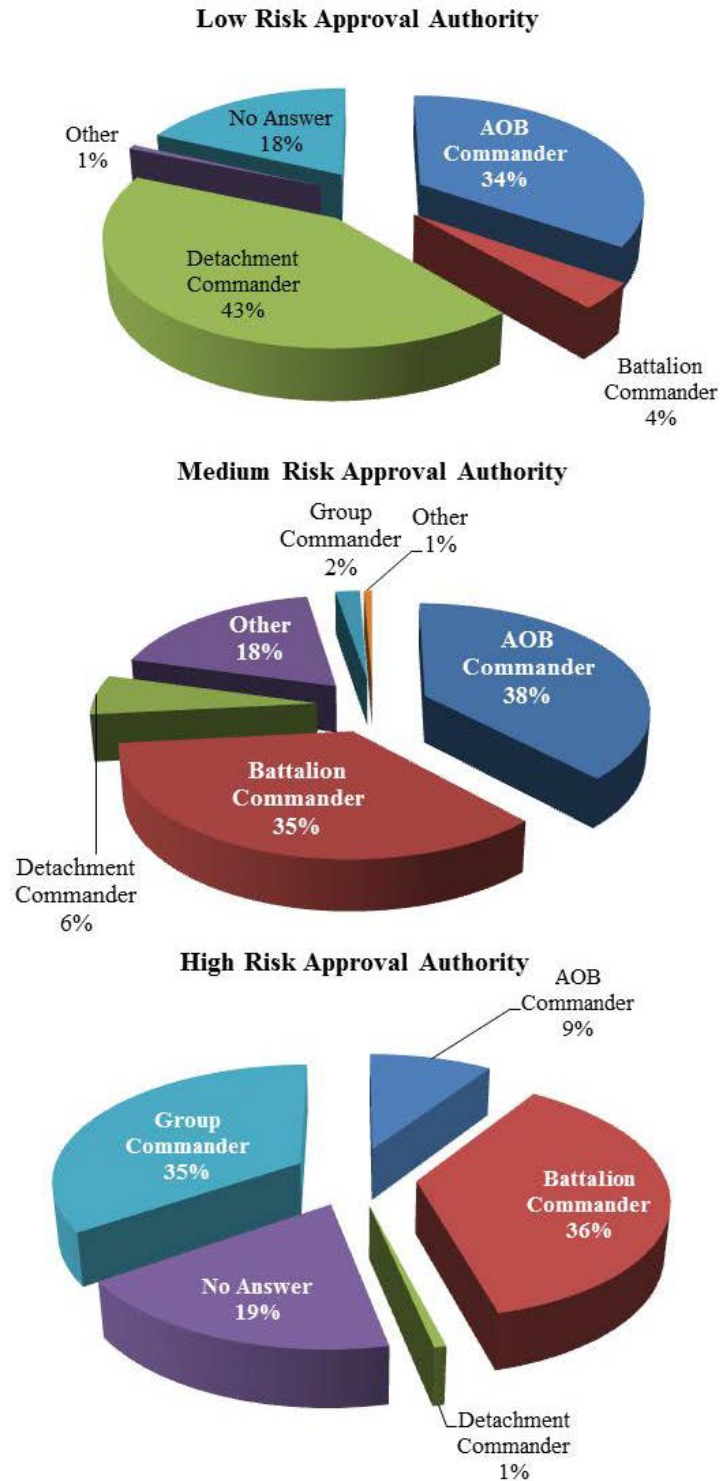


Figure 15. CONOP Approval Authority for the Low-Risk, Medium-Risk, and High-Risk CONOPs.

Summary statistics demonstrated that the approval authority was quite close between the AOB commander and SOTF Commander for approval of the medium-risk CONOP and between the SOTF Commander and CJSOTF Commander for approval of the high-risk CONOP. Nevertheless, approval authority for the medium-risk CONOP increases one level up from the detachment commander with 38% of the subjects in support of the AOB commander. Finally, 36% of the subjects stated the Battalion Commander should have approval authority over the high-risk CONOP.

Delays to CONOP approval occur when informational requirements increase, when formats change during deployments, and when approval authority increases. In order to decrease approval time and increase agility of our detachments, decrease the amount of informational requirements for the CONOP, simplify the CONOP format, and delegate approval authority to lower levels.

E. RESOURCE ALLOCATION AND STAFF OVERSIGHT DURING THE CONOP SEQUENCE

The geography of Afghanistan and the nature of the threat drive the tactics against coalition forces. This relationship has increased the competitiveness between coalition forces for rotary wing support and ISR platforms in order to bypass the terrain advantage and IED threat which favors the enemy. In order to remain competitive for these assets, the SOTF must have effective oversight of SFODA operations prior to the CONOP sequence.

According to the data collected from the survey, the general trend across Special Forces is that SFODAs are not planning for operations more than one week in advance. Figure 16 demonstrates the descriptive statistics and histograms for Afghanistan and Iraq for question 28.²¹

²¹ See Appendix C for the survey questions

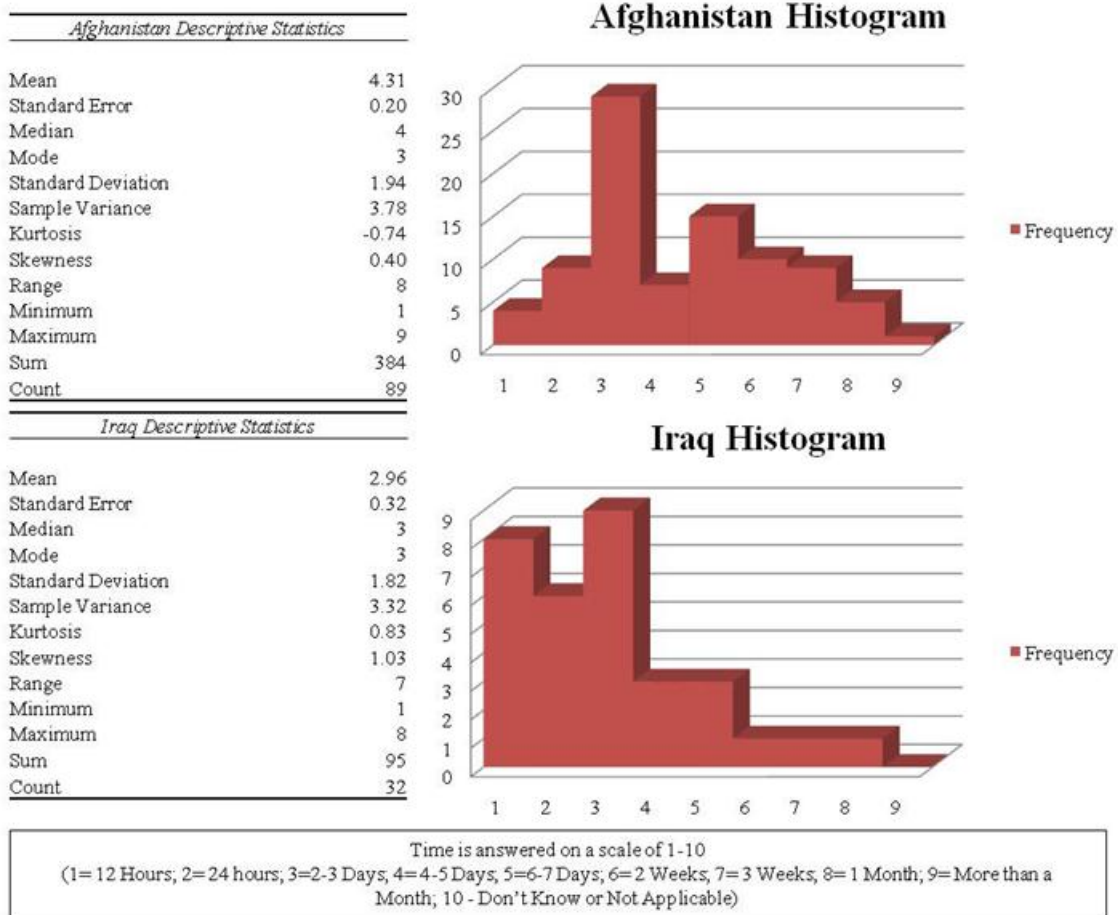


Figure 16. Question 28 SFODA Forecasting and Planning Prior to CONOP Submission.

The mean for Afghanistan states that SFODAs are planning operations at least four to five days prior to CONOP submission. SFODAs in Iraq were planning within a much tighter window of about three days prior to CONOP submission. The skew for Iraq is heavily to the right, indicating that planning windows varied little, possibly due to OPTEMPO. Afghanistan's histogram has a near bell shaped curve. This is indicated by the height of the data, which is mostly in the middle, and tapering off in both directions. This indicates that planning varied widely in Afghanistan, possibly due to a slower OPTEMPO.

The SOTF staff is not forecasting operations very far out either. Despite robust targeting procedures across Special Forces, the data from question 30 indicates that the staff was not requesting operational information or resource requirements from the detachments more than seven days out.

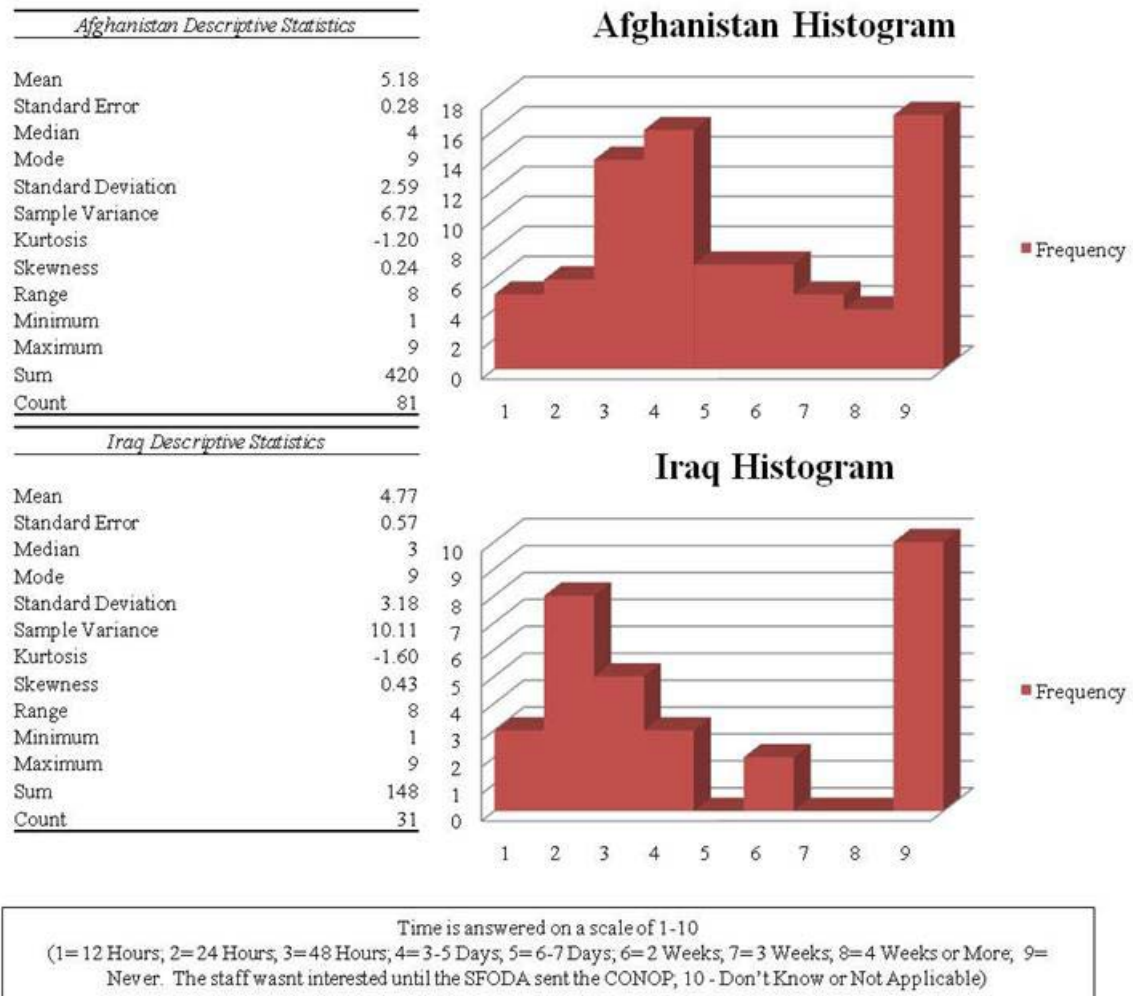


Figure 17. Question 30: Resource and Operational Requirements by the SOTF Staff Prior to CONOP Submission.

Figure 17 shows the mean for Afghanistan as 5.1. This indicates that the staff wanted to know what the detachment was planning, including the required resources at least six to seven days prior to CONOP submission. The time was relatively shorter in

Iraq, with a mean of 4.7, which indicated the staff wanted operational information and resource requirements about five days out. Although the staff and detachments were trying to forecast resources for future operations, the staff could not have had a clear picture of the operation and therefore little justification of resources without the CONOP. The histograms for both Iraq and Afghanistan indicate a bi-modal distribution of the data. This means that some SOTF staffs required resource and operational requirements more than other SOTF staffs.

Given the lack of lengthy forecasting of operations in Special Forces, the staff and the SFODAs cannot effectively compete with other conventional forces for non-organic resources to support operations. Indeed, the staff generally did not initiate coordination for resources until the CONOP was submitted by the detachment to the SOTF.

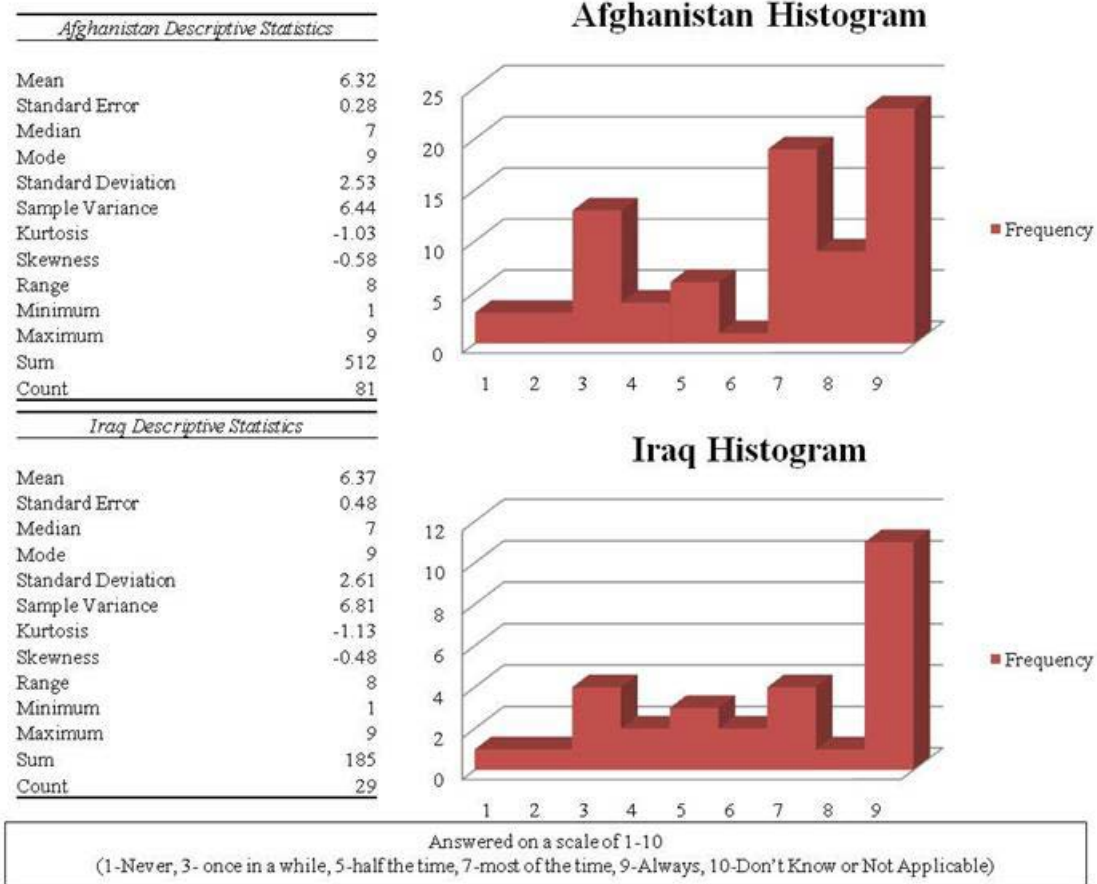


Figure 18. Question 35: Coordinations for Assets Submitted with the CONOP to the Battalion Staff.

Figure 18 shows the mean, or the average, of the subjects that stated coordination for assets was submitted along with the CONOP. According to the data, subjects in Iraq and Afghanistan stated that the coordination for resources was submitted to the SOTF in conjunction with the CONOP more than half the time. The skew is to the left for both Afghanistan and Iraq which indicates the pattern across Special Forces is to coordinate for resources when the CONOP is submitted for approval.

From here, the data was analyzed using correlation between questions 34 and 35. Question 34 asked whether the detachments CONOPs were “pushed to the right” as a result of the scarcity of ISR and rotary wing assets.

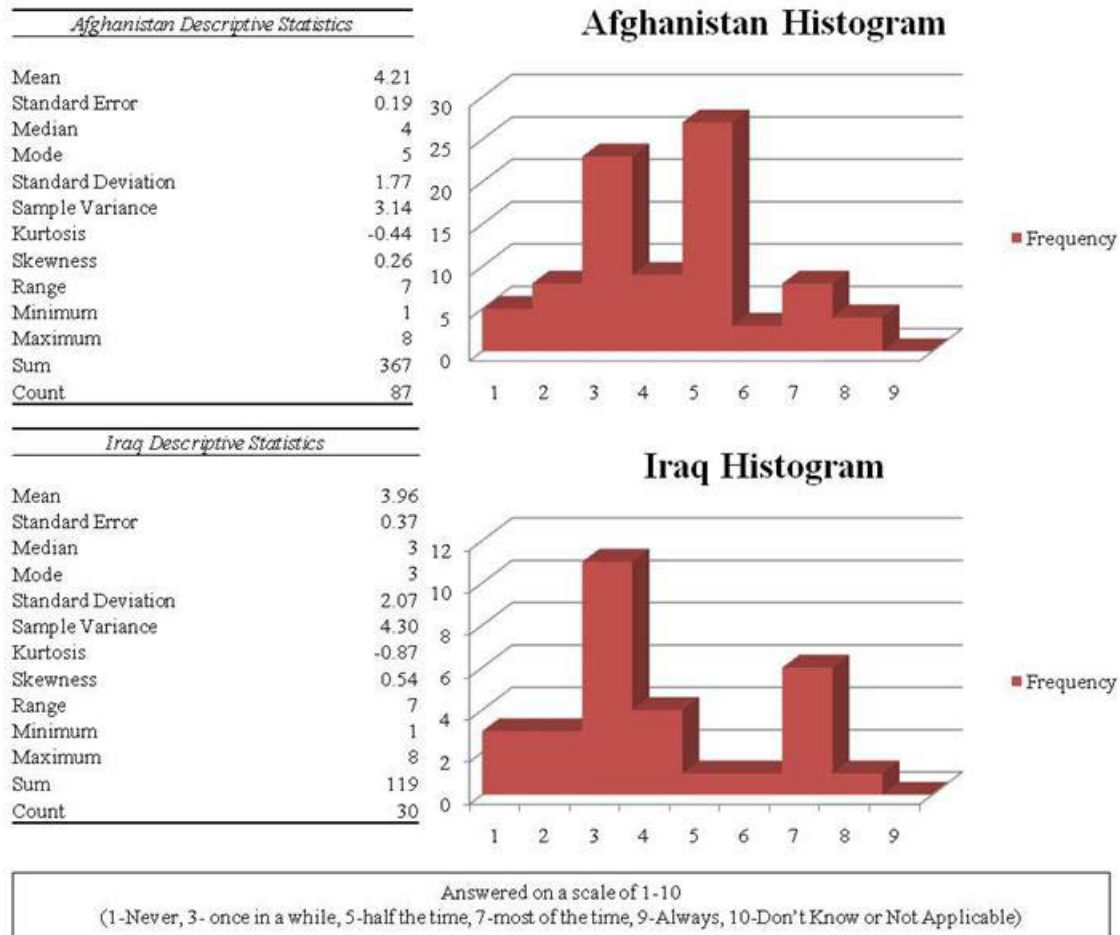


Figure 19. Question 34: CONOPs “Pushed to the Right” Due to Scarcity of Resources.

Figure 19 shows that most of the SFODAs stated that their CONOPs were postponed about half of the time as a result of resource requirements. The skew for Afghanistan has a symmetrical bell-curved shape, which indicates most of the subjects experienced delays to their CONOPs due to resources. Iraq has more of a bi-modal shape due to two main columns on the histogram. This indicates few subjects experienced CONOP delays due to resources or a lot of subjects experienced CONOP delays due to resource. Now that question 34 and 35 are fully understood, correlation was used to analyze the relationships between the variables. Again, question 35 asked subjects if the coordinations for resources were submitted by the SFODA when the CONOP was submitted for approval. To simplify the variables, they are CONOP approval delay and

resource coordinations submitted in conjunction with the CONOP. There was a significant relationship. Figure 20 shows the correlation:

<i>Afghanistan</i>		
	<i>Question 34 text</i>	<i>Question 35 text</i>
Question 34 text	1	
Question 35 text	0.63	1

<i>Iraq</i>		
	<i>Question 34 text</i>	<i>Question 35 text</i>
Question 34 text	1	
Question 35 text	0.84	1

Figure 20. Correlation Between Resource Coordination During the CONOP Procedure and CONOP Delay.

Afghanistan demonstrated a correlation of .63 and Iraq demonstrated a correlation of .84. Both theatres of operations show a significant relationship between the two variables. What this correlation means is that in order to increase competitiveness for resources, the SOTF must increase its oversight during a targeting procedure rather than the CONOP procedure.

Effective staff oversight for resource requirements begins with a targeting methodology rather than the CONOP sequence. Figure 21 demonstrates a timeline for a typical CONOP developed by an SFODA and submitted to the SOTF for approval. The SFODA begins with CONOP development and submits the CONOP to the AOB. Next, the AOB submits the CONOP to the SOTF in order to gain approval for the operation. Once the CONOP is received at the SOTF, it is during this timeframe that the staff has effective management over the required resources for the SFODAs future operation.

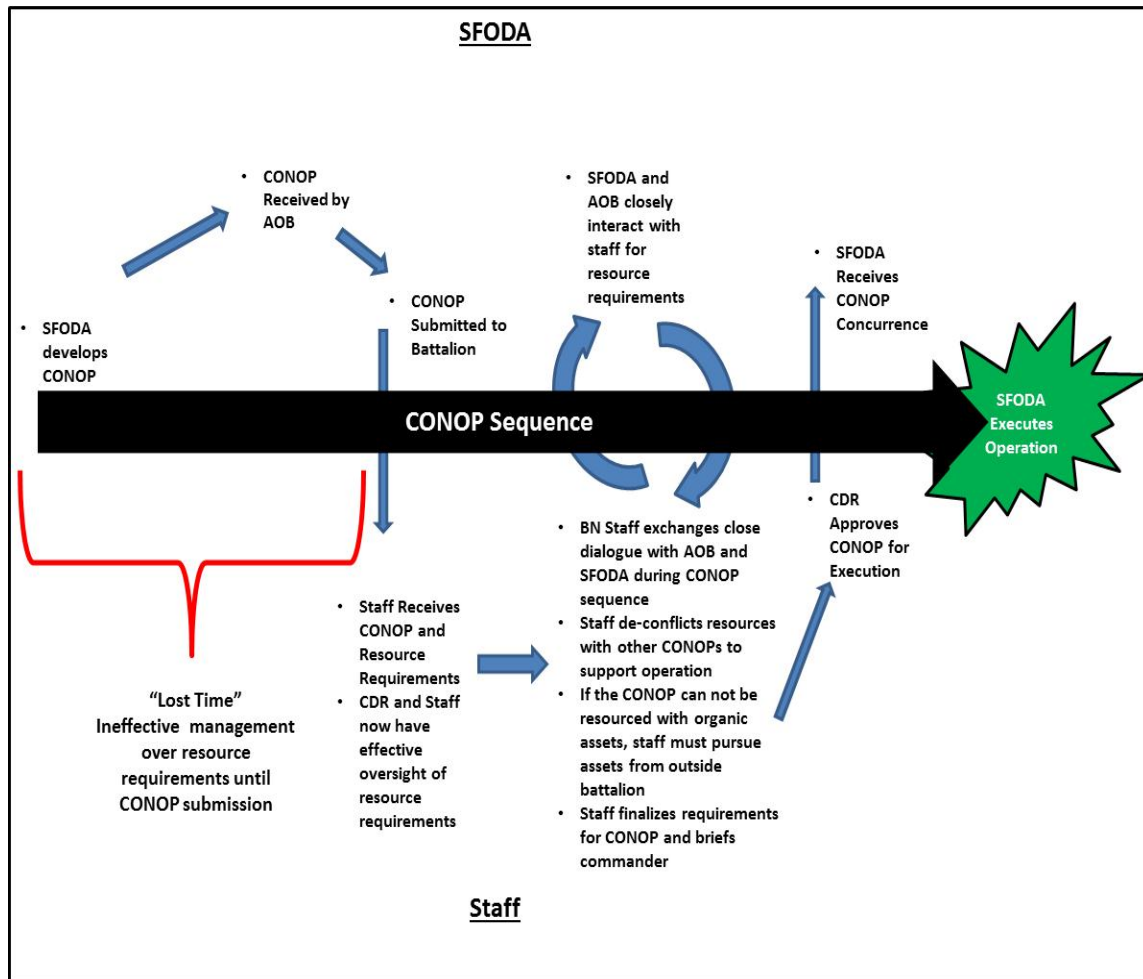


Figure 21. Staff Management of Resources during the CONOP Sequence.

As the SFODA develops the CONOP, the SOTF has little to no direct oversight of the resources required for the operation. If the SFODA submits the requests for assets prior to CONOP submission, the staff has little understanding of operation and will have difficulty obtaining non-organic assets to support the operation. This is "lost time" and is demonstrated in the diagram above with the red brackets.

A targeting methodology by the SOTF staff provides effective management of organic and non-organic resources required to support operations across the SOTF. A simple targeting slide, developed by the SOTF staff and filled out by the SFODA, will accelerate the CONOP sequence and increase the SOTF's competitiveness for non-organic assets across the area of operations. Figure 22 demonstrates the targeting

sequence to drive the CONOP process and make up for the “lost time” as a result of the CONOP methodology.

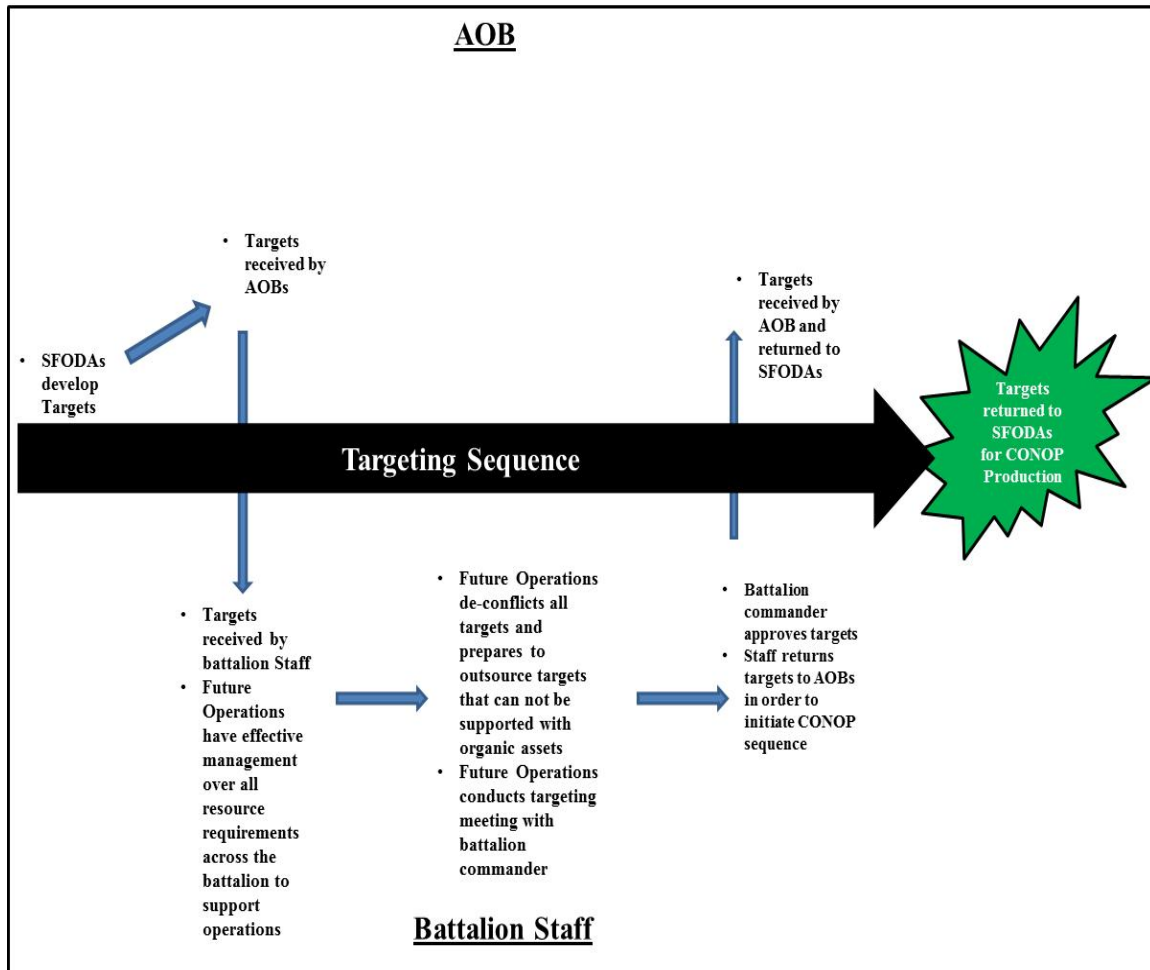


Figure 22. Making up for Lost Time.

The targeting methodology will increase staff oversight for the resources required to support operations. Indeed, the SOTF competes for non-organic assets like any other adjacent unit in the area of operations. In order to increase competitiveness, the SOTF staff requires management and oversight of resource requirements long before the CONOP is ever submitted to the SOTF for approval. To this end, the SOTF requires a targeting methodology that will drive CONOP production. For a more detailed method of the targeting methodology, see Annex B.

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IV. CODIFYING THE CONOP PROCEDURE

*Keep it simple, stupid.*²²

Indeed, the words expressed by this Non-Commissioned officer echo the sentiment of many of our Special Forces operators. Information requirements demanded from the detachments have increased to proportions where agility and momentum can be degraded. Adding to information demands are the constant changes to the CONOP format, which can delay CONOP approval, potentially pushing back the timeline to the detachments operations. The result is a CONOP that flows back and forth between the staff and the detachments until corrections are perfected so it can receive approval from the commander. Additionally, the CONOP can “sit” with the staff or is kicked back to the detachment until another window appears for execution if the delay causes resources to be reallocated.

Strong support exists across the Special Forces community, as much as 57%, for doctrinalization of the CONOP. Figure 23 represents the number of subjects that supported putting the CONOP into doctrine.

²² Subject 32. Anonymous Sergeant First Class, 18F, Afghanistan veteran, question 71.

Putting the CONOP into Doctrine

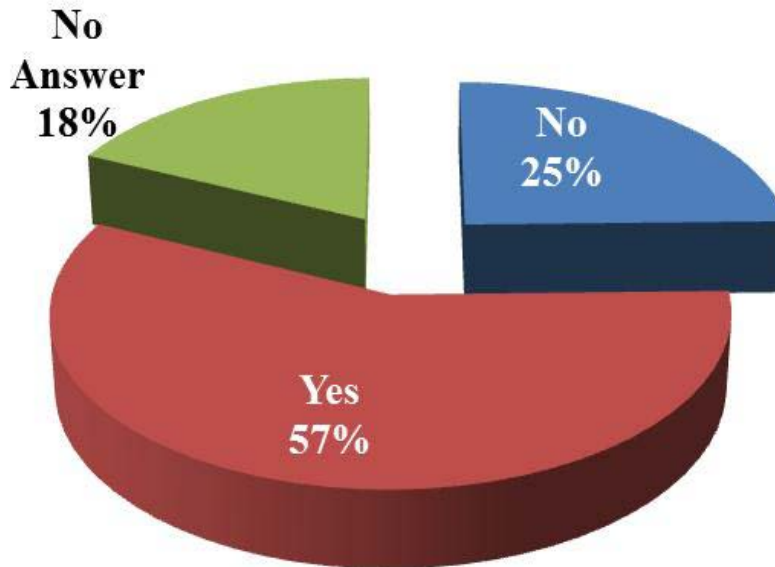


Figure 23. Question 71: Putting the CONOP into Doctrine.

Conversely, 25% of subjects did not support putting the CONOP into doctrine. Several points in the counter argument are worth mentioning here. Some of the subjects stated that different areas of responsibility (AORs) have different commands and different requirements. For example, Karzai's 12 points became a relevant additional slide for the medium-risk and high-risk CONOPs in Afghanistan. The premises are valid, but this counter argument is unsound. CONOPs that contained Karzai's 12 points were never delayed because of this particular slide. The CONOPs were delayed due to their content, doctrine, packaging, and resourcing. All CONOPs will contain doctrine to demonstrate to the commander the effects that will be achieved. The CONOP format is only the method of packaging the presentation, yet if this format is not standardized, as was demonstrated in chapter III, detachments can anticipate delay to CONOP approval. Commands and AORs may have different requirements, but doctrine is the method for standardization and telling the story to the commander exactly how the mission will be accomplished. Standardization of the CONOP format will allow familiarization of its

structure prior to deploying and decrease delays to approval while deployed. The information that a commander requires to make a decision for approval can be standardized and formatted. Karzai's 12 points can be a simple addition to the CONOP package once detachments are deployed into theatre.

Other subjects that oppose doctrinalization of the CONOP stated that the unit should set its own standard operating procedure (SOP) for the CONOP format. This would be good, except for the AOBs and detachments that deploy attached to other SOTFs, who may have a different standard. Again, this would require the detachments to re-familiarize themselves with the new format. Again, as discussed in chapter III, formatting and packing of slides was a significant issue and often resulted in delays to CONOP approval. Support for implementing the CONOP into doctrine is strong in the SF community, but when do we need to implement the CONOP procedure?

Knowing when to implement the CONOP is as important as codifying the CONOP product and procedure. Indeed, it is common knowledge that Special Forces did not have CONOPs in the early days of Afghanistan or Iraq. As coalition forces entered into theatre and competition for resources increased, commanders demanded more information from their detachments to justify operations. Figure 24 demonstrates the primary conditions for implementing the CONOP procedure.

Implementing the CONOP Procedure

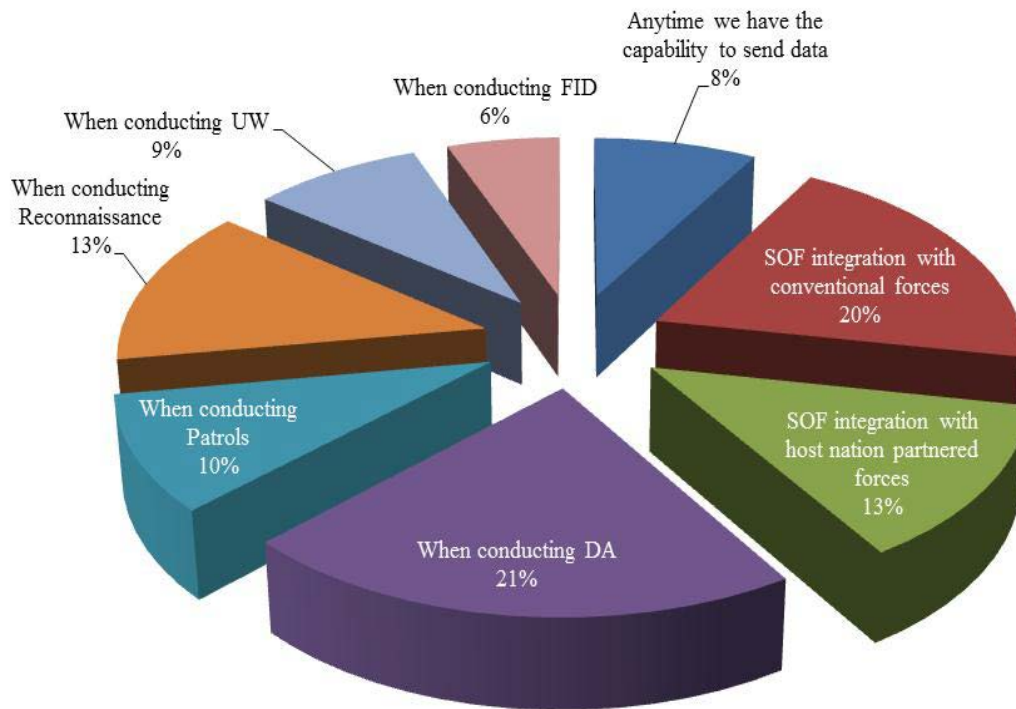


Figure 24. Question 62: Implementing the CONOP Procedure.

Conducting direct action raids and integration with coalition and host nation forces have made over 40% of the conditions for implementing the CONOP procedure. Although the scope of the survey limited the choices to the subjects, many of the subjects indicated with commentary throughout the survey that resources and level of risk were also major factors for implementing the CONOP.

Competition for resources, level of risk, and integration with coalition and host nation forces are the primary factors driving CONOP production. When these conditions are present in theatre, the commander should decide to implement the CONOP. The decision should be made by the commander and will be based on the conditions present in the AO.

V. THE RECOMMENDED CONOP FOR FUTURE OPERATIONS IN SPECIAL FORCES BATTALIONS

*The CONOP process is good but takes too long and requires too much effort in most circumstances. The 5Ws is very quick to get out the wire and focus on more important things other than providing a cute little package to reference. Frequencies and MEDEVAC etc., should be standard across the board for most missions. Level I & II CONOPs is slightly different as the danger level and more complicated missions. But there is a lot of fluff in CONOPs that isn't needed. At least cut the package down slightly. Too much time is spent in front of computers these days.*²³

Standardization is essential for the CONOP in order to maintain familiarity with the product and decrease time for concurrence. This study recommends a standard CONOP which contains relevant information the commander requires to make a decision for approval. The survey asked subjects to choose the relevant components for the CONOP product if it were to be implemented into doctrine. Figure 25 shows the comprehensive list of components for questions 72 and 73 of the survey and the number of times that particular component was chosen by the subjects.

²³ Subject 36. Anonymous Sergeant First Class, Special Forces, 18B, Afghanistan veteran, question 74.

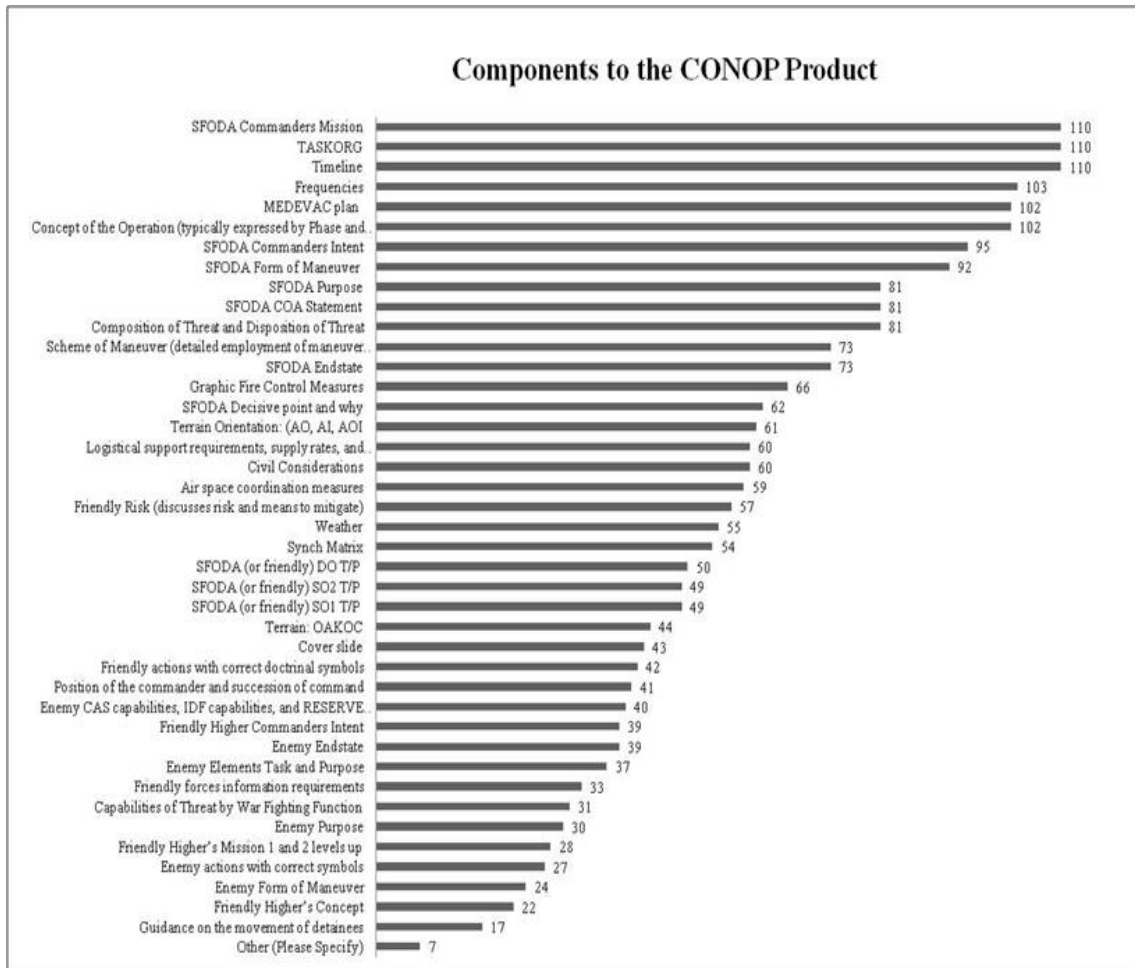


Figure 25. Question 72 and 73: The Minimum Components for the CONOP Product.

A. THE MAJOR COMPONENTS TO THE CONOP

Several components were strongly supported by the subjects. Task organization, MEDEVAC, Timeline, SFODA commander's mission, Concept of the operation (1 slide), and Frequencies all had over one hundred subjects who support including this information into the CONOP structure. These components should be mandatory for all CONOPs in order for the commander to make a decision to concur with the operation.

B. SUBCOMPONENTS TO THE CONOP

Subcomponents to the CONOP were Terrain Orientation (AO/AI), composition and disposition of the threat, SFODA commander intent, SFODA course of action

statement, SFODA purpose and form of maneuver, SFODA decisive point and why, SFODA endstate, SFODA scheme of maneuver (1 slide per phase), and graphic fire control measures (GFCs). Most of these components are quite simple and only enhance the commander's knowledge of the operation.

C. OTHER COMPONENTS TO THE CONOP

Although most of these components could be dropped, not all of them have to be eliminated from the recommended CONOP structure. Civil considerations, for example, did not have strong support to be included in the CONOP structure; however, given its importance it is already doctrinally included in the SFODA commander's endstate. Civil considerations do not require a separate slide. Rather, it is sufficient to keep it in the endstate and discuss it as required under the scheme of maneuver. Other components, such as the SFODA task and purpose and the enemy elements task and purpose did not receive strong support as well; however, these components can be included due to stronger support for the friendly scheme of maneuver and composition and disposition of the threat.

D. THE RECOMMENDED CONOP PRODUCT

Appendix A is the recommended CONOP. The recommendation is a compromise between objectivity from the data taken from this study and subjectivity based on personal knowledge of the CONOP procedure. The format was adopted from the data taken from the survey, a recent high-risk CONOP taken from Afghanistan, and an operations order (OPORD) grade sheet from the Maneuver Captains Career Course (MCCC). The CONOP design is close to the current CONOP in Afghanistan, but with significantly less information requirements, since this operation is still ongoing. This study recommends a cover slide, a concept of the operation slide and a signal slide as mandatory components for the CONOP structure. A scheme of maneuver slide, by phase, is optional for the commander. This slide, if included, will increase the commander's knowledge of the detachment's plan, but will also potentially hinder approval time. MEDEVAC is mandatory and must be included in the scheme of maneuver, by phase of

the operation. If the scheme of maneuver is eliminated, MEDEVAC must be included in the concept of the operations slide.

The recommended CONOP is the maximum amount of information that commander should require in order to understand the operation and a justification for approval. It is not recommended to add any more slides or other information requirements that could burden the detachments and staff. Indeed, the example provided can be simplified if the conditions in the AO or commander require it. In other words, given that this example is the maximum requirement, commanders and staff can eliminate slides in order to simplify their version in their AO.

There were a small percentage of subjects who added components not listed to the choices in the survey. A gridded reference graphic (GRG) is definitely worth mentioning here. This can be a critical component for deconfliction and battle tracking on the objective; however, it should be included as a document generated by the detachment upon CONOP approval, but not necessarily as a document to be included in the CONOP product when submitted for approval. Other comments in the survey advocated for including weather and terrain analysis. These components can be left out since the detachment conducts its own terrain and weather analysis prior to CONOP submission. The battalion does not need to know the effects of weather and terrain or products such as a modified combined obstacle overlay in order to concur with the detachment's operation. The effects of weather and terrain on the detachment's maneuver will be clearly evident in the detachment's description of the concept of the operation or a scheme of maneuver.

VI. THE MODEL

*Same issues with SOTF on the LVL 1 as the two LVL 0 CONOP's. LVL 1 ended up never getting approved due to repeated change to execution dates from lack of support from higher. Air assets continued to get pushed right again and again. CONOP was initially a 5W, SOTF elevated it to a LVL 0 and had the ODA resubmit. Detachment CDR did a face to face with everyone involved at SOTF and brought everyone on the same page. Days later during a VTC the Detachment CDR got thrown under the bus by all those he did a face to face with at SOTF before the SOTF CDR which resulted in it being elevated once again to a LVL 1. CONOP ended up never getting approved because ODA lost the timely opportunity due to the disconnect at SOTF.*²⁴ Sergeant First Class, Special Forces Veteran.

A. DESIGNING THE MODEL

The summary statistics and correlation within this study thus far demonstrated that there are numerous problems with the CONOP product and the CONOP procedure, but what are the major factors that contribute to CONOP delay? That is the focus of this chapter. In order to understand the model that is presented in this chapter, it is equally important to understand how the survey supported and helped formulate the variables that contributed to CONOP delay. The questionnaire used in this study was designed to examine what affects CONOP delay. The questions were categorized into four parts, according to the survey structure.

The survey itself included quantitative and qualitative sections. The quantitative questions of the survey comprised the majority of the study and sought to explore CONOP inputs that affected timely CONOP approval. The qualitative portions of the survey, which allowed subjects to comment on various questions in open blocks, focused on CONOP inputs and allowed subjects to provide additional information that may have been omitted in the survey.

For the purpose of the quantitative portion, descriptive statistics and regression analysis were used to examine the variables hypothesized that contribute to CONOP

²⁴ Subject 100. Anonymous Sergeant First Class, Special Forces, 18E, Afghanistan veteran, question 50.

delay.²⁵ In order to understand how the independent variables, or the inputs, and the dependent variables, the output, were formulated, it is important to understand the structure of the survey itself.

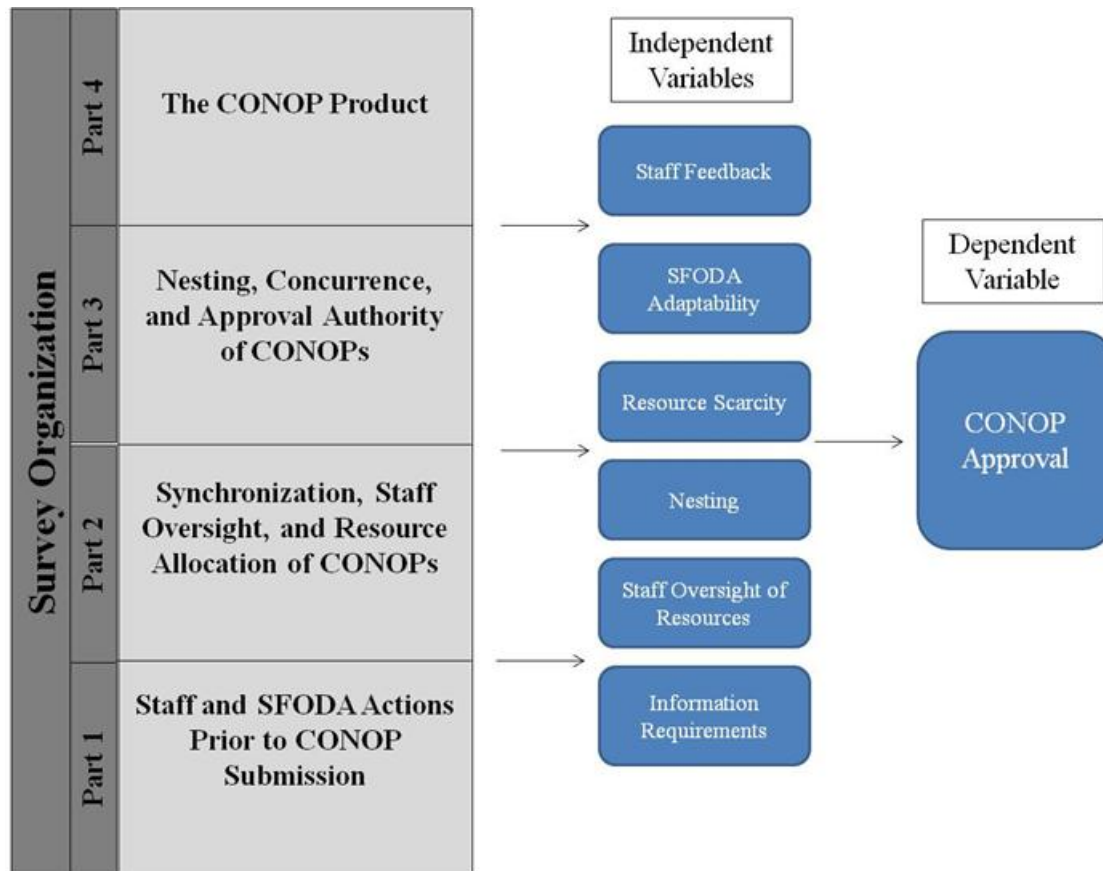


Figure 26. Formulating the Model.

Figure 26 demonstrates how the survey was categorized. The diagram shows the methodology of not only formulating the independent variables, but the dependent variable as a result of these inputs. To sum their relationships, the model hypothesizes that CONOP approval time is dependent on the amount of staff feedback to the SFODAs during the CONOP procedure, the adaptability of the SFODA to the CONOP procedure

²⁵ Given that the direction of the relationship between the dependent variable and the independent variables were unknown, a two-tail hypothesis test was conducted for this model. The data was input to Stata, an integrated statistical analysis software package.

and lack of resources to support the operation, the scarcity of resources, nesting, staff oversight of resources, and the amount of information requirements for the CONOP product. The proportion of CONOP approval delay is hypothesized to be affected by the inputs of these values.²⁶

B. REGRESSION ANALYSIS

Now that the relationships have been discussed, statistical analysis is conducted to examine the CONOP procedure. Stated in simple terms, the hypothesis is that CONOP approval is greatly affected by the following independent variables.

$$\text{CONOP Approval} = \text{Staff Feedback} + \text{Adaptation} + \text{Resource Scarcity} + \text{Nesting} + \text{Staff Oversight of Resources} + \text{Information Requirements}$$

Changes in any of these variables will either increase approval time for CONOPs or delay approval time for CONOPs. Using a multivariate regression model, we examine which variables affect CONOP delay more than others. Nine models are examined in this chapter regarding low-risk, medium-risk, and high-risk CONOPs: Iraq and Afghanistan combined, Afghanistan only, and Iraq only. A close examination of the coefficients and T values of the independent variables in the model above prove that they greatly affect timely CONOP approval.²⁷

As stated above, the independent variables will either increase or decrease approval times for CONOPs. To sum their relationships, staff feedback will increase approval times if the staff is slow to integrate with the SFODAs and AOBs. SFODA adaptation slows CONOP approval times if detachments are reacting to constant formatting changes to the CONOP and resource scarcities to support the operation. Resource scarcity will slow CONOP approval times, forcing the staff and SFODAs to come up with alternative resources to support the operation. Conversely, if resources are

²⁶ This study utilized multiple linear regression analysis. When several factors simultaneously affect one dependent variable multiple regression analysis is the method to use for measuring the effects of these factors concurrently. Schroeder, *Understanding Regression Analysis*, 29.

²⁷ The T value is a useful tool for examining the behavior of a model. A high T-value associated with the parameter estimate tends to indicate that the estimate is well determined in the model; conversely, a low T-value tends to indicate that the estimate is poorly determined. David A. Ratkowsky, *Nonlinear Regression Modeling: A Unified Practical Approach*, (New York, NY: Marcel Dekker, INC, 1983), 33.

available or if the operation does not require specific resources, this variable increases approval times. Nesting will increase CONOP approval because it demonstrates to the commander how the operation supports his intent. Staff oversight of resources will increase approval times, provided that the staff is aggressive with its oversight of resources, specifically rotary wing and ISR, prior to CONOP submission. Finally, information requirements slow CONOP approval times due to the higher volume of informational inputs required by the SFODA to the CONOP product.

1. Afghanistan and Iraq

Each table demonstrates how the independent variables affect approval for the low-risk, medium-risk, and high-risk CONOPs. This study utilized multiple regression analysis to examine the simultaneous effects of the independent variables on CONOP delay. Figure 27 demonstrates the effect of scarcity of assets and information requirements on low-risk CONOP approval.

Afghanistan and Iraq									
Independent Variables	Low Risk Coefficient	Low Risk T Stat	MED Risk Coefficient	MED Risk T Stat	High Risk Coefficient	High Risk T Stat	Number of Observations		R Squared
Staff Feedback	.117	0.69	.291	2.34	.240	1.29	LVL0	49	LVL0 0.266
Adaptability	.105	0.56	.179	1.36	.115	0.58	LVL1	51	LVL1 0.340
Scarcity of Resources	-.227	-1.16	-.161	-1.16	-.045	-0.21	LVL2	40	LVL2 0.175
Nesting	-.113	-0.64	.071	0.58	.007	0.04			
Staff Oversight of Resources	-.124	-0.62	-.261	-2.10	-.209	-1.01			
Information Requirements	.429	2.78	.169	1.85	.117	0.75			

Figure 27. Low-risk, Medium-risk, and High-risk CONOPs: Afghanistan and Iraq.

Of the six independent variables listed above, scarcities of assets and information requirements have the strongest potential to affect low-risk CONOP approval.

The coefficient for scarcity of assets is -.227. What this means is whenever a subject answers question 46 of the survey and the mean moves one unit left or right,

scarcity, an independent variable, changes the value of the dependent variable, CONOP approval, by $-.227$.²⁸ A negative coefficient demonstrates that it shortens CONOP delay. In other words, scarcity of resources speeds up the CONOP procedure for low risk operations. This makes perfect sense for low risk operations since they rarely require any scarce resources, specifically rotary wing and ISR. Conversely, a positive coefficient will adversely affect CONOP approval time, increasing the time for approval. The coefficient for information requirements is $.429$.²⁹ What this means is whenever the mean of question 46 moves from the left to the right one unit, information requirements, an independent variable, moves the dependent variable, CONOP approval, by $.429$. The coefficient is positive, which indicates the information requirements on low-risk operations slow the CONOP procedure and increase the time for approval.

The T values are also worth noting on Figure 27. The T value for scarcity is -1.16 and information requirements are 2.78 . When evaluating the T values, the closer the value is to 0, the stronger is the evidence against the null hypothesis, the effects of the independent variables on the dependent variable. On the other hand, the stronger the evidence is that the T value is different from zero, the more reliable and precise the coefficient.³⁰ Overall, low-risk CONOPs are most significantly delayed by information requirements while scarcity of assets is less statistically precise.

The most significant effects on approval time changes as the CONOP increases to the medium-risk CONOP. Figure 27 shows the relationships of the independent variables to the dependent variable. Notice that staff feedback to the SFODAs and resource requirements have the most impact CONOP approval. Staff feedback, $.291$, has a positive coefficient, which indicates that it has potential to slow down the CONOP procedure. This might be explained by the level of approval authority and the scrutiny placed on the CONOP product as the level of approval authority increases. The staff must be in constant contact with the AOBs and SFODAs during the staffing process as the level of

²⁸ Question 46 asked subjects the average time it takes for approval of a Low-risk CONOP.

²⁹ The regression coefficient is highly informative since it indicates by how much the dependent variable changes as the independent variable changes. Schroeder, *Understanding Regression Analysis*, 29.

³⁰ T stats are stated in absolute value terms. Schroeder, *Understanding Regression Analysis*, 48.

approval authority goes up. The slower the staff feedback is to the detachments, the longer the delay to CONOP approval. Once we go up one level, another interesting change occurs with the medium-risk CONOP. The data indicates that staff oversight of resources matter a lot more during the CONOP procedure. The coefficient for staff oversight, $-.261$, is negative. This indicates that staff with aggressive oversight of non-organic resources will increase approval times versus a staff that does not have oversight of non-organic assets until CONOP submission. Information requirements are significant in the medium-risk CONOP, but not as much as with the low-risk CONOP. Furthermore, given that the T values of each of these independent variables are greater than two, both variables are strong predictors of the medium-risk CONOP.

We see similar relationships in the high-risk CONOP in Figure 27. Again, staff feedback to the SFODAs and staff oversight of non-organic assets, specifically rotary wing and ISR, have significant impact on CONOP approval. It is same story with the high-risk as with the medium-risk; the higher the approval authority, the sooner the SOTF staff needs to exercise oversight over the CONOP. As we increase the level of CONOP risk, we need more staff oversight to decrease the impact of information requirements and scarcity of assets. Now that Afghanistan and Iraq CONOPs have been evaluated together, let us review Afghanistan specifically.

2. Afghanistan

The story changes in Afghanistan with the low-risk CONOP. Figure 28 demonstrates that SFODA adaptability and low-risk CONOP information requirements have the most effect on CONOP approval.

Afghanistan										
Independent Variables	Low Risk Coefficient	Low Risk T Stat	MED Risk Coefficient	MED Risk T Stat	High Risk Coefficient	High Risk T Stat	Number of Observations	R Squared		
Staff Feedback	.146	0.67	.148	0.87	-.062	-0.26	LVL0	33	LVL0	0.332
Adaptability	.340	1.32	.215	1.22	-.063	-0.21	LVL1	33	LVL1	0.408
Scarcity of Resources	-.277	-0.95	-.363	-1.82	-.343	-1.15	LVL2	24	LVL2	0.183
Nesting	-.276	-1.15	.013	0.08	.094	0.32				
Staff Oversight of Resources	.194	0.71	-.171	-1.05	-.357	-1.21				
Information Requirements	.603	2.86	.329	2.00	.150	0.47				

Figure 28. Low-risk, Medium-risk, and High-risk CONOPs: Afghanistan.

SFODA adaptability with the CONOP procedure is simply the detachments ability to achieve approval despite resource requirements and information requirements to the CONOP. The coefficient for adaptability is .340, which indicates the more frequently they are forced to adapt to the battalion's operational needs, the longer the delay. SFODAs that submitted CONOPs in Afghanistan spent more time adapting to CONOP procedures and formatting, which distracted the detachments from their other operational activities. The adaptability coefficient could also mean slower feedback to the SFODAs at the battalion and group levels. As stated in chapter IV, formatting and packing of slides combined with doctrine were major factors contributing to CONOP delay. Informational requirements, with a coefficient of .603, demonstrate it drastically slowed the CONOP approval times. The T values also demonstrate that adaptability and information requirements are the most significant predictors of CONOP delay in the low-risk CONOP.

As the level of risk increases, the independent variables and their effect on the dependent variable change. Scarcities of assets and information requirements have the most effect on CONOP approval with the medium-risk CONOP. These variables are demonstrated in Figure 28. Scarcities of assets, with a coefficient of -.363, indicate that this variable increases approval times, provided that these assets are available. CONOP approval time increases as the level of risk goes higher. The coefficient for information

requirements is .329, indicating it slows down the CONOP procedure. The T values for scarcity and information requirements demonstrate these variables are significant and show that they are strong predictors for CONOP delay.

The story changes a little in Afghanistan with the high-risk CONOP. Figure 28 shows the impact of scarcity of assets and staff oversight of resources on high-risk CONOP approval. The coefficients for these variables are quite strong and they are both negative. Additionally, the T values show that both variables are strong and reliable predictors of CONOP delay. Indeed, staff oversight of resources becomes the major factor with the high-risk CONOP, quite a change from the medium-risk CONOP. Additionally, information requirements do impact the high-risk CONOP as much as the medium-risk, which is shown in Figure 28. This can be explained by the level of scrutiny and management over the high-risk CONOP. The higher the level of approval, the more attention the CONOP receives. Now that Afghanistan has been analyzed, this study will review Iraq specifically and compare the variables to Afghanistan.

3. Iraq

The numbers represented in the next figure for Iraq tell a much different story when compared to Afghanistan. Figure 29 shows how the independent variables nesting and staff oversight of resources impact approval time for the low-risk CONOP.

Iraq									
Independent Variables	Low Risk Coefficient	Low Risk T Stat	MED Risk Coefficient	MED Risk T Stat	High Risk Coefficient	High Risk T Stat	Number of Observations		R Squared
Staff Feedback	-.308	-1.21	.253	1.47	.904	3.16	LVL0	20	LVL0 0.587
Adaptability	-.309	-1.45	.089	0.61	.172	0.66	LVL1	21	LVL1 0.637
Scarcity of Resources	.076	0.37	.181	1.24	.005	0.02	LVL2	21	LVL2 0.544
Nesting	-.406	-2.33	-.072	-0.57	.122	0.57			
Staff Oversight of Resources	-.562	-2.70	-.301	-2.27	-.067	-0.29			
Information Requirements	-.071	-0.34	-.024	-0.23	.204	1.12			

Figure 29. Low-risk, Medium-risk, and High-risk CONOPs: Iraq.

The coefficient for nesting is -.406 which indicates it decreases approval times. In other words, the more frequently the CONOP is nested, the more quickly it was approved. The coefficient for staff oversight is -.562 and also increased approval times for CONOPs in Iraq. Interestingly, adaptability and information requirements were the most significant factors contributing to delay in CONOP approval in Afghanistan (Figure 28). Detachments that served in Afghanistan spent more time revising CONOPs and adapting to CONOP procedures when compared to Iraq. Detachments serving in Iraq that submitted low-risk CONOPs were delayed if their CONOPs were not nested or if the staff failed to have effective oversight of resource requirements to enable the detachments. This can also be explained by the number of slides required in Iraq and Afghanistan, which was demonstrated in Figure 6 (Chapter III), and show why Iraq and Afghanistan have different independent variables. Simply put, Iraq had fewer information requirements on their detachments when compared to Afghanistan.

We see an increase in staff feedback and staff oversight of resources when the level increases to the medium-risk CONOP. Figure 29 demonstrates the impact these independent variables have on CONOP approval. It is interesting to compare Figure 28 with Figure 29 and see the differences in the independent variables between Iraq and Afghanistan. Staff oversight, with a coefficient of -.301, had the most effect on the CONOP procedure, decreasing the time in the approval process for SFODAs serving in

Iraq. Staff feedback has a coefficient of .253 and decreased approval times. This can be explained by the increase in information requirements which required more time for integration between the staff and the SFODAs to gain approval. On the other hand, Afghanistan's approval time increases with the availability of resources, specifically rotary wing and ISR when compared to Iraq. Additionally, information requirements affected the CONOP approval process more in Afghanistan when compared to Iraq.

Moving along to the high-risk CONOP, Figure 29 shows a change in the independent variables. Staff feedback remains the same (as with the medium-risk CONOP), but staff oversight of resources changes to information requirements. Once again, as shown in Figure 29, both coefficients are positive for staff feedback and information requirements, which indicate they slowed down CONOP approval times in Iraq. This change can be explained by the higher level of approval authority in order to justify approval for a high-risk operation and the time to collaborate between the staff, the SFODA, and the AOB. We also see the T values are significant as well, especially for staff feedback, which is 3.16. More than Afghanistan, staff feedback in Iraq had the most profound effect on CONOP approval. This concludes regression analysis for the Afghanistan and Iraq CONOPs. With these variables in mind we can build a model that can predict timely approval or delay for CONOPs. The next section sets the equation for a multiple regression model.

C. DISCUSSION

Regression analysis highlights what affects CONOP delay at different levels between Afghanistan and Iraq. The key findings from this analysis span from the detachment, to the SOTF to the CJSOTF level and beyond. Each variable varies in importance to the CONOP procedure, either delaying or hindering CONOP approval. At the detachment level, the most important factors are adaptability, nesting, and the detachment's inputs to the information requirements of the CONOP. These are variables that the detachment can control. On the other hand, at the SOTF staff level, the important factors are staff feedback, visibility over resource requirements, and information requirements. Again, these are variables that the staff can control as well. The last

independent variable, scarcity of resources, are often driven by competition between detachments within the SOTF and between the SOTF and conventional forces. This is a variable that the SOTF often cannot always control. This depends on the amount of SFODAs serving in theater and the number of organic resources attached to the SOTF, specifically rotary wing and ISR, which can support operations across the AO. Since these resources are major contributors to CONOP delay, there is a strong argument here for an increase in these assets for Special Forces battalions.

Although resources are a major contributor to CONOP delay, this technical factor can be overcome by increasing the staff's oversight of resource requirements during a targeting procedure rather than the CONOP procedure. Nevertheless, whether the SOTF will ever enjoy an increase of rotary wing assets and ISR remains in question, but the CONOP procedure can still be enhanced by improvements to the human contributions to CONOP delay. More systematic feedback by the SOTF staff to the SFODAs and AOBs, decreasing information requirements, and standardizing the CONOP product are excellent steps to decrease delay to approval.

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VII. RECOMMENDATIONS AND FINAL THOUGHTS

This thesis recommends the following changes to the CONOP product and the CONOP procedure currently utilized by SOTFs:

1. Replace the low-risk and medium-risk CONOP with the 5W format (Who, What, When, Where, Why).³¹ Retain the high-risk CONOP for operations that require high-demand resources, have strong potential for political repercussions, and present high risk to the force. Medium-risk CONOPs can be prepared for the SOTF commander if there is especially keen competition for resources. Use the format recommended in this study for the medium-risk and high-risk CONOPs.

2. Assign approval authority for the 5W format to the detachment commander. Medium-risk CONOPs can be approved by the AOB commander, but the SOTF commander should approve medium-risk CONOPs requiring rotary-wing and ISR assets. Assign approval authority of the high-risk CONOPs to the SOTF commander, with the caveat of keeping the CJSOTF commander informed of the operation.

3. Implement a targeting procedure by the SOTF staff to closely track critical high-demand resources, specifically rotary-wing and ISR assets. Utilize the targeting procedure to drive the CONOP process, in order to maximize visibility of critical resources, and increase the SOTF's competitiveness for non-organic assets.

4. Attach more rotary-wing and ISR assets to the SOTFs. There is creditable evidence in this study that Special Forces units require more of these non-organic resources in order to maintain operational agility in combat, which would also further accelerate CONOP approval.

Finally, there is the issue of relationships between commanders and their subordinates. Although the scope of this study did not address the relationships between commanders and their subordinates, trust is a theme in many of the comments left by the

³¹ The 5W is a simple word document that states the Who (the SFODA), What (the mission), When (the time of the operation and specific timeline), Where (the place of the operation), and Why (the purpose) of the operation. The 5W also addresses MEDEVAC and communications frequencies for an SFODA operation.

subjects in this survey. Indeed, the CONOP, in many ways, could be a manifestation of the lack of trust commanders have in their detachments. Many would argue that this is not true and that there is little evidence to support such a claim. Nevertheless, the perception exists that detachment commanders are not trusted as much by their commanders to the full extent when compared to that of their conventional counterpart, the infantry rifle company commander. A quote by a lieutenant colonel states that the CONOP is a product of the lack of trust between commanders and the detachment commanders.

The CONOP was used by some (all?) for control purposes. ODAs used tricks to get out from under that control like submitting a Level 0 when they knew full well they would take fire and at some point go into a Level 2- because they knew their commander wouldn't approve a Level 2 and/or it would take too long. CONOPs and other types of control measures point to a level of distrust in subordinate units. I don't think CONOPs are evil in and of themselves- but they are a product of a lack of trust.³²

Similarly, a sergeant major hints to relationship between commanders and the SFODA. Again, trust is a theme in his statement.

There are many variables to consider in the CONOP product, process, and approval. Principles: 1. The responsibility of the leader to balance the information requirement versus the information desire, this extends and relates to whether the ODA is distracted from mission success because of the increased mission requirements. 2. Trust and confidence in subordinates to do in depth planning as related the mission, operational environment, location, command and control capabilities and political impact.³³

The sergeant major is correct in this statement. Is there not sufficient trust today between subordinate officers and their commanders to conduct effective planning that higher authorities require vast amounts of information in a CONOP? The balance between information requirements and information desire must come from higher. Given the austere locations of our SFODAs and the lack of face-time between the detachments and the commander, the detachment's CONOP product can instill confidence in the

³² Subject 121. Anonymous Lieutenant Colonel, Special Forces, 18A, Afghanistan veteran, question 74.

³³ Subject 138. Anonymous Sergeant Major, Special Forces, 18Z, Iraq veteran, question 74.

commander and therefore increase the chances of mission approval. A detailed CONOP product does project the image of detailed planning by the SFODA. The door swings both ways; however, only higher authorities can eliminate information requirements, not our SFODAs.

A sergeant first-class echoes the same sentiment regarding trust in detachment commanders.

The CONOP process has become a show down in PowerPoint ability. The information needs to be passed to higher, we all understand this. However, higher needs to have developed their subordinate commanders and have TRUST in their decision making abilities. There needs to be a lot less micromanaging of an ODA by BN and GRP level commands. This issue may not be a CONOP related issue and may boil down to SF commanders training and mentoring their own replacements to make decisions that are at or above their levels of operations.³⁴

Again, this quote hints to the relationships between detachment commanders and their AOB and SOTF commanders. Indeed, this sergeant first-class states that the level of scrutiny and micro-management of our detachments, which is manifested into the CONOP product and the level of approval authority, has potentially resulted from the lack of confidence in subordinate commanders. He also states that this lack of confidence may be a direct result of the lack of mentoring, counseling, and leadership from higher authority. The CONOP product projects the image of the detachment and its level of planning to the commander. Does a good CONOP package always equal a good SFODA? Does the CONOP tell the commander enough about that SFODA so that he is comfortable with mission approval? Indeed, the CONOP is a method that detachments can use to project confidence in the commander; however, mentoring and training are the preferred methods mentioned by the sergeant first-class. The result now is a CONOP package with fewer information requirements because the commander *knows* his SFODAs.

Green Berets, whether they are officers, NCOs, or warrant officers, were specially selected because of their maturity, professionalism, intellect, physical capabilities, and

³⁴ Subject 28. Anonymous Sergeant First Class, Special Forces, 18C, Iraq veteran, question 74.

temperament. Indeed, these characteristics are carried proudly within the regiment and make Special Forces among the greatest branches amongst the services. Despite the undertones of the lack of trust between subordinates and commanders, these quiet professionals continue to execute the mission without objection to the current CONOP procedure. Let this study speak for the detachments and let our commanders empower them once again by implementing the recommendations of this study.

APPENDIX A. THE RECOMMENDED CONOP

Classification		Mission Synopsis Task Organization: Assets Required
Operation Name Level 1/2		
Mission Statement: (who, what/task, when, where, and why/purpose) Commander's Intent: Operations purpose Conditions that represent the End state (enemy, civil, and terrain)		
Approval Authority: AOB CDR SOTF CDR CJSOTF CDR BSO Regional CDR	Classification	

		Classification		
Concept of the Operation				
- Map 1:150,000 - Composition/Disposition of Friendly Elements		- Friendly COA Statement - Friendly Purpose - Form of Maneuver/Def Technique - Decisive Point; Why? - Risk - Friendly DO Task and Purpose - Friendly SO1 Task and Purpose - Friendly SO2 Task and Purpose - COA Specific Endstate - Concept of the Operation (by phase) - Synopsis of each phase beginning to end - Key tasks for each phase - Uses map - Addresses MEDEVAC		
		Classification		

Classification	
Scheme of Maneuver <i>(MAY BE AN OPTIONAL SLIDE)</i>	
- Map 1:150,000 - Composition/Disposition of Friendly Elements - Clearly conveys the plan - Displays clear graphic fire control measures - Displays Friendly Task and Purpose - Shows location of HLZs	- Detailed synopsis by each phase of the operation - Incorporates enemy actions during phase as a result of friendly movements - Generally one slide per phase - Employs all available assets and elements consistent with doctrine and does so in a manner that maximizes their capabilities - Employs appropriate movement formations/ techniques throughout the depth of the fight - Accurately accounts for the arrangement of activities in time and space for both friendly and enemy forces - Demonstrates the location of Key leaders - Addresses MEDEVAC by phase
Classification	
Signal	
Classification	

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APPENDIX B. THE RECOMMENDED TARGETING PROCEDURE

A. THE TARGETING METHODOLOGY

According to JP 1-02, a target is defined as an entity or object considered for possible engagement or other action. Most targets that drive operations typically revolve around direct action raids or cordon and search operations and require rotary wing support for infiltration. Additionally, these types of operations require ISR platforms for the SFODAs to increase the situational awareness for the ground force commander, which in return decreases the risk associated with direct action raids. The targets associated with direct action operations are prioritized by the battalion commander's operational priorities and selected by the battalion commander for approval. This is conducted through targeting, which is defined as the process of selecting and prioritizing targets and matching the appropriate response to them, considering operational requirements and capabilities.³⁵

The targeting sequence identifies enemy vulnerabilities or enemy advantages that can be exploited and prosecuted by the SFODAs. It also allows the commander and battalion staff to effectively forecast future operations, which increases time for the staff to synchronize operations with other SFODAs or friendly forces in the battle space and request rotary wing support and ISR platforms in support of the battalion's operations. At the conclusion of the targeting meeting, the targets that are approved are deconflicted and posted to the calendar by the battalion staff. Approved targets meet the battalion commander's operational priorities and objective, are nested under the battalion commander's intent, and provide effects for the battle space owner.

B. THE SOTF COMMANDER'S GUIDANCE AND INTENT

Targeting is designed around the decide, detect, deliver, and assess (D3A) methodology. D3A is a cycle that portrays an analytical and systematic approach to

³⁵ Department of Defense *Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms, Joint Publication (JP) 1-02*. Department of Defense, November 8, 2010, 325.

achieve operational objectives. It is a methodology that emphasizes attacking the enemy at the right time with the correct asset. Figure 30 is a diagram that represents the D3A methodology.

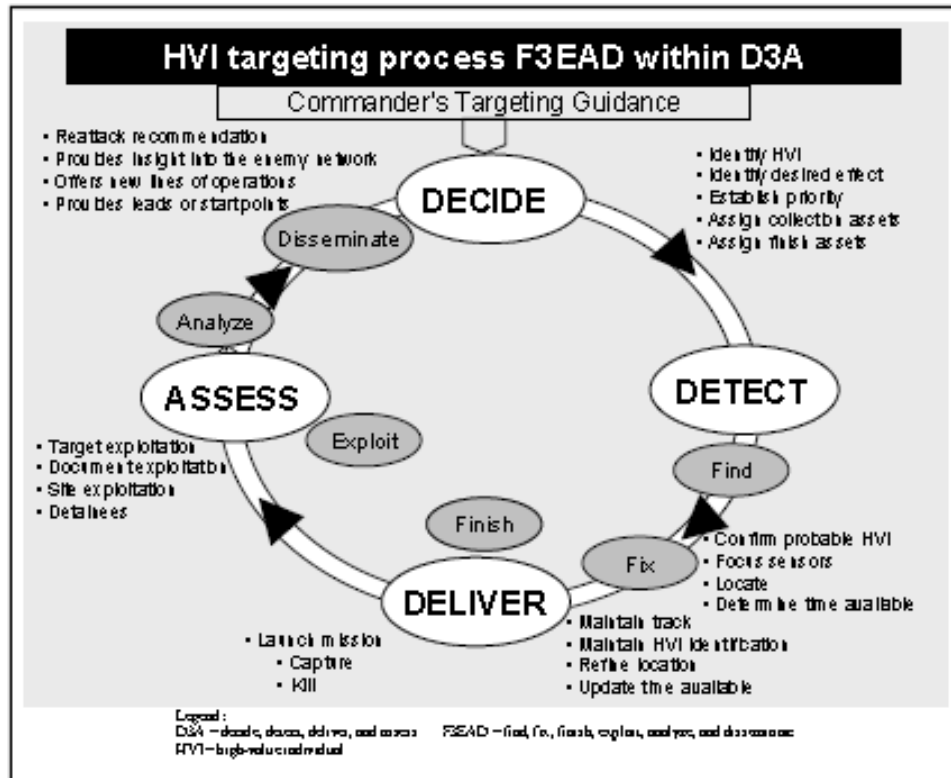


Figure 30. The D3A and the F3EAD Targeting Cycle.

Find, fix, finish, exploit, analyze, and disseminate (F3EAD) is a methodology within D3A that enables commanders to organize resources and array forces across the range of operations. While the targeting aspect of F3EAD is consistent with the D3A methodology, F3EAD provides the maneuver commander an additional tool to address certain targeting challenges, particularly those found in a counterinsurgency environment.³⁶ Figure 30 demonstrates how F3EAD is nested into the D3A targeting cycle.

³⁶ Department of Defense, *The Targeting Process: Field Manual (FM) 3-60*. (Headquarters Department of the Army, November 2010), B-1.

The planning activities of the SFODA, the AOB, and SOTF take place under the decide and detect functions of D3A and the find function of F3EAD. Due to the decentralized structure of the Special Forces battalion, the bulk of planning for actioning particular targets is primarily conducted by the SFODAs with the military decision process. Resource allocation, which is centralized at the SOTF level, is then allocated to the SFODAs and AOBs with the targets that are nested under the battalion commander's operational priorities. Due to the nature of resource allocation primarily distributed during the CONOP procedure, the scope of this targeting chapter is primarily focused on the decide portion of the targeting cycle, which is where resources should be allocated to the SFODAs prior to CONOP submission.

C. DISSEMINATING THE COMMANDER'S OPERATIONAL PRIORITIES

It is primarily up to the staff to keep the operational priorities of the commander constantly up to date and disseminated down the detachments. Operational priorities are best identified by the staff during targeting meetings rather than the CONOP sequence. SFODAs and their operations run the risk of delay if operational priorities are not disseminated accurately and in a timely manner by the SOTF. According to the survey, subjects stated that detachments did always receive approval because the operation was not nested.³⁷ Correlation was used to identify relationships between CONOP delay and whether the staff was disseminating the commander's operational priorities.³⁸ The results demonstrated significant relationship.³⁹ What this correlation means is there is a significant relationship between operational priorities that are not disseminated or understood by the SFODAs and CONOP approval delay.

³⁷ Question 45: The mean for Afghanistan was 2.9 while the mean for Iraq was 2.6. On the likert scale, 3 was considered once in a while.

³⁸ Question 15: The mean for Afghanistan was 5.9 while the mean for Iraq was 6.6. On the likert scale, 5 was half of the time and 7 was most of the time.

³⁹ Correlation coefficient measures the degree of linear association between two variables. Linear correlation coefficient is the quantity between -1 and +1. This quantity is denoted by R. The closer to R +1 the stronger positive (direct) correlation and similarly the closer to R -1 the stronger (negative) inverse correlation exists between the two variables. See Schroeder, Sjoquist, and Stephan, *Understanding Regression Analysis: An Introductory Guide*, 24–25.

<i>Afghanistan</i>		
	<i>Question 15 text</i>	<i>Question 45 text</i>
Question 15 text	1	
Question 45 text	0.772859644	1

<i>Iraq</i>		
	<i>Question 15 text</i>	<i>Question 45 text</i>
Question 15 text	1	
Question 45 text	0.683618966	1

Figure 31. Correlation between CONOP delay and Disseminating the Commander's Operational Priorities to the SFODAs.

When competition for resources is high, the commander will prioritize CONOPs and targets according to his operational priorities. The staff must be constantly updating these priorities and disseminating them to the SFODA. This will not only directs operations for the SFODAs, but prevents delay when CONOPs are submitted for approval.

D. THE TARGETING MEETING

Under the decide function of D3A, the targeting meeting takes place. The future operations (FUOPS) cell is responsible for the conduct of the targeting meeting which organizes the targets in support of the commander's objectives. The targeting meeting is the method for deconflicting targets that overlap on the calendar, assigning the required assets to the targets, demonstrating which targets are nested under the commander's intent, and synchronizing targets with other detachments or adjacent units in the area of operations (AO). Figure 32 is a diagram of a typical agenda for a targeting meeting in Special Forces battalion.

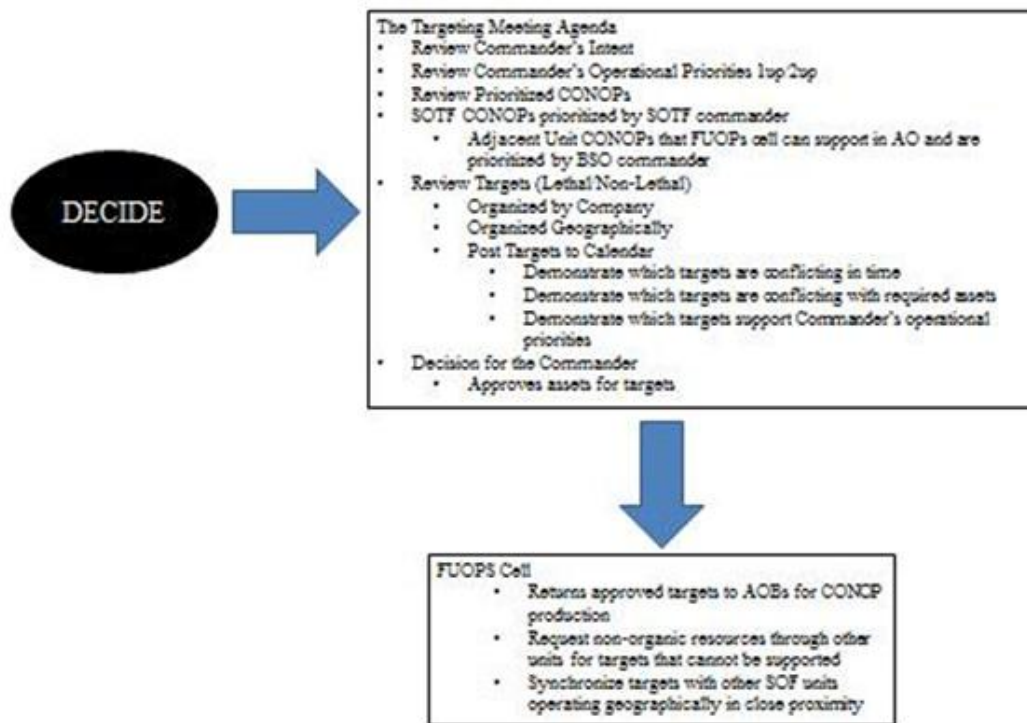


Figure 32. The Targeting Meeting Agenda.

During this meeting the FUOPS cell reviews the battalion commander's intent, operational priorities and the prioritized operational CONOPs that have been approved. Next, the FUOPS cell briefs regional commander (COMRC) and the conventional BSOs operational priorities. The review is essential in order to demonstrate how SFODAs are nested and how the battalion is balancing operations in order to provide effects for the CJSOTF commander and the conventional forces in battle space.

Next, the FUOPS cell reviews all the targets in the deck. Typically, these targets are categorized as lethal and non-lethal and are organized geographically or by AOB. The FUOPS cell then posts targets to a calendar and demonstrates which targets conflict in time and with the battalion's organic assets. The FUOPS cell will prioritize the targets for the commander based on the operational priorities and the commander's intent and make a recommendation to the commander for approval at the conclusion of the targeting meeting. The targets for approval are posted to a calendar for the commander. Figure 33

is an example of a calendar which shows a battalion forecasting operations at least four weeks out for execution. This gives the FUOPs cell time to resource targets that cannot be supported by the battalion's organic assets and meet the commander's intent and support his operational priorities.

Weeks One and Two demonstrate a timeline of targets submitted to a battalion through the targets approval. Weeks three through six, which are empty on the calendar, will already have CONOPs approved for execution from a previous targeting meeting. Weeks seven and eight demonstrate the window for execution this particular targeting meeting.

	SUN	MON	TUES	WED	THUR S	FRI	SAT
WK1				Targets Submitted by SFODAs to Battalion	FUOPs Cell Reviews Targets		
WK2	Cut Off for Target Submission	FUOPs Cell Prep for Targeting Meeting			Targeting Meeting with CDR -Concurrence -Resource allocation	Approved Targets Returned to AOBs/SFOD As for CONOP submission	
WK3							
WK4							
WK5							
WK6							
WK7	Targeting Window for Execution						
WK8							



Figure 33. Targeting Calendar.

The targeting meeting is concluded with the battalion commander approving targets for execution. The FUOPS cell returns the targets to the SFODAs through the AOBs for CONOP production. Not all targets can be supported with organic assets

during the window of execution. The FUOPS cell will request resources through the regional command (RC) for the targets that cannot be executed with the battalion's organic assets. The advantage of forecasting operations out at least four weeks through a targeting meeting is increasing resource allocation for the battalion's SFODAs. Furthermore, the detachments can save time by not initiating CONOP production due to the potential unavailability of non-organic assets.

E. TARGETING MEETING MEMBERSHIP

The targeting meeting is a critical event for the SOTF staff. It not only drives CONOP production, but demonstrates to the commander how combat power is being projected across the AO and how resources are being used to support operations. The targeting meeting is integrated into the battalion commander's battle rhythm. Prior to initiating the battalion targeting meeting, the FUOPS cells will hold a preliminary targeting meeting in order to prioritize the targets according to the commander's intent and operational priorities and allocate resources to the targets. This will alert the FUOPS cell to which targets cannot be supported with the battalion's organic assets.

Special Forces Battalion Targeting Meeting Membership	
Who	Responsibilities
S3	• Chairs the targeting meeting • Directs the FUOPs cell and normally delegates the conduct of the meeting to the Future plans officer • Reviews all targets prior to the targeting meeting with the FUOPs cell and may modify targeting products based on operational priorities, commander's intent, and resource requirements • Assists commander when prioritizing targets for action and CONOP production
AS3 (Plans Officer)	• Manages the targeting meeting • Develops targets in conjunction with the S2 • Determines which targets can be resourced with organic assets • Develops supporting requests for ISR and rotary wing in conjunction with the aviation officer and EW officer for all targets • Demonstrates where targets are located geographically
Aviation officer	• Assists the FUOPs cell with developing rotary wing support requests for targets that are not supportable with the battalions organic assets
Fires support officer	• Assists the FUOPs cell with developing fire support requests and tactical air assets
Civil affairs officer	• Briefs all non-lethal targets during the targeting meeting • Provides input on affects of operations on populace
Psychological operations officer	• Works closely with IO to nominate themes in support of targeting activities • Provides input on affects of operations on populace
Information officer	• Synchronizes information tasks and nominates themes in order to enhance effects of lethal/non-lethal activities

Table 3. Preliminary Targeting Meeting Proposed Membership.

The preliminary targeting meeting does not require the majority of the staff to be present. Its purpose is primarily to prepare for the battalion targeting meeting by briefing the S3. Attendees are listed in Table 3. Attendance to the preliminary meeting is not inclusive and more members of the staff are encouraged to attend if time is permitted. At the conclusion of the preliminary meeting, the FUOPS will adjust the targeting calendar according to the S3 guidance and finalize preparations for the actual targeting meeting with the SOTF commander.

The actual targeting meeting can be held the same day as the preliminary meeting or several days afterward, depending on the SOTF commander's and the SOTF's current battle rhythm. Nevertheless, it is important to hold a preliminary meeting prior to having the actual targeting meeting. The board membership to the targeting meeting is extensive and Table 4 lists the personnel who should formally attend. Again, the list is not all inclusive, but maximum participation is essential.

Special Forces Battalion Targeting Meeting Membership	
Who	Responsibilities
Commander	- Provides commander's intent and operational priorities, and prioritizes CONOPs for the FUOPs cell for resource allocation. - Approves all targets presented by the FUOPs cell at the conclusion of the targeting meeting
Command Sergeant Major	Provides guidance to the commander and FUOPs cell during targeting meeting
Executive Officer	- Alternate Chair for the targeting meeting - Provides oversight for target resource requirements
S3	- Chairs the targeting meeting - Directs the FUOPs cell and normally delegates the conduct of the meeting to the Future plans officer - Reviews all targets prior to the targeting meeting with the FUOPs cell and may modify targeting products based on operational priorities, commander's intent, and resource requirements - Assists commander when prioritizing targets for action and CONOP production
AS3 (CHOPS)	Maintains situational awareness of targets for current operations
AS3 (Plans Officer)	- Manages the targeting meeting - Develops targets in conjunction with the S2 - Determines which targets can be resourced with organic assets - Develops supporting requests for ISR and rotary wing in conjunction with the aviation officer and EW officer for all targets - Demonstrates where targets are located geographically
S2	- Provides intelligence updates for the targeting meeting - Assists the FUOPs cell with collection of information in order to support targets - Develops HVTs
AS2	- Provides intelligence updates for the targeting meeting - Assists the FUOPs cell with collection of information in order to support targets
Aviation officer	Assists the FUOPs cell with developing rotary wing support requests for targets that are not supportable with the battalions organic assets
Fires support officer	Assists the FUOPs cell with developing fire support requests and tactical air assets
Civil affairs officer	- Briefs all non-lethal targets during the targeting meeting - Provides input on affects of operations on populace
Psychological operations officer	- Works closely with IO to nominate themes in support of targeting activities - Provides input on affects of operations on populace
Information officer	Synchronizes information tasks and nominates themes in order to enhance effects of lethal/non-lethal activities
Electronic warfare officer	- Develops support requests for EW aircraft in support of approved targets - Recommends EW methods of employment to enhance targeting
Joint or Interagency representative as required	- Inform their higher head quarters of potential SOTF targets they an support - Nominate targets to the SOTF for joint action

Table 4. The Targeting Meeting Group Membership.

During the targeting meeting, the FUOPS cell will brief both lethal and non-lethal targets to the SOTF commander. At this time, those targets that have resources attached have been placed on a calendar or a synchronization matrix. Resource requests have been initiated to the RC by the FUOPS cell for other targets that cannot be supported by the SOTF. Targets may conflict in time with the SOTF's resources, so the FUOPS cell will recommend to the SOTF commander and the staff which targets should be supported based on the commander's intent and the current operational priorities. The FUOPS cell

briefs which targets are currently being outsourced through the RC. Approved targets are then returned to the SFODAs through the AOBs for CONOP production.

Figure 34 shows an example of a lethal targeting slide. This slide contains all of the relevant information that the FUOPS cell would need to forecast the operation and justify the resources, specifically rotary wing and ISR. This targeting slide does not have to be limited to direction raids involving the capturing of high value targets. Detachments can also implement terrain based effects for the commander, rather than enemy based effects, for Figure 34. Table 5 briefly explains Figure 34.

1. Lethal Targeting Slide

DTG: CLASSIFICATION	
OBJ NAME	GRID
INSERT TARGET PICTURE OR MAP 12 11	
Intelligence:	Objective History: 6 Rotary Wing Support Package: Estimated # Personnel: MH60: UH60: 7
Task and Purpose:	ISR Requirements (Detect): 8 Decisive Operation: Shaping Operation 1: Shaping Operation 2: Additional Partnered Force Requests: 9
Endstate:	Desired Effects: 10 CLASSIFICATION 3

Figure 34. Lethal Targeting Slide.

Number	Description
1	Date Time Group (DTG); This block is a proposed window of execution for the target. The window should be between 3-5 days in length. This allows flexibility for the staff when requesting resources to support the target
2	This block is a color scheme to represent the maturity of the target; Green= ready for action; Amber= requires resources; Red=requires intelligence
3	This is the classification of the target
4	This is the objective name of the target
5	This block is designated for the eight digit grid to the targets location
6	The FUOPS will make every attempt to verify the objective history if it is not known to the detachment. Has this target area been actioned before? If so, by whom?
7	This is filled out by the detachment. This block is a support request nominated by the detachment. This alerts the staff to the support requirements and whether organic rotary wing can support the target.
8	If intel is further required to support the target, the ISR manager will submit requests. If assets are locked in to support the CONOP, this is filled in by the FUOPS cell
9	This block is filled in by the detachment. This tells the staff who the lead planner is and who is actioning this target. It also informs the staff of other forces that may be required to support the operation. The staff will then make the appropriate coordinations as required
10	This block is filled out by the detachment. The desired effects will be weighed against the commander's intent and operational priorities
11	Objective picture or geographical imagery of the target area is inserted in this block
12	Provincial location of the target area is inserted here in order to orient the commander to the area
13	This block is filled out by the detachment. This block demonstrates all of the supportable intelligence for actioning this target
14	This block is filled out by the detachment. This tells the commander and staff exactly what the detachment is doing using correct doctrine. The endstate will be according to terrain, enemy, and civil considerations (friendly optional)

Table 5. Lethal Target Slide Description.

Targeting meetings can demonstrate a balance between lethal and non-lethal effects, depending on the operational environment and the commander's operational priorities. Figure 35 shows an example of a non-lethal targeting slide and Table 6 will

demonstrate its description. Non-lethal targets can be nominated by the detachment, the tactical psychological operations team (TPT), or the civilian affairs teams (CAT). At the SOTF level, organizing and resourcing non-lethal targeting slides should fall under the Civilian Affairs officer who works in the FUOPs cell.

DTG: _____ 1		2		CLASSIFICATION 3																
OBJ NAME 4		GRID 5		CERP Requirements: 6																
10 Insert Photo of Objective Insert Provincial Map 11				Intelligence: 7																
				Task and Purpose: 8																
				Endstate:																
				Desired Effects: 9																
12 <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th></th> <th>NOV</th> <th>DEC</th> <th>JAN</th> <th>FEB</th> <th>MAR</th> <th>APR</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Requirements Identified for Project (COMPLETE)</td> <td>Project submitted (COMPLETE)</td> <td>Project Approved for CERP (AWAITING STATUS)</td> <td>Initiate Movement: -ID Workers -Engineer Assets in Place -CLASS IV in Place</td> <td></td> <td></td> <td>Estimated Date for Project Completion</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>								NOV	DEC	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	Requirements Identified for Project (COMPLETE)	Project submitted (COMPLETE)	Project Approved for CERP (AWAITING STATUS)	Initiate Movement: -ID Workers -Engineer Assets in Place -CLASS IV in Place			Estimated Date for Project Completion
	NOV	DEC	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR														
Requirements Identified for Project (COMPLETE)	Project submitted (COMPLETE)	Project Approved for CERP (AWAITING STATUS)	Initiate Movement: -ID Workers -Engineer Assets in Place -CLASS IV in Place			Estimated Date for Project Completion														
CLASSIFICATION																				

Figure 35. Non-Lethal Targeting Slide.

Number	Description
1	Date Time Group (DTG); This block is a proposed window of execution for the target. The window should be between 3-5 days in length. This allows flexibility for the staff when requesting resources to support the target
2	This block is a color scheme to represent the maturity of the target; Green= ready for action; Amber= requires resources; Red=requires intelligence
3	This is the classification of the target
4	This is the objective name of the target
5	This block is designated for the eight digit grid to the targets location
6	This is a comprehensive list of the resource requirements required to service the non-lethal target. This can include funds, heavy equipment, or human resources.
7	- This block will be filled out by the SFODA, CAT, or TPT. Typically, if the project is relatively large and requires heavy equipment and human resources, a thorough evaluation of the threat in the area is required. - If intel is further required to support the target, the ISR manager will submit requests. If assets are locked in to support the CONOP, this is filled in by the FUOPS cell
8	This block is filled out by the SFODA, CAT, or TPT. This tells the commander and staff exactly what the element is doing using correct doctrine. The endstate will be according to terrain, enemy, and civil considerations (friendly optional)
9	This block is filled out by the SFODA, CAT, or TPT. The desired effects will be weighed against the commander's intent and operational priorities
10	Objective picture or geographical imagery of the target area is inserted in this block
11	Provincial location of the target area is inserted here in order to orient the commander to the area
12	This is the timeline for the project if it requires extensive resources. The SFODA, CAT, or TPT will include the milestones under each month. The timeline will begin with the initiation of the contract and will end when the project is completed.

Table 6. Non-Lethal Targeting Slide Description.

The lethal and non-lethal slides are recommendations for the FUOPS cell when conducting targeting meetings with the SOTF commander. These slides are only recommendations and can vary with each unit; however, it is recommended that each targeting slide contain a window for execution and the resource requirements for servicing the target. When competing for resources, forecasting and justification for using resources are key to obtaining them for the detachments from the RC.

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APPENDIX C. SURVEY QUESTIONS

1. Where were you deployed most recently when you were exposed to the CONOP process?

A. Afghanistan

B. Iraq

C. Other (Please explain below)

2. What is your Rank?

A. CPT

B. MAJ

C. LTC

D. COL

E. SSG

F. SFC

G. MSG

H. SGM

I. CSM

J. CW1

K. CW2

L. CW3

M. CW4

N. Other (Please specify below)

3. What is your MOS?

A. 18A

B. 180A

C. 18B

D. 18C

E. 18D

F. 18E

G. 18F

H. 18Z

4. What is your age?

5. The battalion staff conducted targeting meetings.

Answered on a scale of 1–10 (1-Never, 3- once in a while, 5-half the time, 7-most of the time, 9-Always, 10-Don't Know or Not Applicable)

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

6. The detachment was required to submit targets up to the battalion staff.

Answered on a scale of 1–10 (1-Never, 3- once in a while, 5-half the time, 7-most of the time, 9-Always, 10-Don't Know or Not Applicable)

1

2

3

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7

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9

10

7. Targeting meetings increased the battalion staff's oversight of resource requirements for CONOPs .

Answered on a scale of 1–10 (1-being strongly DISAGREE to 9 being Strongly AGREE; 10 - Don't Know or Not Applicable)

1

2

- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7
- 8
- 9
- 10

8. Targeting meetings increased the staff's capability to obtain non-organic assets not available to me in the battalion.

Answered on a scale of 1–10 (1-being strongly DISAGREE to 9 being Strongly AGREE; 10 - Don't Know or Not Applicable)

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7

8

9

10

9. The Detachment was well informed by the battalion staff of available resources before submitting CONOPs.

Answered on a scale of 1–10 (1-being strongly DISAGREE to 9 being Strongly AGREE; 10 - Don't Know or Not Applicable)

1

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5

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7

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9

10

10. The detachment adapted its targeting to the battalion's changing operational priorities.

Answered on a scale of 1–10 (1-being strongly DISAGREE to 9 being Strongly AGREE; 10 - Don't Know or Not Applicable)

1

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

11. The detachment adapted its targeting to the available resources.

Answered on a scale of 1–10 (1-being strongly DISAGREE to 9 being Strongly AGREE; 10 - Don't Know or Not Applicable)

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

12. Rotary wing platforms were abundant in support of my detachment's operations.

Answered on a scale of 1–10 (1-being strongly DISAGREE to 9 being Strongly AGREE; 10 - Don't Know or Not Applicable)

1

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13. ISR platforms were abundant in support of my detachment's operations.

Answered on a scale of 1–10 (1-being strongly DISAGREE to 9 being Strongly AGREE; 10 - Don't Know or Not Applicable)

1

2

3

4

- 5
- 6
- 7
- 8
- 9
- 10

14. The detachment understood the battalion commander's operational priorities.

Answered on a scale of 1–10 (1-Never, 3- once in a while, 5-half the time, 7-most of the time, 9-Always, 10-Don't Know or Not Applicable)

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

15. The battalion staff disseminated the battalion commander's operational priorities.

Answered on a scale of 1–10 (1-Never, 3- once in a while, 5-half the time, 7-most of the time, 9-Always, 10-Don't Know or Not Applicable)

1

2

3

4

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16. The battalion staff disseminated the operational priorities of the regional commander so that the SFODA may nest the CONOP.

Answered on a scale of 1–10 (1-Never, 3- once in a while, 5-half the time, 7-most of the time, 9-Always, 10-Don't Know or Not Applicable)

1

2

3

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5

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10

17. The battalion staff disseminated the operational priorities of conventional forces so that the SFODA may nest the CONOP.

Answered on a scale of 1–10 (1-Never, 3- once in a while, 5-half the time, 7-most of the time, 9-Always, 10-Don't Know or Not Applicable)

1

2

3

4

5

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7

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18. The detachment was in direct contact with the SF Battalion to coordinate rotary wing assets in order to support the CONOP.

Answered on a scale of 1–10 (1-Never, 3- once in a while, 5-half the time, 7-most of the time, 9-Always, 10-Don't Know or Not Applicable)

1

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3

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5

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7

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19. The detachment coordinated through the AOB for rotary wing assets in order to support the CONOP.

Answered on a scale of 1–10 (1-Never, 3- once in a while, 5-half the time, 7-most of the time, 9-Always, 10-Don't Know or Not Applicable)

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20. The detachment coordinated through the AOB for ISR in order to support the CONOP.

Answered on a scale of 1–10 (1-Never, 3- once in a while, 5-half the time, 7-most of the time, 9-Always, 10-Don't Know or Not Applicable)

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21. The detachment was in direct contact with the SF Battalion to coordinate rotary wing assets in order to support the CONOP.

Answered on a scale of 1–10 (1-Never, 3- once in a while, 5-half the time, 7-most of the time, 9-Always, 10-Don't Know or Not Applicable)

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22. The detachment was in contact with the SF Battalion to coordinate ISR assets in order to develop intelligence for the CONOP.

Answered on a scale of 1–10 (1-Never, 3- once in a while, 5-half the time, 7-most of the time, 9-Always, 10-Don't Know or Not Applicable)

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23. The detachment was in contact with the SF Battalion to coordinate ISR assets in order to support the operation.

Answered on a scale of 1–10 (1-Never, 3- once in a while, 5-half the time, 7-most of the time, 9-Always, 10-Don't Know or Not Applicable)

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24. The battalion staff coordinated for assets required to support the CONOP prior to CONOP submission.

Answered on a scale of 1–10 (1-Never, 3- once in a while, 5-half the time, 7-most of the time, 9-Always, 10-Don't Know or Not Applicable)

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25. The detachment directly coordinated with other units for rotary wing support before going through SF battalion in order to support the CONOP.

Answered on a scale of 1–10 (1-Never, 3- once in a while, 5-half the time, 7-most of the time, 9-Always, 10-Don't Know or Not Applicable)

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26. The battalion staff synchronized the detachment's operation with adjacent units before CONOP submission.

Answered on a scale of 1–10 (1-Never, 3- once in a while, 5-half the time, 7-most of the time, 9-Always, 10-Don't Know or Not Applicable)

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27. The detachment synchronized operations with adjacent units before CONOP submission.

Answered on a scale of 1–10 (1-Never, 3- once in a while, 5-half the time, 7-most of the time, 9-Always, 10-Don't Know or Not Applicable)

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28. Before submitting a CONOP, the detachment was planning within at least..._____ prior to CONOP submission.

Time is answered on a scale of 1–10 (1= 12 Hours; 2= 24 hours; 3=2–3 Days; 4= 4–5 Days; 5=6–7 Days; 6= 2 Weeks; 7= 3 Weeks; 8= 1 Month; 9= More than a Month; 10 - Don't Know or Not Applicable)

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29. After submitting the detachment's targets to battalion, the staff provided accurate feedback to the detachment through the AOBs within... ____.

Time is answered on a scale of 1–10 (1= 12 Hours; 2= 24 hours; 3=2–3 Days; 4= 4–5 Days; 5=6–7 Days; 6= 2 Weeks; 7= 3 Weeks; 8= 1 Month; 9= Never. The SFODA wasn't required to submit targets; 10 - Don't Know or Not Applicable)

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30. Before submitting a CONOP, the battalion staff wanted to know what the detachment was planning, to include the required resources, at least..._____ prior to CONOP submission.

Time is answered on a scale of 1–10 (1= 12 Hours; 2= 24 Hours; 3= 48 Hours; 4= 3–5 Days; 5= 6–7 Days; 6= 2 Weeks; 7= 3 Weeks; 8= 4 Weeks or More; 9= Never. The staff wasn't interested until the SFODA sent the CONOP; 10 - Don't Know or Not Applicable)

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31. In order to compete for rotary wing and ISR, the detachment submitted CONOPs that required rotary wing and ISR for concurrence..._____prior to mission execution.

Time is answered on a scale of 1–10 (1= 12 Hours; 2= 24 Hours; 3= 48 Hours; 4= 3–5 Days; 5= 6–7 Days; 6= 2 Weeks; 7= 3 Weeks; 8= 4 Weeks or More; 9= There was no competition, RW and ISR were abundant; 10= Don't Know or Not applicable)

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- 10

32. The detachment would coordinate through the AOB and battalion staff for rotary wing and ISR at least..._____prior to CONOP submission.

Time is answered on a scale of 1–10 (1= 1 week to 9= 9 or more weeks; 10 - Don't Know or Not Applicable)

- 1
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- 3
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33. Rotary wing and ISR assets were pulled in support of other CONOPs.

Answered on a scale of 1–10 (1-Never, 3- once in a while, 5-half the time, 7-most of the time, 9-Always, 10-Don't Know or Not Applicable)

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34. The detachment's CONOPs were "pushed to the right" as a result of the scarcity of ISR/ Rotary wing assets.

Answered on a scale of 1–10 (1-Never, 3- once in a while, 5-half the time, 7-most of the time, 9-Always, 10-Don't Know or Not Applicable)

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35. Coordinations for assets that the SFODA required for the operation were submitted with the CONOP at the same time to the battalion staff.

Answered on a scale of 1–10 (1-Never, 3- once in a while, 5-half the time, 7-most of the time, 9-Always, 10-Don't Know or Not Applicable)

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36. CONOPs requiring rotary wing support that the detachment submitted were approved for the CONOPs original time of execution.

Answered on a scale of 1–10 (1-Never, 3- once in a while, 5-half the time, 7-most of the time, 9-Always, 10-Don't Know or Not Applicable)

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37. CONOPs requiring ISR that the detachment submitted were approved for the CONOPs original time of execution.

Answered on a scale of 1–10 (1-Never, 3- once in a while, 5-half the time, 7-most of the time, 9-Always, 10-Don't Know or Not Applicable)

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38. The detachment adapted CONOP planning to the battalion's changes in operational priorities.

Answered on a scale of 1–10 (1-Never, 3- once in a while, 5-half the time, 7-most of the time, 9-Always, 10-Don't Know or Not Applicable)

- 1
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39. The detachment adapted CONOP planning to the battalion's changes in available resources.

Answered on a scale of 1–10 (1-Never, 3- once in a while, 5-half the time, 7-most of the time, 9-Always, 10-Don't Know or Not Applicable)

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40. The battalion commander decided which operations were resourced with organic assets when the CONOP was briefed for concurrence.

Answered on a scale of 1–10 (1-Never, 3- once in a while, 5-half the time, 7-most of the time, 9-Always, 10-Don't Know or Not Applicable)

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41. The battalion staff coordinated for non-organic assets in support of the detachment's operation after the CONOP was briefed to the commander for concurrence.

Answered on a scale of 1–10 (1-Never, 3- once in a while, 5-half the time, 7-most of the time, 9-Always, 10-Don't Know or Not Applicable)

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42. The battalion staff synchronized the operation with adjacent units after CONOP submission.

Answered on a scale of 1–10 (1-Never, 3- once in a while, 5-half the time, 7-most of the time, 9-Always, 10-Don't Know or Not Applicable)

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43. The detachment synchronized operations with adjacent units after CONOP submission.

Answered on a scale of 1–10 (1-Never, 3- once in a while, 5-half the time, 7-most of the time, 9-Always, 10-Don't Know or Not Applicable)

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- 10

44. The Commander and battalion staff prioritized CONOPs for concurrence in support of operational priorities.

Answered on a scale of 1–10 (1-Never, 3- once in a while, 5-half the time, 7-most of the time, 9-Always, 10-Don't Know or Not Applicable)

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45. The detachment did not receive concurrence for the CONOP because the CONOP was not “nested.”

Answered on a scale of 1–10 (1-Never, 3- once in a while, 5-half the time, 7-most of the time, 9-Always, 10-Don’t Know or Not Applicable)

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46. Concurrence for an SFODAs Level 0 CONOP typically took...

(Level 0 CONOP is defined as an operation with Low-risk to the force with little potential for political repercussion)

Time is answered on a scale of 1–10 (1= Within the Hour; 2= Within 3 Hours; 3= Within 6 Hours; 4= Within 8 Hours; 5= Within 12 Hours; 6= Within 24 Hours; 7= Within 48 Hours; 8= 48 Hours or More; 9= The SFODA never submitted a Level 0; 10 - Don’t Know or Not Applicable)

1

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47. Concurrence for an SFODAs Level 1 CONOP typically took...

(Level 1 CONOP is defined as an operation with Medium-risk to the force;
Requires Rotary Wing Support; Some potential for political repercussion)

Time is answered on a scale of 1–10 (1= Within 24 Hours; 2= Within 48 Hours;
3= Within 3–5 Days; 4= Within 6–7 Days; 5= Within 10 Days; 6= Within 2 Weeks; 7=
Within 3 Weeks; 8= Within 1 Month; 9= The SFODA never submitted a Level 1;10 -
Don't Know or Not Applicable)

- 1
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48. Concurrence for an SFODAs Level 2 CONOP typically took...

(Level 2 CONOP is defined as an operation with High-risk to the force; Requires Rotary Wing Support; Strong potential for political repercussion)

Time is answered on a scale of 1–10 (1= Within 24 Hours; 2= Within 48 Hours; 3= Within 3–5 Days; 4= Within 6–7 Days; 5= Within 10 Days; 6= Within 2 Weeks; 7= Within 3 Weeks; 8= Within 1 Month; 9= The SFODA never submitted a Level 2; 10 - Don't Know or Not Applicable)

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49. Concurrence took longer for the detachments Level 0 CONOP because (click all that apply)

- A. Lack of rotary wing support
- B. Lack of ISR platforms
- C. Intelligence requirements (HUMINT; SIGINT; IMINT)
- D. Operation wasn't nested with BSO
- E. Operation wasn't nested with SOTF
- F. Operation wasn't synchronized with adjacent units
- G. Incorrect Font
- H. Incorrect use of doctrine (tactical tasks and graphic symbols that match)
- I. Incorrect mission statement (5W)
- J. The operational plan was not clear with the use of graphics and doctrine (not enough detail)
- K. Lack of graphic fire control measures
- L. Incorrect formatting and packaging of slides
- M. Operation was not deconflicted with adjacent units
- N. Other (Please explain below)

50. Concurrence took longer for the detachments Level 1 CONOP because (click all that apply)

- A. Lack of rotary wing support
- B. Lack of ISR platforms
- C. Intelligence requirements (HUMINT; SIGINT; IMINT)
- D. Operation wasn't nested with BSO
- E. Operation wasn't nested with SOTF
- F. Operation wasn't synchronized with adjacent units

G. Incorrect Font

H. Incorrect use of doctrine (tactical tasks and graphic symbols that match)

I. Incorrect mission statement (5W)

J. The operational plan was not clear with the use of graphics and doctrine (not enough detail)

K. Lack of graphic fire control measures

L. Incorrect formatting and packaging of slides

M. Operation was not deconflicted with adjacent units

N. Other (Please explain below)

51. Concurrence took longer for the detachments Level 2 CONOP because (click all that apply)

A. Lack of rotary wing support

B. Lack of ISR platforms

C. Intelligence requirements (HUMINT; SIGINT; IMINT)

D. Operation wasn't nested with BSO

E. Operation wasn't nested with SOTF

F. Operation wasn't synchronized with adjacent units

G. Incorrect Font

H. Incorrect use of doctrine (tactical tasks and graphic symbols that match)

I. Incorrect mission statement (5W)

J. The operational plan was not clear with the use of graphics and doctrine (not enough detail)

K. Lack of graphic fire control measures

L. Lack of graphic fire control measures

M. Operation was not deconflicted with adjacent units

N. Other (Please explain below)

52. The CONOP sequence for resource allocation was effective when resources were ABUNDANT.

Answered on a scale of 1–10 (1-Never, 3- once in a while, 5-half the time, 7-most of the time, 9-Always, 10-Don't Know or Not Applicable)

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53. The CONOP Sequence for resource allocation was effective when resources were SCARCE.

Answered on a scale of 1–10 (1-Never, 3- once in a while, 5-half the time, 7-most of the time, 9-Always, 10-Don't Know or Not Applicable)

- 1
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54. The CONOP sequence was effective for synchronization of operations with adjacent units.

Answered on a scale of 1–10 (1-Never, 3- once in a while, 5-half the time, 7-most of the time, 9-Always, 10-Don't Know or Not Applicable)

- 1
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55. The CONOP sequence was effective for deconfliction of operations with adjacent units.

Answered on a scale of 1–10 (1-Never, 3- once in a while, 5-half the time, 7-most of the time, 9-Always, 10-Don't Know or Not Applicable)

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56. The CONOP sequence was effective for planning future operations in a Special Forces battalion.

Answered on a scale of 1–10 (1-Never, 3- once in a while, 5-half the time, 7-most of the time, 9-Always, 10-Don't Know or Not Applicable)

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57. The CONOP sequence was effective in providing staff oversight to resource requirements for future operations in a Special Forces battalion.

Answered on a scale of 1–10 (1-Never, 3- once in a while, 5-half the time, 7-most of the time, 9-Always, 10-Don't Know or Not Applicable)

- 1
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58. Who should have approval authority for a Level 0 CONOP?

(Level 0 CONOP is defined as an operation with Low-risk to the force with little potential for political repercussion)

- A. Detachment Commander
- B. AOB Commander
- C. Battalion Commander
- D. Group Commander
- E. Other (Please explain below)

59. Who should have approval authority for a Level 1 CONOP?

(Level 1 CONOP is defined as an operation with Medium-risk to the force; Requires Rotary Wing Support; Some potential for political repercussion)

- A. Detachment Commander
- B. AOB Commander
- C. Battalion Commander
- D. Group Commander
- E. Other (Please explain below)

60. Who should have approval authority for a Level 2 CONOP?

(Level 2 CONOP is defined as an operation with High-risk to the force; Requires Rotary Wing Support; Strong potential for political repercussion)

- A. Detachment Commander

- B. AOB Commander
- C. Battalion Commander
- D. Group Commander
- E. Other (Please explain below)

61. Should the CONOP be terminated in lieu of a 5W (Who, What, When, Where and Why)? (YES/NO; Why or Why not?)

- A. Yes
- B. No

62. Under what conditions should we use the CONOP procedure? (Click all that apply)

- A. Anytime we have the capability to send data
- B. SOF integration with conventional forces
- C. SOF integration with host nation partnered forces
- D. When conducting FID
- E. When conducting DA
- F. When conducting UW
- G. When conducting Reconnaissance
- H. When conducting Patrols
- I. Other (Please explain below)

63. On average, how many slides were in your Level 0 CONOP during your last deployment?

Answered on a scale of 1–10 (1= 1 slide; 2= 2–3 slides; 3= 4–5 slides; 5 = 6–8 slides; 6= 9–13 slides; 7= 14–18 slides; 8= 19–23 slides; 9=24 or more slides; 10- Don't know or Not applicable)

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64. On average, how many slides were in your Level 1 CONOP during your last deployment?

Answered on a scale of 1–10 (1= 1 slide; 2= 2–3 slides; 3= 4–5 slides; 5 = 6–8 slides; 6= 9–13 slides; 7= 14–18 slides; 8= 19–23 slides; 9=24 or more slides; 10- Don't know or Not applicable)

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- 9
- 10

65. On average, how many slides were in your Level 2 CONOP during your last deployment?

Answered on a scale of 1–10 (1= 1 slide; 2= 2–3 slides; 3= 4–5 slides; 5 = 6–8 slides; 6= 9–13 slides; 7= 14–18 slides; 8= 19–23 slides; 9=24 or more slides; 10- Don't know or Not applicable)

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

66. How many slides should be in a Level 0 CONOP?

Answered on a scale of 1–10 (1= 1 slide; 2= 2–3 slides; 3= 4–5 slides; 5 = 6–8 slides; 6= 9–13 slides; 7= 14–18 slides; 8= 19 or more slides; 9= No set limit; 10= Don't know or Not applicable)

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67. How many slides should be in a Level 1 CONOP?

Answered on a scale of 1–10 (1= 1 slide; 2= 2–3 slides; 3= 4–5 slides; 5 = 6–8 slides; 6= 9–13 slides; 7= 14–18 slides; 8= 19 or more slides; 9= No set limit; 10= Don't know or Not applicable)

1

2

3

4

- 5
- 6
- 7
- 8
- 9
- 10

68. How many slides should be in a Level 2 CONOP?

Answered on a scale of 1–10 (1= 1 slide; 2= 2–3 slides; 3= 4–5 slides; 5 = 6–8 slides; 6= 9–13 slides; 7= 14–18 slides; 8= 19 or more slides; 9= No set limit; 10= Don't know or Not applicable)

- 1
- 2
- 3
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69. How many times did the CONOP format change over your previous deployment?

Answered on a scale of 1–10 (1= 1 time, 2= 2 times, etc; 9= 9 or more times; 10- Don't know or Not applicable)

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70. Should there be one standard for the CONOP structure? (Yes/No; Why or Why Not?)

A. Yes

B. No

71. Should the CONOP be put into doctrine? (Yes/No Why or Why Not?)

A. Yes

B. No

72. If the CONOP Level 1 and 2 should be codified, what are the minimum components that need to be included?

- A. Cover slide
- B. Timeline
- C. TASKORG
- D. Terrain Orientation: (AO, AI, AOI
- E. Enemy CAS capabilities, IDF capabilities, and RESERVE elements
- F. Terrain: OAKOC
- G. Weather
- H. Civil Considerations
- I. Composition of Threat and Disposition of Threat
- J. Capabilities of Threat by War Fighting Function
- K. Enemy Purpose
- L. Enemy Form of Maneuver
- M. Enemy Elements Task and Purpose
- N. Enemy Endstate
- O. Friendly Higher Commanders Intent
- P. Friendly Higher's Mission 1 and 2 levels up
- Q. Friendly Higher's Concept
- R. SFODA Commanders Mission
- S. SFODA Commanders Intent
- T. SFODA COA Statement
- U. SFODA Purpose

V. SFODA Form of Maneuver

73. If the CONOP Level 1 and 2 should be codified, what are the minimum components that need to be included? (Continued)

- A. SFODA Decisive point and why
- B. Friendly Risk (discusses risk and means to mitigate)
- C. SFODA (or friendly) DO T/P
- D. SFODA (or friendly) SO1 T/P
- E. SFODA (or friendly) SO2 T/P
- F. SFODA Endstate
- G. Concept of the Operation (typically expressed by Phase and in conjunction with the COA statement) 1 Slide
- H. Scheme of Maneuver (detailed employment of maneuver units) 1 Slide per phase to express mission from beginning to end
- I. Friendly actions with correct doctrinal symbols
- J. Enemy actions with correct symbols
- K. Graphic Fire Control Measures
- L. Air space coordination measures
- M. Rules of engagement
- N. Themes and Messages
- O. Synch Matrix
- P. Logistical support requirements, supply rates, and prestockage of class III, IV, and V supplies
- Q. Guidance on the movement of detainees
- R. MEDEVAC plan

S. Friendly forces information requirements

T. Position of the commander and succession of command

U. Frequencies

V. Other (Please Specify)

74. Thank you for taking this survey! Is there anything else you wish to add to this study?

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