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The Role of the Global SOF Network in a Resource Constrained Environment

# The Role of the Global SOF Network in a Resource Constrained Environment



Edited by Chuck Ricks  
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*The Role of the Global  
SOF Network in a  
Resource Constrained  
Environment*

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# Foreword

It was an honor for the Joint Special Operations University (JSOU) to host the February 2013 Special Operations Forces (SOF) Symposium, *The Role of the Global SOF Network in a Resource Constrained Environment*. This symposium represented the second year in which JSOU and the Canadian Special Operations Forces Command (CANSOFCOM) have co-sponsored this event.

We built upon the prior symposium hosted by the CANSOFCOM Professional Development Centre held in December 2011 at the Royal Military College of Canada in Kingston, Ontario. In that symposium, we explored the issues and challenges of SOF personnel training, mentoring, and collaborating with SOF from our partner nations around the world.

This symposium moved us forward and focused on the future integration and interoperability necessary to sustain the emerging Global SOF Network with the realization that we will have to do this more efficiently and effectively. With anticipated resource constraints in the future, it will require a synchronized and interoperable Global SOF Network to combat our current and emerging threats.

A network is inherently human in the SOF realm. Although our operators have a distinct advantage of access to some of the best equipment and systems in the world, it is the understanding and leverage of the human domain that serve to strengthen the bonds of trust among our partners while providing us an advantage in operations against our adversaries. Those bonds among our partners represent commitments that must be nurtured and sustained so we develop, together, both commonality of experience and trust.

Shared experiences and trust will then support furthering a compelling narrative of the value of SOF within the context of our complex security environment. It's about knowing what we can and can't do, and having an appreciation for the contributions of partners within our community. As Lieutenant General John Mulholland, Deputy Commander of United States Special Operations Command stated, "I'm more concerned with capabilities than caveats. There's always something to be done; we just have to vet the capabilities to see what is possible." Our resources must be carefully allocated, yet SOF are still expected to, as Lieutenant-General Stu Beare,

Commander of Canadian Joint Operations Command noted, “deliver operational success.” The Global SOF Network supports increased capability for that success.

I would like to thank Brigadier-General Thompson for the great commitment he and our CANSOFCOM partners made to this symposium. I also offer a special thank you to our distinguished speakers and panelists who took time from their busy schedules to contribute to this forum. Without their participation and support to SOF, this symposium would not have been possible. It is through their unique experiences and wisdom that each of us will refine our search for innovative solutions to the complex issues facing the global SOF community.

I am proud to introduce this collection of essays that capture the essence of the symposium. It is my hope that the ideas presented will act as a catalyst for members of the SOF community to discuss and critically evaluate these issues—issues that will shape and influence the future of our SOF network.

Brian A. Maher, SES  
President, Joint Special Operations University

# Introduction

More than 125 Special Operations Forces (SOF) personnel from Canada, the United States, and eight other countries gathered at MacDill Air Force Base in Tampa, Florida, for a two-day symposium on the Role of the Global SOF Network in a Resource Constrained Environment from 27-28 February 2013. In addition to U.S. and Canadian SOF, participants included representatives from Australia, France, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Spain, and the United Kingdom.

This was the third symposium in the series and the second co-sponsored by the Joint Special Operations University (JSOU) and the Canadian Special Operations Forces Command (CANSOFCOM) Professional Development Centre (PDC). The event featured a mix of individual presentations, panel discussions, and social interaction to introduce issues, engage in productive discussions, and strengthen SOF network relationships. The focus ranged from the tactical (The Acid Test of Reality—Experiences of the Operators) to the strategic with senior civilian and military leadership from both Canada and the U.S. assuming active, contributing roles.

In his opening remarks, JSOU President Dr. Brian Maher outlined the symposium concept as one of “knowledge proliferation ... free of policy constraints and leadership prerogatives” in which participants could address issues and concerns in an open environment. He pointed out two important linkages to guide the discussions:

1. The continuity of effort achieved through the CANSOFCOM PDC’s publication of *Special Operations Forces: Building Global Partnerships*. This work documented and expanded upon the content from the 5-7 December 2011 SOF Symposium held at the Royal Military College of Canada. Each attendee at the 2013 symposium received a copy of this comprehensive collection of articles.
2. The particular importance of this symposium to the second (The Global SOF Network) and fourth (Responsive Resourcing) Lines of Operation (LOOs) established by Admiral William H. McRaven, Commander, USSOCOM. Though not the central focus of the gathering, the other LOOs (Win the Current Fight and Preserve the Force and Families) were acknowledged several times and entered the discussions

periodically. Each of the four LOOs focuses on fulfilling the overall SOCOM 2020 Vision: “A globally networked force of SOF, Interagency, Allies, and Partners able to rapidly and persistently address regional contingencies and threats to stability.”

One of the themes that emerged early in the symposium and persisted throughout was the need to sustain and adapt existing mission-essential networks while continuing to develop new ones during times of austerity. Central to these imperatives was the recognition that resource constrained environments offer opportunities as well as pose challenges to SOF and their networks.

Lieutenant-General Stu Beare, Commander of the Canadian Joint Operations Command, reminded the attendees that regardless of the mission sets assigned or the resources available, SOF have the overriding obligation to “deliver operational success.” Thus, it is essential to develop and apply creative and innovative thinking to develop new and efficient ways of doing things and solving problems. The ways SOF operate offer opportunities compelled by the persistent need to be successful and shaped by an environment far different from that of recent experience.

Typically, discussions of military operations amid austerity define the challenge as having to “do more with less.” This characterization is superficial, frequently reverting to merely agonizing over the hardships of reduced resources rather than on what must be done to succeed. Within the traditional strategic model of “ends, ways, and means,” the ends (that which must be accomplished) are increasing and shifting while the means to accomplish them (resources) are declining. That’s the reality. What remains constant is the expectation that SOF will continue to be successful.

By emphasizing declining resources, one tends to focus on what can be done based only on available resources rather than on what must be done (deliver operational success) and how with the available resources. The first perspective is one that limits options; the latter seeks to exploit opportunity. In other words, how do SOF continue to deliver operational success with whatever resources provided to them?

One of the features of the symposium was that the majority of the presentations and discussions acknowledged both the realities of new and changing mission sets and declining resources while emphasizing the need for critical thinking and innovation to deliver operational success and sustain the

advances achieved over the past decade-plus of war. Handwriting was not a feature of the gathering, but creative energy was.

Several of the presenters have contributed chapters to this collection. The last chapter, General Themes and Thoughts, provides an overview of the issues raised and a survey of the views expressed across the various presentations. Seven shared themes emerged from the symposium:

1. Networks require persistent attention and sustained nurture to maintain and expand their documented effectiveness of recent years.
2. Cultural intelligence/cross-cultural competence programs contribute significantly to SOF network effectiveness and should be viewed as force multipliers, especially in times of diminishing resources.
3. The traditional values of trust and confidence among SOF network partners become even more important in times of constrained resources as the mission sets expand while the margin for error diminishes. Each network partner, whatever their role, must contribute effectively.
4. The ongoing shift in emphasis from direct to indirect action is increasing SOF engagement in Phase Zero shaping activities, thus placing increased demand on network partners who bring with them 3-D (defense, diplomacy, and development), security assistance, and governance skill sets.
5. Persistent attention to interoperability and integration protocols is essential to leverage the contributions of others and to maximize SOF network effectiveness in a resource-constrained environment.
6. Especially in a time of constrained resources, it is imperative to develop and communicate a “compelling narrative” to educate various stakeholders about the value SOF provide.
7. Measures of effectiveness must be clear, understood, shared, and practiced by all members of the SOF Network.

The pages that follow offer insights and suggestions on how to deliver operational success while accommodating both changing mission sets and resource constrained environments.





# 1. A Strategic Perspective on the Global SOF Network: Little Money, Unclear Ends, and Big Ideas

Dr. Richard Rubright

*The cohesion of the Allies was always shifting, subject to the whims of political and military personalities, and constantly tested.<sup>1</sup>*

— Rod Paschall

This chapter provides a strategic view of the emerging Global SOF Network (GSN) within a resource constrained environment, fostered by views of panel members of our recent CANSOFCOM symposium. The purpose is to examine the proposed GSN within a strategic framework to provide a degree of contextualization. In doing so, the chapter is intended to highlight strategic disconnects between thought and the political reality within which the GSN must exist. This step is imperative if the GSN will become an effective means of pursuing U.S. national interests, without as much strategic surprise or potential irrelevancy.

Every strategy is a plan, but not every plan constitutes strategy. Often the word “strategy” is applied in imprecise and nebulous ways to convey the notion of sequential steps or improvement to achieve some stated goal. This is a very different, and often quite unhelpful, connotation than the definition used within strategic studies to denote a plan to specifically use force, or the threat of force, for the imposition of political will to achieve a specific political objective. This can be more generalized by stating that strategy bridges military power with political purpose.<sup>2</sup> The precision of the appropriate use of the word strategy, albeit in a strategic studies context rather than a straight dictionary listing, narrows assumptions and demands a degree of rigor that is often sorely lacking in discourse and the written

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*Dr. Richard Rubright is a Resident Senior Fellow with the Joint Special Operations University Strategic Studies Department. Dr. Rubright holds a Ph.D. in Strategic Studies from the University of Reading. His book, *The Role and Limitations of Technology in US Counterinsurgency Warfare*, is in publishing at Potomac Press for 2014 release.*

word. A pertinent example of this distinction is the plethora of examples used over the past decade to describe, judge, critique, and otherwise explain counterinsurgency (COIN). Colin Gray illustrates the definitional problem well by stating: “COIN is neither a concept nor can it be a strategy. Instead, it is simply an acronymic description of a basket of diverse activities intended to counter an insurgency.”<sup>3</sup> In short, utilitarian need will make use of the “basket of diverse activities” to develop a strategy, specifically tailored to the conflict, to achieve specific political goals—bridging the military power involved in the activities with the political goal of countering the insurgency.

Quite understandably, the reader may be inclined to dismiss the above observation as being an overly pedantic and trivial distinction. However, as a perspective on the GSN, the context of the network (a profoundly complex political milieu with constrained resources), with a lack of grand strategic vision by U.S. leadership, and the distinction becomes important. Much like the “basket of diverse activities,” the GSN represents military possibilities. The GSN will link capability across national boundaries, cultures, languages, and social norms. To be clear, this is a positive endeavor. It will provide strategic flexibility, increase options to policymakers, and allow a more tailored response to global challenges—but it should not be confused with a strategy. The GSN is an organizational plan and as such it should not be expected to be a strategy, but it may enable future strategies within a challenging and complex environment.

## Means

*No matter how brilliant my strategy might be, the implementation depended on the availability of a vast reservoir of cash with which to arm, train and move my forces.*<sup>4</sup> —Mohammad Yousaf

The symposium, like all timely endeavors, attempted to focus on the resource constrained environment found in most countries at the moment. While the political messaging is obvious, and wise, the GSN will always, in fat times and lean, be working in a resource constrained environment. Such restrictions are an inevitable consequence of any allied military endeavor. As far back as the Delian Confederacy of Greece, not all members were willing or capable of contributing like amounts of resources.<sup>5</sup> Ironically, this resulted in Athens providing the ships and their allies providing money, which in

time left the allies in a vulnerable position—a lesson not likely unknown to our would-be partners in the GSN.<sup>6</sup> However, as the GSN is a network rather than a hierarchical structure, it follows that no capability-based parity needs to exist between members. One cannot help but to wonder if there will exist a paradigm of each according to their ability to each according to their need, another ironic twist.

Whatever the contributions made by each member of the GSN, and regardless of the accompanying rhetoric, means do, in fact, matter a great deal. Means may be the contribution of military assets, monetary contributions, and some variant or composite of both. Inevitably, the importance of the contributions will impact the relative leverage and importance of contributing members. Whether this idea is couched in Realist political theory, historical examinations of allied efforts or just plain common sense, there will be a functional impact upon the GSN. However, the constraining nature of means will never be uniform; rather, the importance of means will be relative to the unique needs of each member.

As a panel member providing his knowledge and first hand insights into the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) Special Operations Headquarters (NSHQ), Mr. Scott Morrison articulated that the value of the NSHQ model is the ability to link like-minded nations into a cooperative SOF structure providing value in excess of the sum of its parts.<sup>7</sup> This is undoubtedly an asset in military endeavors which NATO feels are appropriate for the employment of SOF. In fact, the NSHQ model is considered so successful that other Regional SOF Coordination Centers (RSCCs) will be patterned after the NSHQ success, albeit with their own unique regional objectives.<sup>8</sup> However, an organizational structure does not equate *de facto* into strategic success when force must actually be employed.

Will the burden sharing to alleviate the United States Special Operations Forces (USSOF) budgetary strain be realized through a GSN? This has yet to be seen and can obviously be viewed from a variety of angles. One obvious comparison with another similar alliance is the financial dynamics within NATO. By every measure of effectiveness, NATO has served its original intention of collective security, although without ever actually being challenged by a state actor. Yet, NATO should serve as a cautionary example of burden sharing. The entire notion of burden sharing is utterly relative to the unique positions of the members involved. While the Athenians were more than pleased to provide military assets while their notional allies contributed

financial support, one should seriously doubt whether Athens would have been as equally enamored with providing both the military and financial assets. A modern parallel may be aptly described by former Secretary of Defense Robert Gates' attack on European decline in defense capabilities likely leading to NATO's military irrelevance and Europe's complacency over international security.<sup>9</sup> This does not indicate either a concurrent American and European vision of military utility or a concurrent prioritization of funding efforts.

The schism between Europe and U.S. funding priorities is not a simple issue. There are deep-seated differences in political realities which have to be dealt with. Foremost, there is a different world view driving European and U.S. actions internationally in general and militarily specifically. This dichotomy must, inevitably, manifest a differing prioritization of funding allocation. In the view of Robert Kagan: "When it comes to setting national priorities, determining threats, defining challenges, and fashioning and implementing foreign and defense policies, the United States and Europe have parted ways."<sup>10</sup> This is troubling for the future of means available to a GSN if the intention is to alleviate the likelihood of the United States becoming the sole funding source. This should not be taken to imply that the nations of Europe will find the smaller footprint, less manpower intensive, and force multiplying aspects of SOF to be unattractive military options; likely they will profit from it. However, it will be toward their ends in response to their own particular political perspectives and not as *carte blanche* acquiescence to U.S. political objectives; again, as Kagan notes: "European intellectuals are nearly unanimous in the conviction that Americans and Europeans no longer share a common 'strategic culture.'"<sup>11</sup>

If the strategic cultures of NATO members are becoming schizophrenic, then the ends (which we will delve into later) will be affected by the means available. Yet, NATO through the NSHQ represents only a single node within the GSN. It cannot be indicative of other actors within the network with any degree of certainty, albeit there will always be some parallel aspect. The NATO partnership does comprise a core of highly capable and superbly trained forces that have worked well with USSOCOM elements. The interoperability of forces or the quality of the forces is not so much a question, but rather, the utility of the forces within the political paradigms of the nodal actors (states) and the commensurate means available for the work of the entire network. NATO has far more financial and qualitative assets to

contribute than many other countries of the world, but without a common political end, any amount of means may become irrelevant. Consider for a moment a more Liberal view of warfare that has much more traction in Europe than in the United States. Mary Kaldor's view: "A cosmopolitan global community cannot stand aside when genocide is committed, as in Rwanda, for example. But military tasks should be confined to the protection of civilians and the arrest of war criminals and should be authorized through the 'appropriate multilateral procedures.'"<sup>12</sup> This of course may ring of naiveté and banality, yet this attitude is far from a fringe view. Consider the ramifications for NATO contributions (means) to the employment of force within a GSN and how they may actually hamper U.S. action if Kaldor's view becomes even more of the norm than it is now.

So far the focus has been on NATO within a GSN and some of the political challenges that will be associated with the contributions of means to affect political outcomes. Undoubtedly, the fact the USSOCOM pays for the NSHQ makes it an attractive entity for NATO participation. Equally likely, RSCCs around the world will be attractive forums for interaction between other nations. But, is it reasonable to expect more than token contributions from partner nations within the GSN? Declarations of burden sharing have obvious appeal when the U.S. Congress is eyeing defense spending for deficit reduction. It plays equally well within the Department of Defense as services jockey for funding as the overall budget shrinks. However, in reality a GSN likely serves the interests of the United States more than it serves the interests of potential partner nations. After all there is no guarantee that potential GSN participants could not benefit more from direct bilateral relationships with SOF communities without necessarily signing on for burden sharing within a GSN.

## Ends

*The World had been cleft in two, with good on one side and evil on the other, and victory would come, George W. Bush promised, only when we 'rid the world of evil-doers.'*<sup>13</sup> —Reza Aslan

At this point, addressing the ends to be achieved by the GSN is the next logical step. As the means to support and facilitate the GSN are in question in these austere times, there has to be an assumption that some means will be

available, or that there will never be an ideal amount of means as is typical in any organization. This is not an indictment of the GSN, but given the potential scope of employment and varied objectives of the likely participants, more means will always be welcome. The GSN, being an organizational plan, must facilitate the accomplishment of political objectives. The network in and of itself should not be a political objective. Yet, in fact, the network may be the objective dependent on the particular view of the nodal participants.

According to USSOCOM, the purpose of the GSN, which obviously must be in some harmony with U.S. national interests, is to build “a network ... over time through persistent engagement because you can’t surge trust.”<sup>14</sup> However, USSOCOM’s 2020 vision is based upon national strategy, one of which calls for avoiding operations that “constitute an irreversible policy commitment.”<sup>15</sup> The avoidance of such policy commitments implies flexibility for U.S. forces but may not be very reassuring to partner nations or propagate the building of trust. However, be that as it may, the United States is still positioning itself to build a GSN that furthers its political objectives. Of course, this is not to imply that the political objectives of the United States must be at odds with partner nations in the GSN—just the opposite in fact. It is quite likely that the policy objectives of most states will align and be fertile ground for collaboration on a whole range of issues. Yet, as often as not the friction of war also applies to politics; not all nations will share the same concerns, or rank similar concerns with like degrees of urgency or trepidation, and each will have personalities which military commanders will have to heed.<sup>16</sup>

Europe may, as a political imperative, see a very different foundational reason for a GSN vis-à-vis the United States. This is postulated upon the differing roles of the United States and Europe within the international community and the political outlook of each. Generalities in this regard become perilous as they inevitably fail to take nuance into account; however, an attempt is justified. Europe often views process and intention as more important than tangible result. In essence, through a process of coalition building, dialogue, and interaction, Europe seeks to influence the world with the genuine intention of making it a better place while, at times, limiting U.S. military power.<sup>17</sup> As an end goal of peace, both Europe and the United States remain committed as they share fundamental liberal ideas. This is well articulated by Michael Howard: “The original view of the eighteenth-century philosophies, that international disputes could be settled without violence, by

reasoned discussion and agreement between men of goodwill, has remained the basis of most liberal Western thinking about international relations.”<sup>18</sup> Likewise, the United States shares similar goals but approaches challenges in the international arena much more directly. The willingness to use hard power by the United States could be simply, and wrongly, attributed to the overwhelming disparity between the U.S. military and other forces around the world. Rather, it is part and parcel of U.S. strategic culture.

The importance of the differing view of Europe and the United States resides at the crossroads of where the post-modernist view of Europe intersects with the realist view of the United States with regard to the utility of the GSN. Europe’s view is as valid as any, but the utility of the GSN within their political context may be less about meeting challenges around the globe through direct and indirect means and more about demonstrating the reasonableness of European diplomacy and a desire to foster dialogue. Again, generalities lack precision and always have exceptions, but the United States should head into a GSN while asking itself what utility it foresees in terms of support to U.S. national interests, and does it really expect a high degree of burden sharing and cooperation from other partners? Consider Colin Gray’s view of the U.S. role in the international arena in the next century: “I prefer to think of the United States as the sheriff of the current world order, for reasons both of cultural fit of concept and of tolerable accuracy.”<sup>19</sup> If this is accurate, and the author would argue that it is, then what role does the GSN fulfill for the United States, and more importantly, to what degree? Again consider Gray: “The United States is not, and should not and cannot be, the world’s policeman vis-a-vis any and every disturbance. The actions of this American sheriff of order are guided frankly by a national interest discriminator.”<sup>20</sup> While the United States may see it as their duty, and in its national interest, to foster world order, the same end may not be shared by other countries or partner nations in the GSN. Of equal importance, they may not agree on the ways in which such a goal may be reached through the utility of the GSN, but this will be addressed in the next section.

While the above is a fairly nebulous characterization of possible ends to be achieved by different polities as the GSN grows, a slightly less obscure end can be found in USSOCOM’s 2020 vision. Specifically, USSOF are operating in 75 countries to “defeat threat networks and to build partnership capacity.”<sup>21</sup> This represents a dramatic effort far exceeding the capabilities of many potential GSN participants. It also lends some weight to Gray’s



characterization of the United States behaving as sheriff of world order. However, it represents some troubling language. “Defeating threat networks” as a strategic goal has all of the clarity and exactness of a Global War on Terror. It fails to identify specific ends. Yet, that is likely an intentional aspect; open-ended enemies offer open-ended funding needs and open-ended commitments. This is not an attempt to be critical of the writers, nor is it intended to delineate the goal as unachievable. Rather, it presents a potentially unrealistic expectation of ends beyond the grasp of strategic reality. Certainly the United States is incapable of defeating all of the “threat networks” in the world, and just as certainly the wording reflects a desired flexibility to engage networks determined to be a threat to U.S. national interests. It may even be reassuring to potential partners in the GSN that their concerns will be the concerns of the United States. But, importantly it may also signal to potential partners that the United States is engaged in a global strategy far beyond the national interests of the partner nations, just as Iraq in 2003 was not universally approved.

The obvious need to identify specific threats leads to even murkier facets. As Maria Stephens noted, unregulated and technically enabled money transfer schemes are challenging to track and understand.<sup>22</sup> In essence, money is being transferred around the globe by criminal and terrorist elements using technology as an enabler. These methods and actors are evolving faster than authorities are able to respond. At least some of the monies involved are funding threat networks which represent a direct challenge to international stability and order. So, how is the GSN prepared to confront such challenges? Is it reasonable to expect countries that rely on emerging payment systems that require little infrastructure to suddenly engage these networks on behalf of U.S. national interests? Does this type of activity even warrant the required resources to tackle knowing new and novel techniques will emerge to replace eliminated transfer capabilities? These are the type of questions that will have to be addressed by the various partners of the GSN; each one an independent and sovereign political entity. This may at first glance seem like a trivial specific, yet millions of people rely on the Hawala network of money lenders to move money; can this simply be done away with?<sup>23</sup>

It is important to manage expectations whenever strategy is involved. Given U.S. strategic culture, this is not always the most expedient way to garner resources or support for an endeavor. The result can be a very confused and often seemingly disconnected political narrative from the

strategic reality. When the United States declares “war” on an emotional response (terror), chemical compounds (drugs), or economic descriptions (poverty), the marketing is clear, but the strategy and ends to be achieved are not. Much like the destruction of “threat networks” as a strategic end, the lack of clarity becomes problematic. Such clouded rhetoric may serve some interests, but it will also work against others. After all, where on the spectrum of threat networks would we define a terrorist? Somewhere, one would hope, near al-Qaeda but short of teenagers sharing MP3 files. How will different expectations of strategic ends within a GSN be managed? The ends remain unclear. If this is intentional, then so be it. Yet, intentional or not, inevitable problems are likely to emerge as no two nations share exactly the same national interests.

## Ways

*Forward presence forces demonstrate our national resolve and commitment to maintain peace and stability in a region. These recourses serve to deter aggression and they help prevent major crises though aggressive engagement programs and coalition building.*<sup>24</sup>

—Robert H. Scales, Jr.

If it has been determined there will be limited resources, and determined that there are nebulous, if not grand, ideas of what the GSN will accomplish, it is logical to examine how some ends will be attained. Again, at the risk of redundancy, how things are accomplished must be examined in light of restrictions placed upon conduct. In short, the capability of the GSN to execute whatever mission is proposed will be directly impacted by the political realities, which is to say perceptions, of the participants within the GSN. As Lieutenant-Colonel Earl Vandahl noted, it is often trying and challenging to work within a nation’s own governmental structure in support of SOF, much less coordinate with multiple partners.<sup>25</sup>

Attempts to understand foreign cultures will always be limited. Understanding not only a culture, but more importantly the perception within the culture, which in turn determines the political reality, is even a step further into the realm of difficulty. Yet, as history is our guide, allied efforts have a successful track record—both in peace and in war. But, the GSN represents something new, an endeavor of global proportions, in the end state,

with almost limitless possible missions and an equally varied set of national interests and political personalities. What should remain foremost, as stated above, building an organization is different from strategically employing the organization.

Consider the political perceptions required for the United Kingdom to proclaim its support of the League of Nations in the following:

The Foreign Policy of Great Britain shall not be aimed at creating Alliances for the purpose of maintaining the Balance of Power, but shall be directed to concerted action between the Powers, and the setting up of an International Council, whose deliberation and decisions shall be public, with such machinery for securing international agreement as shall be the guarantee of an abiding peace.<sup>26</sup>

While this statement was the foundation for UK participation in the league, it represents the same sentiment for the inclusion of the UK in the United Nations (UN) as well as the public sentiment that the UK operate militarily under UN mandate. It also recognizes that the historical role of Balance of Power politics and secret alliances in the run up to World War I is to be avoided. As the UK is arguably our closest ally, one must wonder about the role of the GSN if, for example, China is determined to be an adversary. Not only would the partnership in East Asia be affected, even a partner as far away from the theater as the North Atlantic would have questionable commitment. Would a strategically adversarial position of China and the United States be classified as Balance of Power? Would the UK want to be in an Alliance of such profound scope with the ideological battle of the Cold War no longer a threat? How and to what degree would the UK be willing to participate in a GSN on the other side of the globe? The above quote is historical, and therefore dated, yet, to a degree the sentiment it represents is still very much alive.

The questions posed above are not intended to imply a shortcoming of the GSN; it is, after all, a network which implies flexibility and adaptation. The point is to illustrate the complex and varied ways in which local political consideration will have an inevitable impact on how the GSN is utilized strategically, not necessarily upon its formative construction. While other partners will have an impact, there should also be questions about the impact that U.S. strategic culture will have upon the employment of the GSN.

In looking back over the past 10 years, several trends have become apparent. The level of constraints the U.S. political system has placed upon U.S. military capabilities has become a strategic handicap. U.S. Naval War College professor emeritus and author, Dr. Roger Barnett, identifies the impact by stating: “Cumulatively, the constraints extinguish U.S. choices. By doing so, they accomplish the same effect as coercion by the enemy. Coercion is for the purpose of confining options, of requiring the target to do one’s bidding. But, their effect is unidirectional.”<sup>27</sup> In short, military capabilities are being eroded through legalistic constraints and lawfare just at a time when the United States is seeking to engage enemies around the world through a global network. How far these restrictions will go is unknown, but the quote previously mentioned from Mary Kaldor indicates that there is an effort, or at least a school of thought, that will, in effect, reduce military utility to the level of meaninglessness. This is a troubling trend that will likely continue.

If the most able SOF in the world will be limited in how they can be employed through arms control, legalistic interpretations, or even a judicial process for targeting known enemies, how effective will the GSN be as a whole when other partner nations look for a degree of leadership and capability from the United States? Again, beyond the formation of the network, the question directly is concerned with the actual utility of the network. When faced by adversaries who play by no rules at all, be they non-state actors or states practicing unrestricted warfare, is it reasonable to expect a network to be value added? Perhaps if proxies are able to operate in the grey areas in which we decline to get our hands dirty. Yet, how long before congressionally mandated vetting or political pressure from allies responsible to their constituents have a negative impact upon capability?

Another troubling trend is one of precedence. While the NSHQ represents the general template for the RSCCs envisioned as part of a GSN, a serious question of utility must be asked. How effective has the NSHQ and the allied International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) effort contributed to success in Afghanistan? Undoubtedly, this is a question that will raise hackles and is a tough one to put forward. The more than 2,000 SOF contributed through the NSHQ are valued and contributing members of the ISAF mission and bring capabilities that enhance the effort. In no way should that contribution, nor any contribution by any allied nations, be underestimated or underappreciated, nor can their sacrifice be ignored. However, we are in the realm of strategy and not in the realm political correctness, albeit political

correctness drives much of our strategy. The simple fact is that time will tell whether the SOF network working in Afghanistan has made a difference. The effort will be in the hands of history decades from now. Unfortunately, while NSHQ can be used as a validation of a template on how to organize a SOF network, it cannot yet serve as a template for how to effectively employ a GSN to achieve strategic aims.

The final trend is one of political will to sustain a U.S. military effort. While the U.S. military will carry out the directives of its civilian leaders, ultimately those civilian leaders must be cognizant of their constituents' political desires. It would have been hard to imagine on 12 September 2001 that the citizenry of the United States would become tired of a war in Afghanistan after fewer deaths than just the single day Union deaths during the battle of Antietam.<sup>28,29</sup> As every U.S. casualty, as well as every allied casualty, represents a shattered family, the last decade indicates that the tolerance of the American public for military adventurism, must less casualties in causes they do not directly relate to, is questionable. Whether or not this fatigue of 24-hour news bombardment will extend to a persistent low-level engagement is yet to be seen. If SOF efforts in Afghanistan after 2014 do not elicit popular disapproval, it may bode well for the ability of the U.S. military to operate as part of a large GSN. On the other hand, if political actors in the United States use persistent engagement as an opportunity to score political victories, then popular U.S. support for persistent engagement through the GSN may indeed be short lived.

## Considerations

*Time is on the side of the counter-terrorists ... but Al Qaeda cannot be permitted to fade at a speed set by what may be a glacial pace of societal evolution in the Dar ul Islam.*<sup>30</sup>

—Colin Gray

The quote by Colin Gray is accurate, and the tool to ensure that an organization like al-Qaeda is harried at every possible turn is through a GSN. The recognition of the need to engage in a wide-ranging effort is not new and was recognized outside of the SOF community years ago.<sup>31</sup> While the thoughts above may have seemed critical of the idea of a GSN, they were, rather, intended to highlight the strategic context and a few of the difficulties the

GSN will encounter. It was never intended as a critique of the actual intention to build such a network. If nothing else, the GSN is a relatively inexpensive way to engage partners, learn from other perspectives and cultures, extend some influence and help to troubled nations, and engage enemies that have already been well defined within the current fight. The GSN is a logical step, if not for burden sharing, then at a minimum, for the collaboration with other forces that have local knowledge and capabilities which is not possessed within USSOCOM.

The GSN will be a useful tool for future commanders and policymakers for use in pursuit of U.S. political objectives. However, if the complexity of the mission is not grasped, or the political objective reasonable, then policymakers may make assumption about the utility of the GSN that are not well grounded. In order to manage such expectations, USSOCOM may want to bring clarity to the GSN in a manner that explicitly outlines the realistic rather than the vague. In short, it would position the GSN to bridge military power and political objectives in a realistic way to ensure that proper strategy is developed to appropriately use the GSN.



## 2. Interoperability: Benefits and Challenges

Lieutenant-Colonel Kevin Morton

Canadian Special Operations Forces Command's challenge, based on its domestic CT mandate and its out-of-area responsibilities, is to maintain relationships and ensure an appropriate level of interoperability and/or integration across a broad front. This is no small feat. Interoperability is without a doubt not only a benefit in the contemporary operating environment, but truly a necessity. Yet, organizational culture, technology, and security concerns often impede the necessary process of working more effectively together.

Nonetheless, the value and necessity for interoperability are generally quite clear. In fact, interoperability within certain 'communities of practice' is extremely important, even critical for mission success. This connection is underscored with regard to CT where a rapid response can mean the difference between success and failure. Nevertheless, due to limited resources and capacities, as well as time constraints, it is not always possible to maintain interoperability with all the potential players. One must then decide where and how to focus their effort. One must ask who you truly need to be interoperable with, and to take it to the next level, who you need to be able to integrate with in the various situations you are likely to encounter.

To put this in context, within CANSOFCOM, we have historically focused on being interoperable with our Canadian Forces Services—the Army, the Navy, and the Air Force—while we have driven to integrate with our SOF 'Five Eyes' partners. The reasoning and value of this differentiation and its focus has borne itself out over the years in multiple theatres as a solid start point. Yes, in some cases, integration with our services is the key to success, but for the most part we simply need to be able to operate in the same space, capable of communicating with and supporting one another. Our efforts in

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this regard are more often than not focused on the harmonization of effects vice the synchronization of activities.

Notably, where an appreciation for the need to be interoperable, or even have an ability to integrate based on the need, does not exist, the situation can become not only professionally frustrating but, more worrisome, it can inhibit mission success. For example, as is always the case when responding to a crisis, time will be in short supply. Akin to producing quality SOF, interoperability must be established pre-crisis, such that when the need arises, you are not establishing baseline connectivity, muddling through a seldom practiced approval process, or, worse yet, operating in a manner that risks mission success because you have no other recourses.

At the political and strategic levels, mitigating these challenges equates to ensuring that the chain of command and approval processes are clear; that each of the invested stakeholders knows their roles, responsibilities, and capabilities; importantly, all can communicate appropriately through voice and data mediums in a secure domain. In a perfect world, the chain of command and approval processes are as flat as possible, with no noncontributing layers of staff or decision makers. At the operational and tactical levels, mitigating these challenges equates to a similar ability to communicate over distance in the classified realm across the tactical option space. It also means having a well-oiled process in place for the various elements to operate within the same space, and potentially, where required, the ability to integrate assets to achieve an end.

For instance, in the Canadian domestic maritime environment, being interoperable means that CANSOFCOM can operate in the same space, communicate with, support, or be supported by, the Royal Canadian Navy, the Royal Canadian Air Force, the Canadian Coast Guard, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, the Canadian Border Services Agency, and/or the Canadian Security Intelligence Service, most likely all at the same time on the same task.

For Canada, striving to achieve fulsome pre-crisis interoperability in response to domestic situations or crises abroad is critical. To achieve this proficiency one must first and foremost understand the threat environment including the threat posed, the stakeholders and their roles, the chain of command, the decision makers, and the processes in place to take action. Then a rigorous analysis must be completed to confirm the level of interoperability and/or integration necessary to achieve a desired effect. Prioritization

of effort must then occur. Whenever possible, interoperability should ideally begin at the highest combined joint interagency levels, thereby defining the perimeters and setting the conditions for the elements below. When appropriate levels of interoperability and integration have been achieved, they are appropriately practiced and realistically rehearsed. By doing so, one's ability to efficiently, and in a timely manner, 'wade' through the systems at play will be considerably enhanced.

While interoperability is without a doubt a necessity in the contemporary operating environment, it is nonetheless often inhibited. Specifically, organizational cultures tend to resist interoperability even with other similar organizations. Nations, and departments or agencies within nations, all have distinct cultures, mission-sets, and by extension priorities. For example, the operational mindset necessary for CANSOFCOM to be successful in the prosecution of military actions, domestically or abroad, is not necessarily shared by all departments or agencies within Canada. Culturally the varying groups may have different perspectives which may militate against a common appreciation of a given situation. Indeed, where CANSOFCOM is involved, it is often a lack of knowledge of our viewpoint or our specific requirements that deny an aligned perspective. This communication challenge rests with us. Even with that completed, however, that does not necessarily drive others to a common understanding of what defines interoperability or the need for it.

Working within an international context is also fraught with similar challenges to interoperability. The military operational culture is, however, generally pervasive and typically paves the way for aligned thought, purpose, and action, at least when national agendas are similar. CANSOFCOM's experience in Afghanistan provides a good example. With relatively aligned national agendas, Canada was able to operate easily within a Combined Joint SOF environment and was interoperable and fully and seamlessly integrated with a series of Allied entities. In the early days of the war, this ability was predicated on pre-crisis efforts within the international SOF community. Since 2001, with continual interaction, these relationships have done nothing but improve. This experience has truly set the conditions for the Western SOF community going forward, with operational and tactical integration relatively easily accomplished.

Another significant challenge to interoperability is technology, which is underscored by the rapid pace of technological advancement. Governments,

departments, and agencies optimize technology first and foremost to meet the demands of their respective mandates. Regrettably, this myopic focusing is often done in a bit of a vacuum, thus creating a technological barrier to being seamlessly interoperable. Arguably, these technological barriers are most acute in the communications sphere, be it as a result of the device, its software, its deployability, or its classification.

Security is a third significant challenge to interoperability. Where national agendas do not necessarily align, or a certain nation's operational efforts are compartmentalized, the will or want to share information has historically been a significant contributor to a lack of interoperability. National missions and security classifications (for example 'Four Eyes,' 'Five Eyes,' NATO caveats and/or constrained disclosure policies) have been serious impediments. Notably, things have started to change. More open policies and approaches within the Western SOF community have increased sharing and forced change in the underlying mindset. Certainly, this progress is no more apparent than with Admiral William McRaven's inclusive SOF network approach to doing business going forward.

For CANSOFCOM, defining and efficiently navigating both the domestic and out-of-area 'systems' at play is a constant challenge. Applying a ruthless task and mission focus allows us to prioritize the levels of interoperability and/or integration necessary across our response continuum. Domestically, much work has been and continues to be done in the public safety domain to ensure that those who need to be able to talk and operate together can do just that. Moreover, as the international SOF community is becoming more and more networked, one clear derivative is an increased level of interoperability.

While my view is framed from an operator's perspective, my experiences within the combined, joint, interagency environments and across the strategic, operational, and tactical levels of conflict hopefully contribute to a balanced perspective.

### 3. Solving the People Puzzle: Educating and Training SOF Operators for Enhanced Cultural Intelligence

Dr. Emily Spencer

Following nearly a decade of war in Iraq and Afghanistan, the Canadian and American people, as well as our allies, are weary of war. Arguably, there is a growing lack of national will within Western nations to commit troops to battle, a state of affairs simply underscored by a lack of resources, both human and financial. In fact, there is a common belief that military engagements are costly in terms of human and financial capital, are often of long duration and incite division amongst constituents. With regard to the large footprint that the conventional force leaves in its wake, these perceptions generally reflect reality. Nonetheless, avoiding the increase in transnational acts of aggression, including terrorism, criminal activity, and cyber attacks, to which no nation is immune, is not an option. Therefore, in order to combat transnational insecurity and violence, a collective, global solution is required.<sup>1</sup>

By nature of their agile, unobtrusive, and cost-effective profile, SOF represent an ideal option to deal with such violence.<sup>2</sup> More specifically, by empowering partners to develop local solutions to global problems, SOF networks provide a rapid, efficient, and effective manner of dealing with transnational threats while at the same time minimizing the cost to each nation.

Importantly, the concept of SOF networks is neither new, nor is it laden with risk.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, continued global threats, combined with fiscal restraint, highlight the need to expand SOF networks.<sup>4</sup>

Essentially, a confederation of SOF organizations—a SOF network—is about helping partners who possess the will but not necessarily the capacity or expertise to conduct counterterrorism or other types of operations and

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to build that capacity. Its strength resides on the ability to provide common professional military education, and combined training and information sharing opportunities. Through this type of resource sharing and mentoring, SOF networks provide an opportunity for the SOF of various nations to work together and grow from each other's strengths.<sup>5</sup>

Within the scope of Global SOF Networks, (and importantly not limited to this domain), the future operating environment (FOE) will no doubt represent a mosaic of cultures from SOF to conventional forces to civilians, all from various regions of the world and each embedded with its own cultural perspectives. As Admiral McRaven notes, "although SOF usually only garner attention for high-stakes raids and rescues, direct action missions are only a small part of what we do." He continues, "on any given day USSOF are working with our allies around the world, helping build indigenous special operations capacity so that our partners can effectively deal with the threat of violent extremist groups, insurgents, and narco-terrorists—themselves."<sup>6</sup> McRaven astutely comments, "neither we nor our partners can kill our way to victory in this fight."<sup>7</sup> Indeed, it is starting to be recognized that the indirect approach, often reflected by the statement "by, with, and through" will be the most influential for SOF in the FOE.

As such, to be successful in the FOE and for Global SOF Networks to be effective, the issue of "culture" needs to be addressed.<sup>8</sup> While common tactics, techniques, and procedures, as well as military camaraderie, may help bridge some cultural divides, there must be increased cultural education and training for SOF members.<sup>9</sup> Ultimately, SOF operators need to solve the "people puzzle," and they should be empowered to do so through professional military education and professional development. In short, in order for SOF to be highly effective in the FOE, they will need to communicate and behave in a way that transcends cultural boundaries and influences a group of people toward a desired end. Demonstrating enhanced cultural intelligence is germane to achieving this objective.

Essentially, cultural intelligence is about understanding the beliefs, values, and attitudes that drive behaviors and acting in a way so as to further your interests, which, in the case of Western militaries, are national interests.<sup>10</sup> It is about understanding the message that is being sent, making sure that the intent of your message is being properly understood and, ultimately, influencing a group of people to achieve your goal.

While demonstrating enhanced levels of cultural intelligence may seem simple enough in theory, there are many innate obstacles to fruitful intercultural encounters. For instance, a big problem to solving the people puzzle is that we often assume that our interpretations are not only correct, but that they are also shared. This bias is generally underscored when speaking the same language. Any military member who has worked with other governmental departments can likely appreciate that even though you are coming from the same national culture and you are speaking the same language, the meaning behind the words might actually be quite different depending on which government agency or organization you are working for. For example, a problem that is “urgent” might mean to SOF that it needs to be solved immediately and no time can be wasted in initiating action. Conversely, an “urgent” problem for foreign affairs practitioners might mean that it will be addressed at the next regularly scheduled daily brief, even if that is in 23 hours. Moreover, it may also mean not deciding on any action for days using the philosophy that perhaps something will change to improve the circumstances and reduce risk, even though not making a timely decision is actually a decision.

Additionally, one should not assume that simply because a behavior can be copied, that the underlying motives and effect will be as easy to replicate. Instead, breaking down and explaining core beliefs and values are key in making sure that your intent is understood. For example, one SOF operator mentioned that when he was training a group of Afghan SOF, he stressed the importance of establishing check-points. In fact, the Afghans saw how often the Canadians and Americans performed these checks, so it was not hard to get their buy-in. The Afghans began to stop many cars but, surprisingly to the Canadian operator, they never actually looked into any of them. While they understood the “action,” they had no idea why it was being done. They simply mimicked the superficial behaviors that they had witnessed. It was not until the reasons for why road-checks were performed and their importance were fully explained to the Afghans that they began to perform effectively.<sup>11</sup>

The reason behaviors that are simply copied without an understanding of the core beliefs and values that drive them often lack effect is because, in its simplest form, culture provides meaning. Our culture or, more appropriately our cultures, are the lenses through which we understand the world and our place in it. In essence, culture is the way we make sense of things. Everything has cultural meaning and, more importantly, to some extent all meaning

is culturally derived. When that meaning is not clearly explained to people with different cultural backgrounds it can often be misinterpreted.<sup>12</sup>

While the need for SOF operators to act in a culturally intelligent manner is rarely debated, the issue of how to achieve this objective is one that has not yet been fully resolved.<sup>13</sup> In essence, the issue is how to enable SOF, through education and training, to be better at applying cultural intelligence. Particularly in a period of fiscal restraint, and when global, multi-cultural SOF networks are increasingly seen as valuable tools, this is a pertinent issue that needs to be addressed.

Before proposing a solution, however, it is first important to address some of the challenges that often come up in discussions about how to best educate and train military members to have and use cultural knowledge effectively. It is vital to acknowledge these challenges at the start so that the negative effects of these biases can be minimized.

To begin, a major area of contention that continuously surfaces is that between “academics” and the “military.” The distance that sometimes gets created between academics and the military needs to be bridged as each side has something valuable to offer the other. To dismiss a good idea simply because it did not come from someone in the military, or as sometimes is the case for SOF, an “operator,” is short sighted; it is equally as myopic to ignore ground truth and insight because it is not expressed in academic jargon.

The next roadblock to progress that is often brought up is the disconnect or, often more appropriately, the lag between theory and practice, which notably adds fuel to the academic/military debate by often placing theorists on one side and practitioners on another. Sometimes things are easier said than done, and reality is so complex that theories are rendered almost useless. Nonetheless, at the end of the day, there is value to recognizing that each has their merits and, importantly, for the purposes of this discussion, both the theorists and the practitioners—the academics and the military—are trying to achieve the same goal.

A final challenge that needs to be addressed is the idea that if there is no 100 percent solution, then there is no point to going down that path. Making such a statement is akin to saying if there is no silver bullet—if there is no perfect solution—then no ammunition will be used at all. Put this way, the ridiculousness of the situations should be apparent to all.

Notably, what follows is not a “silver bullet” for any and all potential culturally based challenges that SOF will encounter in the FOE. Rather, the

following is a practical way to help educate and train SOF so they exhibit high levels of cultural intelligence in order to become even better at what they already do well. As such, below is a five step method that provides a potential solution to solving the people puzzle in the FOE.

### **Step One: Recognize the Importance of Cultural Intelligence to SOF in the FOE**

At a grassroots level, the operators know how important cultural intelligence is. At the leadership level, this recognition needs to be transferred into dedicating scarce resources, particularly time, into developing this skill set. Also, success should be rewarded. It is one thing to be “quiet professionals,” but rewarding success through recognition, pay and/or promotion is also a way to show how serious you are about this ability. It also means that people with these necessary skills sets will eventually be in positions to help foster them within others. Simply put, words are not enough; they need to be backed by actions.

### **Step Two: Matching Skill Sets with Individuals: Who Needs to Know What?**

This step sounds simple enough in theory. You need to determine what skill-sets are required for which individuals. Do certain ranks need more or less knowledge than other ranks? Do certain trades demand better affinity than others?

SOF is about equipping the man, not manning the equipment. Cultural intelligence enables individuals to problem solve in cross-cultural situations. Everyone can benefit from having enhanced cultural intelligence, but it should also be seen as a work in progress. You can always learn more and be better, so what needs to be determined is what threshold of knowledge is required for which positions. In particular, what needs to be avoided is placing people in positions where a lack of cultural intelligence may have a negative strategic impact.

### **Step Three: Cultural General Versus Cultural Specific Education and Training**

The next phase should be to distinguish between cultural general education and training and cultural specific education. Cultural general education



and training looks at the broad mechanisms that help you understand what culture is, how it has shaped your own perspectives, and how it shapes those of others, which will also help you appreciate how others see you. It is not so much about what to think, but rather how to think. Cultural specific items that are representative of a specific group of people represent the fine detail.

Like putting a puzzle together, the cultural general part helps you see the big picture, but the culture specific part provides you with the pieces to fill in the picture. Although there has been debate about which is better to have, it is clear that they do work together and neither should be seen as simply good to have. Rather, both should be seen as must haves.

That being said, however, the framework for cultural general knowledge—the how to think piece—is the part that should be continuously addressed for SOF. The regions where SOF may deploy can change on a moment's notice, so investing a lot of time studying a specific culture may not be fruitful. Yet, teaching individuals how to use cultural information—how to appreciate what information is important and why—will help individuals be faster and more efficient at using cultural specific information and transforming this knowledge into a strategic advantage.

Teaching people to not just understand the words that are being spoken but, more importantly, how to determine the meaning behind the words, is what is crucial for SOF. The cultural specific information can then be added to this framework.

## **Step Four: Integrating Cultural Intelligence into SOF Education and Training**

Step four becomes the real challenge where you integrate these skill-sets into training and education. The key, as has been alluded to, is teaching people how to think more effectively.

As such, strategic thinking, which teaches individuals to think both critically and creatively, while also acknowledging that emotions will always be at play, is a really good skill set to develop. What you want is for people to understand the true meaning of the problem and to be able to come up with a variety of potential solutions or courses of action. Importantly, first you have to understand what the problem is actually about before being able to find a solution.

Additionally, operators are going to need to be able to apply this knowledge to real life scenarios. Since cultural intelligence is not just about improving communication by understanding the true meaning and intent behind words but also about achieving a desired impact, it is important to look at the psychological and leadership dimensions of being able to influence others.

At the end of the day, in the SOF context, cultural intelligence should be an applied art, not a theoretical model. Notably though, when we think of fields like anthropology, psychology, philosophy and history, for example, we tend to think of a classroom learning environment. A lot of military members may reject this type of learning environment as useless to their “real jobs” and, in fact, developing these skill-sets in a classroom may provide somewhat of a false sense of accomplishment because ultimately operators need to apply these skill sets in potentially volatile and dangerous environments.

Thus, like operational training, cultural intelligence should be incorporated into scenarios that are supposed to be reflective of potential future operating environments. In essence, what you should be teaching people to do is to make better decisions with limited knowledge, minimal time, and under physical duress. In the end, this course of action makes sense since this performance is what you are actually asking operators to do in theater.

### **Step Five: Recognize that Maintaining Enhanced Cultural Intelligence Needs Continuous Education and Training**

Finally, step five is the recognition that, like physical training and conditioning, cognitive skills need to be continuously refreshed. These skills can also fade without practice or use. If you trained for a marathon 10 years ago but have been sitting on the couch eating potato chips ever since, the odds are that you are not going to simply be able to get up and run 26.2 miles—or at least not without much pain. The brain also needs continuous exercise to stay in peak condition. As such, education and training need to be continuous endeavors at all stages of peoples’ careers.

### **Concluding Remarks**

While there may never be a “silver bullet” for solving the people puzzle, that does not mean that SOF should not go in with as much ammunition as they can carry. Ultimately, to encourage high levels of cultural intelligence, you need buy-in, you need to determine who needs to know what, and you need

to be able to teach cultural intelligence in an engaging and realistic fashion. It is also important to remember that cultural intelligence is a skill set that can always be improved upon and can get rusty if it is not being applied regularly.

The FOE is certainly going to be rife with cultural challenges. Given its global nature, coupled with fiscal restraints, enhanced cultural intelligence will not just be a luxury, but rather should be seen as a necessity for SOF in the FOE. As such, it would be unconscionable not to provide the proper cultural education and training to enable SOF to excel in these circumstances.

## 4. Matching the Footprint of Governance to the Footprint of Sovereignty

Dr. Bill Knarr

*If the expansion of governance matches the footprint of sovereignty then there would be no place where an illegal clandestine non-state actor network could hide except with the support, or at least the benign neglect, of the host nation government.*<sup>1</sup> —J.Q. Roberts

The epigraph by J.Q. Roberts, keynote at the JSOU/CANSOFCOM PDC Symposium in February 2013, shows when governance matches the footprint of sovereignty, there is no room for belligerence. Nonetheless, as the contemporary operating environment makes clear, this is not the case.<sup>2</sup> Indeed, gaps in governance present potential sanctuary for violent extremist organizations. The United States 2012 Defense Strategic Guidance further characterizes those gaps as “ungoverned territories.” It proposes that working with allies and partners to establish control is not only strategically and operationally smart, but also economically imperative as we also work “to put our fiscal house in order.”<sup>3</sup> The document suggests that “developing innovative, low-cost, and small footprint approaches [and] relying on exercises, rotational presence and advisory capabilities” are the ways forward. Additionally, it lists counterterrorism and irregular warfare as primary missions in “achieving our core goal of disrupting, dismantling, and defeating al-Qaeda” specifically, and violent extremists in general.

Not surprisingly, many have recognized that SOF are uniquely positioned to address those missions and fiscal realities because of their small footprint, unique skill sets, and core activities. These skill sets emphasize the non-kinetic as well as the kinetic and include training others, engaging host nation populations, and operating in ambiguous and unorthodox

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environments.<sup>4</sup> Core activities include or address the five operations or activities of irregular warfare to include counterterrorism.<sup>5</sup>

The theme of the symposium, *The Role of the Global SOF Network in a Resource Constrained Environment*, leveraged two of Admiral McRaven's Lines of Operation: *The Global SOF Network and Responsive Resourcing*.<sup>6</sup> Those two LOOs provided the basis for speaker and panel presentations, as well as discussions that addressed the issues of ungoverned spaces through expansion of the Global SOF Network and the fiscal advantages of using SOF.

The purpose of this chapter is to provide the views of operators who have experience "working with others." The question is, "How are those strategic level goals being executed at the tactical level?" This chapter is based on a panel discussion, *The Acid Test of Reality*, held at the symposium. The panel consisted of four SOF operators with recent field experience: two Americans and two Canadians.

The Canadian contribution comprised a captain (Eric) from the Canadian Special Operations Regiment (CSOR). He was badged in 2009 and has been deployed to Afghanistan, Mali, and Jamaica. Eric spoke mostly of his time in Mali. The second Canadian was a sergeant (Dave), who is also a CSOR badged operator. He has deployed to Kosovo, Afghanistan, and Jamaica. Currently, he is a Special Forces Detachment Commander. He spoke of his time in Jamaica.

The two U.S. participants were Sergeant Major (SGM) Michael Miller and Command Sergeant Major (CSM) David Betz. SGM Miller is Special Forces qualified and currently an instructor with the Joint Special Operations University Senior Enlisted Academy. He has been deployed to Panama, Iraq, Afghanistan, and Central and South America. He spoke of his time with the NATO SOF Headquarters in Belgium and Afghanistan, and his work in Colombia. Anchoring this panel was CSM David Betz, the Joint Special Operations University Senior Enlisted Leader. He has been deployed as a Special Forces operator to Iraq, Afghanistan, Somalia, Haiti, and the Horn of Africa. He spoke of his time in Haiti and the Horn of Africa.

During the panel, the operators discussed the background, experiences, significance, and lessons, both positive and negative, of their deployments, particularly with regard to training missions. Those missions are primarily under the authorities of foreign internal defense (FID) and security force assistance (SFA) in the United States, and defense, diplomacy, and military assistance in Canada. Each of the four operators' experiences and

perspectives are unique. However, there is common ground when they speak of training others, persistent engagement, trust, early engagement, and linking their tactical actions to strategic goals.<sup>7</sup> As such, the scheduling of this panel, which was near the end of the symposium, capitalized on presentations and perspectives by policymakers, senior military leaders, nongovernmental organizations, contractors, and academia. The focus was at the tactical level—where the “rubber meets the road.” This level is where policies and strategies are implemented, on the ground—it is where tactical applications have operational and strategic implications.

### Filling the Gaps

As J.Q. Roberts discussed ungoverned spaces, he indicated that there were “huge portions of the world where the footprint of governance is tiny and the footprint of sovereignty is huge.” He provided Mali as an example which provided a great segue to Captain Ross’s discussion of his experiences in Mali.<sup>8</sup>

During the fall of 2011, Eric deployed with a 13-man team to Mali for three months—this would be the third of four iterations of sending a CSOR team to Mali. His mission was to build counterterrorism capacity within the Malian security forces. He explained, “We partnered with the 33rd Regiment Comando Parachutiste in Bamako, Mali and we were there to build that initial relationship with them as well as determine their suitability as a long-term partner. We did that by providing tactical level training, basic light infantry skills to a company of 120 that



Figure 1. Map of Mali. Courtesy Central Intelligence Agency.

were destined to rotate up to Kidal to perform border security in Northern Mali.”

The team’s expertise was sorely needed to train the Malian forces as northern Mali had become a “gap,” a source of instability. Tensions in the northern region, exacerbated by a disenfranchised people, Malian armed fighters returning from Libya, and subsequently al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) seeking safe haven, placed the entire region at risk.

The team also provided a crash course in operational planning to the regimental staff and trained the Malian forces on air-ground integration, specifically, on how to integrate “ISR [intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance] platforms and attack helicopters in support of ground forces.” Eric also elaborated on the importance of Mali to Canada:

There is a significant diplomatic connection between Canada and Mali. At the time, it was the third largest recipient of Canadian aid just after Afghanistan and Haiti. There was kidnapping for ransom in 2008 that saw two Canadian diplomats captured in Niger and subsequently held in northern Mali. Lastly, there are significant mineral interests, and it was a democratically elected nation in West Africa.

Notably, there are a number of risks associated with training other nations’ forces. A common question is, “How do you know you are not training the members of the next military coup?” The question became a reality in March of 2012 when the democratic government of Mali was ousted by a military coup. Elements of the Malian military, led by Captain Amadou Sanogo, once trained by U.S. Forces, frustrated with what they perceived as the mishandling of the instability in the north, deposed Amadou Toumani Touré, suspended the constitution, and imposed a curfew.<sup>9</sup> The coup, however, was short-lived with the negotiated appointment of Dioncounda Traoré as acting president and a civilian administration in April.<sup>10</sup> It was later found that the CSOR’s partner force, the 33rd Regiment Comando Parachutiste, defended the democratically elected president, escorted him safely out of the country, and staged a counter-coup.

Although this was Eric’s unique experience in “training others” to fill the gaps in Mali’s national security, others had similar stories. Dave cited similar experiences as a team leader in Jamaica, his duties as a “Warrior Diplomat,” and the challenges of handing off the mission to the host nation force. Again, as in Mali, Canadian national interests were at stake. Jamaica, a member of

the British Commonwealth, has strong economic ties with Canada, and the illegal drug nexus between the two countries provides a common threat.

Dave also mentioned partnering with the “force of choice” as the host nation military transitions from the lead agency to a supporting role with the law enforcement agencies taking the lead. This change reflects a maturity in the security situation as the civil law and police organizations become more responsible for security in the local areas. This transference also reflects the type of partnering commitment that is necessary in “matching the footprint of governance to the footprint of democracy” by maintaining those commitments long enough to see positive trends. As such, all panel members spoke of the need for persistent engagement and long term commitments.

### **Persistent Engagement/Long-term Commitments**

Canada’s commitment to Jamaica started as a five-year commitment and is ongoing today. The length of time of the mission provided time for CSOR teams to rotate back into Jamaica and assess progress as they trained partner forces. Dave deployed to Jamaica twice and, from his first to second deployment, saw progress in the capabilities of the Jamaican Defense Forces (JDF) in particular and their security system in general. During his first deployment his team assisted with the JDF basic course and formalized the courseware. During the second deployment, he found the JDF more than capable of teaching their basic course and had a “firm grasp on formalizing and instituting their courseware.” During his second deployment he also sensed that the emphasis for security transitioned from the military to law enforcement. This change was a clear indication that the security system had matured to a point that local security matters were the responsibility of the police and not the military.

That ability to assess the partner’s growth, capitalizing on repeated deployments, was very similar to CSM Betz’s experiences in Haiti and SGM Miller’s experiences in Colombia. Notably, that commitment toward progress is a two-way street, and it applies to the host nation as well as the supporting nation.

As an example, SGM Miller expressed frustration that every time he went to Colombia to train partner forces, he felt that he was starting over and that there was no observable progress from the previous deployment. That is until Colombia’s military leadership understood that they had to be part



of the solution by supporting the development of the Colombian noncommissioned officer (NCO) corps, both in terms of training and education, as well as giving the NCOs responsibility and holding them accountable. A contributing factor was the development of the Command Sergeant Major Academy. According to SGM Miller, the system did not progress until the leadership pushed from the top down and told the “lieutenants and young officers to utilize the NCOs like they are supposed to be used ...” Then they started to succeed. Looking back over the last ten years, he was able to see the progress as well as the success of the program.

Nonetheless, some endeavors are much more difficult than others. From the policymakers’ perspective, Mr. Roberts stressed the “absorptive capacity” of the society as a critical factor in determining the trainability of the host nation soldier. Do they have the basic skills of reading and writing to understand and apply the training? The absorptive capacity is directly related to the time and funding required developing the force. This connection became quite apparent in Iraq and more so in Afghanistan as the literacy rate, and the capacity of the society to improve the literacy level, became a factor for those locals aspiring to be soldiers and policemen.

Indeed, there are examples of what worked and what did not work in all theaters. Admiral McRaven, in a January 2013 speech, mentioned SOF international engagement efforts and attributed persistent presence as a key to successes in the Philippines and Colombia. On the other hand, he indicated that “episodic deployments or chance contacts,” were not conducive to building relationships and trust, and cited U.S. experience in Mali as an example.<sup>11</sup> Additionally, persistent engagement develops a trust that is so necessary to a cohesive network. Those networks include the requisite enabling systems and technologies to link allies and partners as well as exploit virtual spaces.

## **Sharing is Based on Trust**

Mr. Roberts commented that 10 years ago “We [only] talked about sharing, but today we share.” That became most evident when SGM Miller discussed his duties at NSHQ in 2011 and 2012. SGM Miller’s previous training missions were under the authorities of FID or SFA and primarily involved host nation infantry or SOF—training missions that most people visualize when they think of Special Forces training indigenous forces. Additionally, most of the NSHQ training takes place at Chievres Air Base near Mons, Belgium.

However, Miller's experience was different. As a team leader for a technical exploitation operations team, he was responsible for training the 28 NATO countries and Partnership for Peace (PFP) members on a number of systems that were critical to irregular warfare, in particular counterterrorism and counterinsurgency. That training took place as part of a forward deployed contingent in Afghanistan. Those systems included the Battlefield Information, Collection and Exploitation Systems (BICES), the Secure Electronic Enrollment Kit (SEEK), and CelleBrite.

The importance of BICES as a communications and collection system among the various nations is evident, but SEEK has some far-reaching implications. Its basic function is to collect biometric data such as fingerprints, iris scans, photographs, and personal information on individuals and their families. That is valuable in and of itself, but its networking capability into a shared database is its real value. For example, when 475 Taliban escaped from the Sarposa prison in Southern Afghanistan in April 2011, 35 were picked up within a couple of days during random biometric spot checks of the population.<sup>12</sup> Another example occurred in 2009, when Afghanistan started enrolling people in their program. During that process the Federal Bureau of Investigations (FBI) crosschecked a number of prints, and one of them linked a criminal to a latent print the FBI had recorded in 2007 from a different crime scene. They passed the information to the Afghan government and helped them prosecute the individual.<sup>13</sup>

As one can imagine, there are a number of benefits to SOF. They include supporting population control in COIN, targeting of high-value individuals in CT, and protecting the force through access and entry control.<sup>14</sup> The concept of identifying individuals and population control is not new, as reflected in Figure 2 that provides an example of census operations in the Republic of Vietnam in 1968. The approach was to identify the residents of the village by a photograph corresponding to the number on the black board and recorded personal and family information. That information was placed in a book and maintained at the district. In conjunction with identity papers or cards, anyone that showed up in the village that was not in the book and could not be immediately vouched for, would be suspect until they could legitimize their presence.<sup>15</sup> Conversely, if people, in particular military-aged males, were not present for the census, the question, "Where are they?" was immediately asked.

Forty-five years ago, this process was extremely time-consuming. Although the approach is not new, capabilities since Vietnam have improved immensely. In particular, they are now able to develop and expand the network to track people, even across international boundaries, and communicate information more quickly. Imagine the implications for CT. Direct action for CT targeting is now much more defined, accurate and timely. The team can verify identities on-site in several minutes (again, as long as information on the high-value individual is in the database). Certainly, contributions to the protection of the force were readily demonstrated by SGM Miller's team when, after a two-week training session at a British camp, they biometrically enrolled and screened potential employees for a position at the camp.

Although biometrics enhances sharing, there are a number of drawbacks at the local as well as the national and international levels. In order to be effective, the database needs to be extensive—locally, nationally, and internationally. Additionally, the database needs to be available to all members. As you can imagine, human rights groups are concerned over the potential misuse of the system. As the database is developed in Afghanistan, there are



Figure 2. Identification and Census in Vietnam. Photo by Bill Knarr.



Figure 3. Biometrics in Afghanistan. Photos courtesy Department of Defense.

concerns over abuse and the potential for targeting groups that are opposed, even if in a legitimate way, to the current government.<sup>16</sup>

The use of cell phones in today's society makes them a lucrative target for exploitation.<sup>17</sup> CelleBrite Universal Forensic Extraction Device is used to extract information from cell phones, personal digital assistants and smart phones. Through link analysis and other techniques, this process allows the operator to look at enemy networks, such as al-Qaeda and Haqqani. In combination with BICES and SEEK, these become powerful network and counter network tools.

But the interoperability and sharing of those systems is based on trust. Per Admiral McRaven in USSOCOM 2020 Vision, "you can surge forces; you can surge capabilities; but you can't surge trust."<sup>18</sup> Building trust requires time and commitment. It also requires a recognition that developing those relationships and building trust is important before a crisis. Phase Zero operations, left of the line of operations, are defined as:

Joint and multinational operations—inclusive of normal and routine military activities—and various interagency activities are performed to dissuade or deter potential adversaries and to assure or solidify relationships with friends and allies.<sup>19</sup>

Everyone acknowledged that persistent presence was important, but just as important, and maybe more important, was timing—the ability to arrive well before the crisis in order to "deter and dissuade." Brigadier-General Denis Thompson, CANSOFCOM Commander, emphasized the need to be involved in Phase Zero and cited Mali, from a Canadian perspective, as a great example. "We need to be present in advance of any major conventional operation or in advance of SOF being the major show."<sup>20</sup> SGM Betz described it as "left of the line of operations," and cited experiences in the Horn of Africa and Haiti. He used the phrase, "thickening relationships" to convey the concept of persistent presence, and advocated living with the indigenous force to help thicken the relationship. He also indicated that FID was not glamorous: "there will be no movies," and patience is a prerequisite.

## Conclusion

Each operator offered his own unique experiences, reinforcing the reality that every country and location is different and that missions need to be

approached with that awareness in mind. However, there were a number of themes that linked those experiences and approaches. Those themes not only horizontally linked applications at the tactical level, but, just as importantly, vertically connected strategic and policy goals to tactical actions.

First of all is the realization that “military capabilities, once monopolized by nations, are proliferating rapidly to non-state actors. This has created a more unpredictable and dangerous security environment,”<sup>21</sup> particularly when those non-state actors find sanctuary and breed in under or ungoverned spaces. An example would be AQIM efforts in the northern regions of Mali, as they attempt to create instability throughout the region. Because of their small footprint, unique skill sets, mission capabilities, and today’s fiscal realities, SOF are uniquely positioned to partner with and train others to address those challenges.

Although it is typically referred to as “training others,” it does not do justice to the commitment and complexity of the effort. In addition to mentorship, coaching and living with those forces, it takes early and persistent engagement, trust, and the ability to link tactical actions to strategic goals and to understand the implications of those actions. Additionally, timing is just as important as persistence and, just as Admiral McRaven cautioned, you cannot surge trust. Brigadier-General Denis Thompson stressed that it requires early engagement during Phase Zero to do it right.

## 5. Private Military Corporations as Members of the Global SOF Network: Worth Another Look?

Colonel Bernd Horn

Few would disagree that generally, the public, and military for that matter, have a negative perception of private military corporations (PMCs). Their motives, allegiances, and conduct are often questioned and held under a great deal of suspicion. This view is not totally surprising since PMCs are normally linked to the concept of mercenaries. Moreover, the explosion of PMCs after 2003, as a result of Operation Iraqi Freedom, led to the rapid, unregulated rise of a large number of firms, many becoming the root cause of a number of allegations of unethical behavior and human rights abuses. But as is the case with most stereotypes and popularized myths, there is another side to the story of PMCs. In fact, their widespread involvement in the contemporary operating environment warrants perhaps a closer look at who and what they are. Furthermore, PMCs potentially represent a valuable contributor to, if not member of, the Global SOF Network.

### What Exactly Are PMCs?

There is continued confusion and/or debate on the concept, if not the terms mercenaries, PMCs, and private security companies (PSCs). To many there is no difference and many governmental, scholarly, and public discourse and narratives use the terms almost interchangeably. However, for the sake of clarity in this chapter, the terms will be defined as follows:

1. Mercenaries – Individuals or organizations who sell their military skills outside their country of origin and as an entrepreneur rather than as a member of a recognized national military force.<sup>1</sup> The international definition

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of mercenary, captured in the Geneva Conventions, under Article 47 of Additional Protocol I, is based on an individual meeting six conditions:

- a. Is specially recruited locally or abroad in order to fight in an armed conflict;
- b. does, in fact, take a direct part in the hostilities;
- c. is motivated to take part in the hostilities essentially by the desire for private gain and, in fact, is promised, by or on behalf of a Party to the conflict, material compensations substantially in excess of that promised or paid to combatants of similar ranks and functions in the armed forces of that Party;
- d. is neither a national of a Party to the conflict nor a resident of territory controlled by a Party to the conflict;
- e. is not a member of the armed forces of a Party to the conflict; and
- f. has not been sent by a State which is not a Party to the conflict on official duty as a member of its armed forces.<sup>2</sup>

2. Private Military Corporation – A legally chartered company or corporation organized along business lines and engaged in military operations across the spectrum of conflict.<sup>3</sup> The Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces states:

Private military companies (PMCs) are businesses that offer specialized services related to war and conflict, including combat operations, strategic planning, intelligence collection, operational and logistical support, training, procurement and maintenance. They are distinguished by the following features:

- a. Organizational structure: PMCs are registered businesses with corporate structures.
- b. Motivation: PMCs provide their services, primarily for profit rather than for political reasons.<sup>4</sup>

3. Private Security Company – A registered civilian company that specializes in providing contract commercial services to domestic and foreign entities with the intent to protect personnel and humanitarian and industrial assets within the rule of applicable domestic law.<sup>5</sup>

## Historical Context

As noted earlier, PMCs to this day are still lumped together by many with the concept and practice of mercenaries. At the core is the issue of payment for military/police/security type services. At the end of the day, the use of mercenaries is an age-old practice. Almost every ancient empire, including Persia, China, Greece, and Rome employed foreign soldiers under pay. The Renaissance period in Italy in the 1400s witnessed one of the best known periods of mercenary armies. The condottieri (i.e. military contractors) were formed in Free Companies and offered their services to the highest bidder. The use of mercenaries was also practiced at sea by privateers who were used widely by nations in the 1800s to enlarge their maritime forces.

The use of mercenaries only began to wane with the rise of nationalism and the nation-state, when national service, particularly in times of crisis, was considered a duty of all fighting-age males.<sup>6</sup> In addition, the growth of bureaucratically organized sovereign states, capable of effectively recruiting, maintaining, and training large armed forces began to render mercenary forces somewhat redundant and uncompetitive. More importantly, states began to see the independent/private armies, which they could not totally rely on, or control, as a potential threat to their authority and sovereignty.

Although mercenaries continued to exist and could be contracted individually to be formed into larger groups as required, no formal “corporate” entity existed well into the Cold War. The first embryonic beginnings of a PMC could be traced back to the late 1960s when Sir David Stirling, the legendary founder of the Special Air Service (SAS), created Watchguard International (1967), a firm that offered such services as security analysis, military training, and personal protection services to government clients, primarily in the Middle East, Africa, and former British colonies. During the next decade, Special Advisory Services, a British PSC, operated under the SAS acronym offering the same type of services.

Arguably, the first large scale PMC was established in 1975 when the Vinnell Corporation of California received a multimillion dollar long-term contract to create and operate an entire training establishment for the Saudi Arabian National Guard. Significantly, Vinnell advisors reportedly provided tactical support and advice to the Saudi military conducting operations to retake the Grand Mosque in Mecca after anti-government forces seized the religious site in 1979.<sup>7</sup>



In the 1980s, another former SAS member, David Walker, established Saladin Securities Limited and Keeny Meeny Services. Notably, keeny meeni is Swahili for “deadly snake in long grass,” which was also a term often used by the SAS to describe covert, stealthy, and dangerous operations.<sup>8</sup>

The rise of PMCs, however, began in earnest in the post-Cold War era. With the disintegration of the spheres of influence and economic/political support to many impoverished and politically fragile states artificially propped up by the two opposing global superpowers, the world spiraled into chaos in many regions of the globe creating failed and failing states. These countries were often of marginal strategic value and the political appetite to spend blood or treasure to stabilize them was very low. As a result, there was a vacuum to be filled.

The first of the “new breed” of PMCs was the South African firm Executive Outcomes (EO). It was established in 1989. EO marketed its services as a provider of military training and peacekeeping services to “create a climate for peace and stability for foreign investment.”<sup>9</sup> It set a new standard for PMC capability. It advertised the ability to provide:

1. a highly professional and confidential military advisory service to legitimate governments;
2. sound military and strategic advice;
3. the most professional military training packages currently available to armed forces, covering aspects related to sea, air, and land warfare;
4. advice to armed forces on weapon and weapon platform selection; and
5. a total apolitical service base on confidentiality, professionalism, and dedication.<sup>10</sup>

EO came to international prominence in March 1993, when National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA) rebels captured the Soyo oilfields. When the Angolan Army was unable to remove them, the Angolan government, specifically the Angolan state oil company Sonangol, hired EO, who in turn assigned a group of 50 former officers and noncommissioned officers to work with 600 Angolan Army troops, who quickly recaptured the oilfields. Casualties amounted to only three wounded South Africans, and there was minimal damage to the drilling equipment. The Angolan government deflected criticism of using white mercenaries by stating they were a mixed-race force of security guards.<sup>11</sup> Not surprisingly, EO has been described as “the world’s first fully equipped corporate army.”<sup>12</sup>

Their actions continued to create controversy. In September 1993, EO accepted a further contract to guard a diamond mine in Canfunfo in Lunda Norte, Angola. The “contractors” were ostensibly hired as military trainers, but were allowed to prosecute preemptive strikes against UNITA if they felt the mine was threatened.<sup>13</sup> The firm gained further notoriety in March 1995 when an EO team assisted the beleaguered Kono diamond mines in Sierra Leone. After a short period of training and preparation, the EO-led force took the offensive in April, and in 11 days they drove the insurgent Revolutionary United Front rebels out of the diamond fields. The disturbing aspect to many was the fact that the impoverished Sierra Leone government paid for the EO services by giving a firm entitled Branch Energy (owned by Strategic Resources Group, a British company, which in turn was owned by EO) the concession to operate the Koidu diamond field.<sup>14</sup>

EO’s success was not lost on others. South African intelligence reports asserted, “so successful has EO proved itself to be, the OAU [Organization of African Unity] may be forced to ... perhaps offer EO a contract for the management of peace-keeping continent-wide.”<sup>15</sup> In 1998, EO began training soldiers of the Angolan Army. However, EO closed down in 1999, when South Africa introduced new legislation under the Nelson Mandela regime, the Regulation of Foreign Military Assistance Act, which prohibited South Africans from participating in mercenary activities.

Beginning shortly after the rise of Executive Outcomes was another famous PMC, Military Professional Resources Incorporated (MPRI). Started by a number of retired U.S. Army generals, the company boasted as being the “greatest corporate assemblage of military expertise in the world.” In 1994, MPRI won a contract with the U.S. State Department to provide 45 border monitors for 18 months to report on Serbian compliance with international sanctions. That same year, it also signed a contract with the Croatian government to transform the unskilled Croatian Army into an effective fighting force that was able to conduct Operation Storm, which resulted in the seizure of the Krajina region that had been held by Serbs since the beginning of the conflict. In the end, French and British officials accused MPRI of not only training the Croatian forces but also of assisting with the planning of the operation. MPRI’s success, or at least their perceived success, led to a 13-month renewable contract with Bosnia to cover everything from planning long-term strategy to conducting war games and demonstrating how to operate the newly received equipment under the U.S. “equip and train program.”<sup>16</sup>

In 1995, MPRI also became influential in U.S. Army conceptual and doctrinal development as well. For example, it was involved in the development of the Force/Army XXI combat service support force (CSS), the U.S. Army Combined Arms Support Command on the Battlefield Distribution project, the Theater Force Opening Package, and the CSS Rock Drill. It was also contracted to write a number of Field Manuals (e.g. Theatre Distribution and Theater Support Command). In 1997, MPRI was further awarded a contract to assist in the administration and training of students enrolled in the U.S. Army Reserve Officer Training (ROTC) program. In fact, under the contract up to 50 percent of the ROTC cadre, depending on the respective university, was filled by MPRI contractors.<sup>17</sup>

MPRI was purchased in June 2000 by L-3 Communications Corporation, which specializes in command, control, and communications; intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance; government services; training and simulation; and aircraft modernization and maintenance. MPRI is now called Engility.

Also in 1994, the President of Congo-Brazzaville hired the Israeli PMC Levdan to create a new force to replace military units loyal to the former president. The United Nations itself used “hired guns,” namely armed clansmen, as guards to protect its operations in Somalia in the 1990s and in 1997 hired a “mercenary firm” to guard its offices in Kinshasa during a period of unrest.<sup>18</sup> Similarly, in mid-1990s, when the UN was trying to find forces to separate armed factions in the refugee camps along the Rwandan-Zairian border and no governments were willing to provide troops, the use of PMCs was proposed.

In 1997, another of the more infamous PMCs was created. Blackwater USA began that year as the creation of two former U.S. Navy SEALs. Blackwater USA claims to have trained tens of thousands of security personnel to work across the globe. Its state-of-the-art training facilities are regularly used by law enforcement and military personnel, including SOF. Its information brochures clearly articulated its aim:

Our mission is to provide the most in-depth risk assessment and forward-thinking analysis of our customers’ operational and security needs, and on demand, provide a force of the best trained men and women for global deployment. We employ only the most highly motivated and professional operators, all drawn from various

U.S. and International Special Operations Forces, Intelligence and Law Enforcement organizations. Our chosen focus is our greatest strength—physical and personal security, personal security/risk assessments, and training.<sup>19</sup>

Its conduct in Iraq in 2005-2007 created a hailstorm of criticism, which eventually led to a number of internal changes, including two corporate name changes.

The end of the 1990s continued to witness the expansion of PMC involvement in conflict. In 1998, the U.S. government decided to contract DynCorp, a company based in Virginia, to deploy verification monitors to Kosovo, rather than send military officers as other participating nations were doing.

However, that same year, the “Arms to Africa” or “Sandline Affair” prompted a serious look at the regulation of PMCs. In March 1997, military officers of the Sierra Leone Army ousted President Kabbah. In March 1998, after a year of brutal repression and the killing of political opposition, with no effective international response on the horizon, the British High Commissioner in Sierra Leone reached out to Sandline International to train and equip a local force capable of removing the generals who had initiated the coup and who were now ruling with an iron fist.<sup>20</sup> Both the British and U.S. governments were seemingly aware of the request and lent their tacit approval. However, the assistance was in contravention to UN sanctions in place. As a result, a scandal erupted, eventually costing the British High Commissioner his job. It also prompted a number of actions by the UN Security Council pledging support to the Economic Committee of West African States and its Military Observation Group and banning the supply of arms and supplies to the junta. Additionally, it cast a negative pall over Sandline and PMCs in general.

But, as the undercurrents of the Sandline Affair indicated, PMCs, despite the distrust that existed, represented a viable solution for governments. For beleaguered states unable to raise and train a competent force to exercise national security, or an advanced country that sought to “stretch their military budget” or find a solution to an ugly political situation that required some form of action, but the risks of embroilment were too high and the domestic appetite for such action were too low, PMCs became a possible way out. In fact, by 2002, many governments considered PMCs a viable option in the resource constrained security environment. In February, the

British Foreign Office published a Green Paper, “Private Military Companies: Options for Regulation,” which asserted that UN peacekeeping operations could be contracted out to PMCs. The argument made was that PMCs were more cost-effective than UN operations and they were much more rapid, considering how long it normally took to mount and deploy a UN peacekeeping force.<sup>21</sup>

Then British Foreign Secretary, Jack Straw, announced, “states and international organizations are turning to the private sector as a cost effective way of procuring services which would once have been the exclusive preserve of the military.” He added, “the demand for private military services is likely to increase ... The cost of employing private military companies for certain functions in UN operations could be much lower than that of national armed forces.”<sup>22</sup>

By 2004, the use of military contractors was not abnormal. In fact, many questioned the ability of the U.S. to prosecute operations without the services of Kellogg Brown and Root, one of its primary contractors. The Center for Public Integrity reported that since 1994, the Defense Department entered into 3,601 contracts worth \$300 billion with 12 U.S.-based PMCs within the United States. Not surprisingly, as the U.S. Army has decreased almost a third in size since 1990 and the end of the Cold War, PMCs have increased from a handful at best in 1989 to almost 90 by 2004.<sup>23</sup>

The rapid and unprecedented explosion of PMCs onto the international scene, however, occurred as a result of the second invasion of Iraq in 2003. PMCs became an integral component of how the war was fought. By 2004, there were approximately 10,000-20,000 private contractors serving in theater—one contractor for every 10 soldiers.<sup>24</sup> By 2008, there were approximately 60 PMCs operating in Afghanistan employing some 18,000-28,000 personnel in a global industry valued at \$100-120 billion annually.<sup>25</sup>

## A Question of Trust

Prior to the global expansion, if not explosion of PMCs, the whole issue of mercenaries has always been cloaked in distrust and suspicion. Many characterize them as disconnected from society and representative of “instruments of oppression,” used to impede political process, self-determination, and violate human rights. A British Intelligence report captured the mood. It assessed Executive Outcomes’ “widespread activities” as a “cause for

concern.”<sup>26</sup> It also noted, “it appears that the company and its associates are able to barter their services for a large share of an employing nation’s natural resources and commodities ... EO will become ever richer and more potent, capable of exercising real power even to the extent of keeping military regimes in being ... Its influence in sub-Saharan Africa could become crucial.”<sup>27</sup>

The reason for suspicion was consistently fueled by exotic allegations and actual plots of mercenaries and/or PMCs to overthrow regimes around the world. This just reinforced the belief of PMCs as sketchy characters. For example, as recently as 2004, 64 individuals linked to the former firm, EO, were captured as they embarked on a mission to remove the president of Equatorial Guinea and replace him with an opposition leader in exile. This prompted many to believe that EO was back in business.<sup>28</sup> In another case, in mid-May 2006, police in the Democratic Republic of the Congo arrested 32 alleged mercenaries of different nationalities: 19 South Africans, 10 Nigerians, and 3 Americans. Half of them worked for a South African company named Omega Security Solutions and the Americans for AQMI Strategy Corp. The men were accused of plotting to overthrow the government but charges were not pressed. The men were subsequently deported to their home countries.

Despite this nefarious press, the key undercurrent that continues to exist and feed the existence of PMCs is the fact that they provide a needed, and wanted, service. Due to often less than transparent governmental connections, some of the PMCs were seen as virtually untouchable and a law unto themselves. For example, American, Iraqi, and even industry representatives felt the PMC formerly named Blackwater, which was responsible for protecting the U.S. ambassador and other diplomats in Iraq, was “untouchable” because of U.S. State Department officials who defended it, seemingly without question.<sup>29</sup>

Apparently, the U.S. State Department allowed heavily armed teams from Blackwater to operate without the necessary Iraqi Interior Ministry licenses, even though the requirement was embedded in Department of Defense security contracts. Furthermore, Blackwater was not subject to military restrictions on offensive weapons or their procedures for reporting shooting incidents. In addition, it was exempt from the military’s central tracking system. One senior American official revealed, “The Iraqis despised them because they were untouchable.”<sup>30</sup> A senior Iraqi Interior Ministry official agreed. He insisted, “they [Blackwater] are part of the reason for all

the hatred that is directed at Americans, because people don't know them as Blackwater, they know them only as Americans.”<sup>31</sup>

The animosity is not hard to understand. Between 2005-2007, Blackwater guards were involved in nearly 200 shootings in Iraq.<sup>32</sup> The most notorious shooting by Blackwater personnel occurred in Al-Nisour Square in Baghdad when 17 people were killed and 20 others severely injured on 16 September 2007, when Blackwater personnel allegedly responded to an attack while protecting a U.S. State Department convoy.<sup>33</sup>

Adding fuel to the fire was the 2003 Abu Ghraib prison human rights scandal. A number of the accused were contract employees working for a PMC. They were never subject to investigation or legal sanction despite assurances by the U.S. Government.<sup>34</sup> Not surprisingly, this seeming unchecked authority and power, coupled with a lack of accountability, framed within the historical context and legacy of mercenary activity, breeds suspicion and a lack of trust.

## Cause for Concern?

Although many agree that PMCs have a vital role to play in the contemporary security environment, there is a large degree of concern. The first issue is a question of regulation. The explosion of PMCs as a result of Operation Iraqi Freedom due to instant need fueled the growth of the industry without the necessary safeguards to ensure personnel were qualified or properly trained. The race for governmental contracts and the need to insert personnel into a theatre that was complex, chaotic, and extremely violent, led to an infusion of many poorly trained operators who quickly became stressed, acted without necessary authority, and began shooting with little provocation. They quickly added to the problem of countering the insurgency rather than helping stop it.

Their rapid infusion into and throughout the theater of conflict also fueled legal and practical operating concerns. What exactly is the legal status of PMC personnel operating in a theatre in support of a government but employed outside of the military chain of command? From a practical viewpoint, how do you ensure an integrated response to dangerous situations when information sharing, tactics, techniques, and procedures (TTPs), as well as reporting chains are not common?

Another concern for many is the motive of PMCs—it's all about the money.

At the height of the crisis in Iraq, operators were receiving a “basic salary of \$5,000 or \$6,000 a week, topped up with danger pay and other allowances.”<sup>35</sup> A four-man ex-SAS team in Baghdad cost up to \$5,000 a day.<sup>36</sup> But in matters of national interest, the question always becomes, how can you trust those who are in it only for the money? How reliable are they?

The money issue is the catalyst for yet another concern—poaching talent. Not surprisingly, with the lure of big money, many highly trained SOF members or other military or law enforcement individuals choose to leave for more lucrative waters. This represents a drain on scarce and valuable expertise for the government that has invested huge sums in training these individuals. For example, between May 2003 and December 2004, approximately 40-60 men from the SAS and Special Boat Service sought their premature voluntary release.<sup>37</sup>

Yet another concern about PMCs involves accountability—that of the actual government. Many see PMCs as a means for a government to avoid political oversight—the ability to conduct foreign policy by proxy. It allows governments to avoid opposition and public accountability and scrutiny by using contract money to pay PMCs to execute de facto foreign policy through contracted services.

This is not lost on PMCs. Timothy Spicer, the founder of Sandline International clearly acknowledged:

It's not so much that we can do things better than sovereign governments—though sometimes in Africa a heavy machinegun can be as effective as 10 tanks elsewhere—it's that we can do it without any of the spin-offs that make military intervention unpalatable to governments; casualties [among PMCs] do not have the same emotive impact as those from national forces.<sup>38</sup>

The greatest issue, however, for those who have concerns with PMCs is the matter of the role of a sovereign state as the sole entity responsible for national security and the protection of its citizens. In essence, the specter of private armies worries many. They are seen as a challenge to the state as the sole legitimate entity to wage war, and they are viewed as generating military power that does not reside in the nation state itself, which can undermine the state's monopoly on the use of force and actually threaten the



democratic nation state, particularly in cases of weak or fragmented states. As such, some argue that PMCs actually worsen the situation for long term stability because they can prop up rogue regimes and they contribute to the proliferation of weapons.

The issue of the potency of private armies is not a mere theoretical matter. For example, Erinys, a British firm, also founded by an ex-SAS officer, Alastair Morrison, won a contract with Jordanian and Iraqi partners to protect Iraq's oil installations. The contract was worth over \$100 million, and the firm now controls a 14,000-strong force in Iraq.<sup>39</sup>

## A Question of Oversight and Regulation

The concerns mentioned are valid. However, they are not insurmountable. In fact, many of the issues that arose particularly during Operation Iraqi Freedom have already led to corrective action. Specifically, initiatives have been taken to augment the archaic legislation that is in place. The main pieces of legislation in international law that consider the use of "mercenaries" harkens back to the 1977 Organization of African Unity Convention for the Elimination of Mercenarism in Africa and the 1989 UN Convention against the Recruitment, Use Financing and Training of Mercenaries.

The U.S. also possesses legislation that impacts mercenaries and PMCs. Amended in the 1980s, the 1968 Arms Export Control Act regulates the sale of arms and the selling of military expertise in any form.<sup>40</sup> This requires any U.S. company that provides security or military services abroad to register and apply for a license from the State Department under the International Transfer of Arms Regulations, and any contracts over \$50 million must be approved by the government. There is also the Federal Criminal Statue that proscribes the enlisting or recruiting of American citizens for service against a state that the U.S. is at peace with. The British legislation is the 1870 Foreign Enlistment Act which prohibits the enlistment or recruitment of British citizens for foreign military service.

More recently, in 2008, the UK, U.S., and China, as well as 27 other states endorsed the Montreux Document on Pertinent International Legal Obligations and Good Practices for States Related to Operations of Private Military and Security Companies During Armed Conflict, which provides guidance to states on regulating PMCs. In addition, individual states (e.g. Afghanistan, Colombia, Iraq) have also begun to exercise greater regulatory authority.

In some cases PMC employees actually became members of the employer's armed forces, such as Sandline International's "Special Constables" in Papua New Guinea.<sup>41</sup>

Moreover, PMCs themselves have developed more robust internal management systems, ethic programs, and controls.<sup>42</sup> For example, Academi, the former Blackwater, due to its problems in Iraq has invested in ensuring that its reputation would not suffer further. It invested in a new governance framework to oversee ethical and legal compliance, as well as create a new chief regulatory and compliance officer. At the end of the day, as commercial entities relying on the global market economy for their livelihood, it is their reputation that will guarantee PMCs continued solubility.

Tom Rothrauff, the president of Trident International, offers some key advice to those engaging PMCs. Firstly, ensure they have a legitimate office and appropriate licensing and that they are compliant with existing regulations. Second, invest the time in researching and hiring the proper PMC that has the appropriate backgrounds for contractors; especially ensure that they employ the right people with the right job skills and experience for the situation/task at hand. Thirdly, ensure that the respective PMC possesses the appropriate equipment and standard operating procedures, as well as solid TTPs. Finally, he insists that it is important to work with PMCs that provide full contractor support (e.g. provide the necessary infrastructure and administrative support to their personnel).<sup>43</sup>

Rothrauff asserts that respectable PMCs take regulations and the respective laws to heart. A PMC, he believes, "needs to be able to stand up in front of its employer and the public and explain what you did and why." Most in the industry acknowledge and practice transparency and accountability. "What your troops do," proclaims Rothrauff, "is a direct reflection of the leadership that sent them out." He also reminds all that a "good reputation is important for future contracts."<sup>44</sup>

## **A SOF Nexus?**

So what is the nexus between SOF and PMCs? The reality is that most credible PMCs share a lineage with many international SOF organizations based on membership. As noted earlier, many SOF personnel either create or join PMCs. They take with them their ethic, skills, and TTPs. It is not by chance that Academi specifically stated in its promotional literature that the

organization “has its roots in the Special Operations community. Born of a culture that emphasizes expertise and execution, we continue to develop and perfect the skills required to support both national security and commercial objectives.”<sup>45</sup>

As well, during the turmoil created by the explosion of PMCs during Operation Iraqi Freedom, the industry itself implemented a grading system for PMCs to attempt to ensure clients understood what they were getting. As a result, the industry set the following benchmarks: Tier 1, ex-SOF; Tier 2, ex-marines/airborne; Tier 3, ex-law enforcement/private security personnel; and Tier 4, everybody else.

Once again, the Tier 1 PMCs field former SOF personnel who bring with them the SOF culture, and all the skills and attributes that accompany that. In the end, the professional competence, personal networks, and operating ethic and ethos are similar. This provides an important SOF nexus that can be exploited.

## **What can PMCs Contribute to the Global SOF Network?**

The question then becomes, what can PMCs contribute to the Global SOF Network? The answer is: potentially a lot. PMCs offer a wide variety of services, but equally if not more important, they can provide insight, information, knowledge, and expertise. In the contemporary operating environment, as already shown, they are widely employed by a number of players from corporations, nongovernmental organizations, international organizations, and governments. As a result, they have a persistent presence in many regions. Therefore, they develop relationships and networks. They understand the power brokers, decision makers, customs, and “lay of the land.” Moreover, they have probably built strong personal relationships and identified sources that can, for the lack of a better word, be exploited. As such, they can be an incredibly important information provider.

With the choice of the correct PMC, one that has qualified personnel, the information they provide should be of substantial value as the SOF nexus discussed earlier, means that the operators are experienced, tested, critical thinkers who are also accustomed to the TTPs and needs of SOF personnel. An added advantage is the fact that PMC personnel, unlike newly arrived, exceptionally fit and focused—yet unknown—Western personnel who arrive in a region/alien culture, are known and have a “legitimate” reason to be

there. For example, in 1997, Sandline International provided the American government with political-military information on events in Sierra Leone after the U.S. sources dried up following the coup.<sup>46</sup>

Another benefit to the global network is the relative PMC speed of movement, specifically their ability to get people and equipment on the ground faster than military or government because they have arguably less bureaucratic and/or political “barriers” to surmount. As such, with their ability to provide specialized forces, recruit internationally and surge rapidly, they could establish a presence in “sensitive” areas and assist in influencing and shaping regions to help in preventing local problems becoming international issues. After all, as already discussed, PMCs are arguably politically less costly. Since they deploy by choice, arranging for the contracting of a PMC abroad is seldom held to the same standard as sending national troops working for their country.<sup>47</sup> And, often, it is not seen as contentious by host countries or their neighbors as are foreign troops. As such, PMCs, in some circumstances, provide a low-cost, low-risk, low-visibility manner to exert military influence.<sup>48</sup>

## Conclusion

In the end, PMCs offer the potential to be a valuable contributor to the Global SOF Network. Their specialty skill sets, unique characteristics, persistent presence, low-visibility, and “legitimate” footprint access to local information (that may be of tactical/operational/strategic value) all make them a valued partner in the contemporary operating environment.

However, it must always be recognized that like military or other government department partners, not all PMCs are equal; it is always necessary to investigate and choose carefully. In addition, it must always be remembered that a network by definition requires a degree of reciprocity; it cannot be a one-way valve. As such, expectations must always be defined up front. It may be strictly a monetary arrangement, or it could entail a sharing of information and/or assistance in time of peril.

Nonetheless, in an ever-increasingly complex, chaotic, violent, and resource-constrained international security environment, SOF must maintain their agility, responsiveness, and effectiveness. Therefore, SOF must always strive to look for innovative solutions and maximize their ability to

leverage the Global SOF Network. As such, it may be worth taking a closer look at PMCs as another potential contributor and partner to the network.

## 6. Private Military Corporations: A View from Inside

Mr. Alan Bell

One can argue that it is counterproductive to resurrect the history of private military corporation involvement during the early days of the invasion of Iraq, but suffice it to say that PMCs have come a long way from Operation Iraqi Freedom in 2003. Moreover, during the last decade, PMCs have become an integral part of both governmental and military security infrastructures in Iraq, Afghanistan, and other parts of the globe, and they continue to provide a cross-section of security support services throughout the world. As such, they represent a potential high-value contribution to any Global SOF Network.

The term PMC was initially coined in reference to private security companies operating in Iraq, primarily because they were managed and staffed by ex-military personnel. Important to note is the fact that approximately 85 percent of today's PMCs did not even exist prior to the invasion of Iraq and those that did were operating globally under a "Gray Man" persona utilizing virtual offices, no marketing materials, and relying mainly on a website and word-of-mouth methodology to garner business contracts. There was no media involvement in operations and very little interaction with so-called government agencies.

### PMC Governance

Clearly, mistakes were made during the early days as there initially existed no governmental oversight, laws, regulations or rules of engagement (ROEs)

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governing the activities of PMCs. As a result, for several years, there were significant numbers of international PMCs operating in Iraq as a law unto themselves, with some PMCs actually conducting their operations outside of the law. During this period, for the sake of expediency, PMCs were allowed to operate unchecked, unregulated, and not managed by any governmental body. From the governmental perspective, they had little choice, as multi-million dollar contracts were being awarded daily as the American and embryonic Iraqi governments struggled to bring order to chaos. For example, in Iraq, all convoy protection was initially carried out by coalition forces. However, after too many attacks and resultant casualties, the coalition privatized convoy protection by passing the responsibility and risk to PMCs.

For PMCs, the risks are enormous. They are often required to operate in extremely hostile environments, usually without the benefit of air and ground support. They effectively operate “on their own.” If attacked, or if they sustain casualties, they normally have to rely on their own resources to get themselves out of their predicament. It is for this reason that many ex-military personnel who attempt a career in PMC work often have problems, since they are accustomed to operating under an umbrella of high-level support during operations. Not having the level of support they experienced during their military service deters a large number of potential PMC operators from joining or staying in the business.

Nevertheless, to address the sudden increase in manpower requirements during the Iraq war, a significant number of PMCs were quickly incorporated. Some were not, and to enable a client to be aware of what they were paying for, PMCs developed the tier system described in the previous chapter. This tier system was both good and bad. Initially many bogus biographies/resumes were submitted, and nobody was checking the backgrounds of potential operators. This resulted in some ex-law enforcement and other inexperienced personnel passing themselves off as Tier 1 operators. Unfortunately, as a result, this tiered system was ultimately responsible for lowering the standards and professionalism of some PMC personnel operating in Iraq and Afghanistan.

This, however, has changed. PMCs are now being managed by ex-military personnel with extensive experience in both military and business operations. As such, the industry has advanced significantly from the initial dark days of Iraq. For example, in 2004, Global Risk International (GRI) was invited to Kabul by the Afghanistan government to discuss and subsequently

establish an organization to regulate PMC operations throughout the country. The government of Afghanistan was determined that it was not going to make the same mistakes that were made in Iraq.

As a result, we had just begun the process of establishing the mechanisms and creating new rules, regulations, policies and laws, when the UN decided that they would take on that responsibility. Not surprisingly, the Afghan government concurred. Then, 12 months later, the Afghan Ministry of Interior took over the process as they saw it as an easy money grab.

## **Why PMCs are Necessary in the Contemporary Military Operating Environment**

Generally, military commanders do not want their soldiers performing basic, security related duties, particularly when conducting offensive military operations in a war zone. Their manpower requirements are such that any soldier freed from garrison type general and security duties creates additional bayonets capable of performing operations in the field. PMCs fill this gap. They can provide protective security details, convoy protection, static forward operating base security, and protection for capacity and rebuilding operations.

### **Friction Points**

Although PMCs can fill these essential functions and free up valuable combat power, there are frictions. With regard to governmental decisions on whether to use PMCs or not, there is always a foreign and defense policy nexus. Simply put, PMCs provide a gray space, some “political” latitude that military forces do not. Utilizing PMCs, particularly foreign PMCs, provides governments with minimal legal liability, and more importantly, plausible deniability.

In the end, PMCs do provide a great service. However, if international governments choose to work with PMCs, they must ensure that they are engaging reputable companies. History has shown that this cannot be said of all PMCs. As such, there must be more emphasis placed on developing relationships between PMCs, government agencies, and the military in a more formalized manner.

The failure and reluctance to develop these relationships is a severe handicap for all concerned. Specifically, the military continues to be reluctant to



provide PMCs with the necessary information and intelligence required to enable them to fully support military operations. Some international governments have built close links with the PMC industry, but these are still the exceptions. More common is the case where governments lack an understanding of military and security operations, which on occasion has had an unproductive impact on both military and PMC operations.

Unfortunately, in Canada, where GRI is located, there still remains a relatively high degree of suspicion and distrust about PMCs. In the past, if Canada has had a requirement to utilize PMCs, they have normally used foreign, not Canadian PMCs. This is mainly because they have not been educated in the nuances of PMC operations, as well as the significant legal issues.

An example from my personal experience highlights this issue. In 2009, GRI was retained to assist with the Dahla Dam, a major government project in Kandahar, Afghanistan. When I arrived in Kandahar on my reconnaissance, I had a meeting with a senior military commander. I asked some simple questions:

- Where do I get my intelligence information from?
- Who are the main power brokers?
- What type of “in extremis” support can I expect from ISAF forces?

The reply was succinct, as well as abrupt. The brigadier-general blurted, “we are looking for you to assist with providing this type of information and intelligence.”

There were additional frictions as well such as the problems with end-user certificates for PMC security team firearms; meetings with local tribal leaders and the Taliban to discuss expectations of the project(s); and working for government managers and nongovernmental organizations that have little or no understanding or perception of security.

Yet another problem in the ongoing relationship between the military and PMCs has been the military chain of command and their lack of understanding of PMC capabilities, particularly how PMCs can assist conventional and SOF military operations. Three years ago, I was asked to speak at a senior officer course at the Canadian staff college regarding how PMCs can support military operations. This generated a significant amount of dialogue between myself and the attending officers who all agreed that this was a useful exercise. But this was the first time most, if not all, had even been introduced to the concept or had given it any thought.

This is not totally surprising since there are a number of myths and incorrect stereotypes that plague the industry. The fact of the matter is if one PMC company makes a poor judgment call and innocent people are killed or injured as a result, it reflects badly on all PMCs. The result is normally that all PMCs are painted with the same brush, irrespective of their particular training and operational abilities, or their track record.

As the withdrawal of ISAF forces continues in Afghanistan, PMCs will continue to protect international capacity and infrastructure construction interests throughout Afghanistan. Unfortunately, the Afghan president is slowly replacing PMCs with the Afghan Public Protection Force, which is under the control of the Ministry of Interior, which is a state-owned organization with an Afghan National Police-centric force that is slowly going to assume the responsibilities of current PMCs.

International PMCs could be told to leave Afghanistan with only 30 days notice. This means PMCs will be leaving behind the security infrastructures that they had built up over a number of years including buildings, vehicles, weapons, and equipment. Unfortunately, historical experience has shown that most indigenous PMCs cannot effectively operate without “expat” oversight. One need only look at numerous friendly fire incidents that have occurred between friendly forces and local PMCs; all involved indigenous PMCs that did not have “expat” oversight.

## **What can PMCs Contribute to the Global SOF Network?**

So the question becomes, what does this all mean to SOF? More specifically, what can PMCs contribute to the Global SOF Network? The fact is, some PMCs have been providing this type of support globally for many years. While some PMCs have only operated in Iraq and Afghanistan and lack experience of operating in other theaters, there are other PMCs that have a vast amount of global experience and networks rooted in a large number of countries.

This experience and “infrastructure” allows PMCs to offer a wide range of “conventional” services to support government, military, and international agencies to include:

- Logistics support
- Site and personnel security
- Kidnap and ransom support

- Training and response
- Emergency quick reaction forces response support
- Counter surveillance operations
- Defensive protection operations (secure housing compounds, military bases, logistic areas)
- Psychological operations support
- Mine clearing operations
- K9 support operations
- Convoy protection operations
- Protective security operations
- Anti-piracy operations
- Intelligence support

There are also a number of “non-conventional” services that PMCs can offer, including:

- Threat, risk, vulnerability assessments of the security environment (political, local, and military) and emerging country risks
- Integration of threat assessments and response mechanisms
- Technology-enabled strengthening of security around critical infrastructure facilities including access control and security systems, oil/gas pipelines, power grids, air and sea ports, and telecommunications
- Counter surveillance operations
- Intelligence and human intelligence operations
- Introduction of potential local resources
- Cultural overview

There are many advantages to including PMCs in the Global SOF Network. For instance, PMCs:

- are able to work freely outside the wire;
- can develop local relationships/sources;
- are able to generate ongoing and up-to-date information; and
- can provide a significant amount of information to “other agencies.”

However, there is a danger that the information that is gathered and shared, if misused or shared with the wrong parties, can compromise the respective PMC(s) and their human sources.

## Why Should PMCs be Considered a Value Added Partner in the Global SOF Network?

In short, with the international threats facing the collective of nations today, the fact is that there are only a limited number of SOF resources available. As such, there could be an opportunity for selected PMCs to act as a force multiplier on selected SOF operations or tasks.

Obviously, not all PMCs can be considered capable to provide this type of support, but it could be an additional consideration when planning future operations. A significant number of PMCs already have extensive experience working in hostile environments and war zones, on top of their previous military experiences.

Importantly, working consistently outside the wire gives PMCs many opportunities, as well as the latitude to regularly interact with the local population to a degree that military personnel could never hope to achieve. Once again, it is important to note that some PMCs may be uncomfortable in this role. However, for those that are not, they often represent “eyes and ears on the ground” before any military force arrives. For example, one Christmas Eve I received a call from a Somali asking for “contacts” on the ground.

Governments will continue to face complex and growing challenges and will be looking at SOF assets to provide innovative and novel solutions. They will also attempt to bring together a wide range of diverse capabilities. Regional problems in such areas as Mali, Algeria, Niger, Sudan, Chad, Libya, as well as other countries around the world, will create the next potential crisis area and the need to conduct counterinsurgency, counterterrorism, stabilization, or security operations. As always, resources and “willing nations” will be scarce. PMCs could provide some relief.

Those PMCs that focus their own resources and create compelling partnerships with organizations to address this ever-growing demand will become an excellent resource for the future. Why? Because they are already on the ground, are a known entity in the area, and are not averse to risk taking or innovation. Quite frankly, American “boots on the ground” are not wanted in some countries. Countries prefer Commonwealth countries such as the UK, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. PMCs provide another viable option.

The bottom line is that, in general, PMC contractors are well-led, effective, and reliable subordinates to work alongside the military. Some military

personnel who can get things done are given some slack while operating in a combat situation, but otherwise it's all about avoiding bad publicity. It is better to appear competent than to actually be competent.

PMCs have the advantage of hiring former well-trained and motivated military officers and NCOs on the basis of their ability to get things done. A PMC contractor of whatever rank who does not perform can be terminated immediately. All PMC contractors understand that they either perform or they are terminated. Additionally, PMC contractors can also leave at any time (with some financial loss for breaking a contract). Why do PMC contractors put up with all these demands and challenges? The reason is the pay is better than they would get in the military (or civilian jobs) for the same kind of work. Moreover, the people they work with and for are usually of a higher quality.

## Conclusion

PMCs will never fully replace military forces. However, under certain circumstances, PMCs could be used to complement military forces as an effective force multiplier. There will always be a demand for PMC services. All countries could benefit, as long as the PMCs they retain do not compromise standards in their hiring, training, and operational practices. As such, PMCs will continue to perform a valuable service, thereby freeing up military resources to conduct military operations. Additionally, PMCs provide a commercial service to commercial interests that the military is not mandated to provide. Love them or hate them, PMCs are a commercial necessity.

In the end, PMCs will remain, as long as there is a requirement for them to operate in support roles in hostile environments around the world, either with or without military support. A significant amount of military training and support of indigenous security forces is already being commercialized. It is important to note that the majority of international PMCs take their responsibilities seriously and take great care and pride in selecting their employees. The military is not always so fortunate.

Therefore, if PMCs are well trained and operate under strict guidelines with effective ROE, they could support future conventional and SOF global military operations. As such, well trained and equipped PMCs will continue to have an important role to play in supporting governments and the military; protecting commercial activities; responding to humanitarian

emergencies; and strengthening accountable national security capabilities around the globe, particularly in support of SOF operations. Undeniably, they should be considered a value-added partner in the Global SOF Network.



## 7. General Themes and Thoughts

Mr. Chuck Ricks

The preceding chapters provide in-depth looks at many of the most compelling issues that emerged from the two-day symposium. However, they are not exhaustive in their treatment of the discussions that ranged across a wide collection of topics.

Drawing on Lieutenant-General Stu Beare’s reminder that “we are a culture of doing,” a variety of themes and thoughts emerged that sought to address the challenge of seeking greater efficiency and becoming more effective in delivering operational success with the resources provided—whatever they may be. This chapter is dedicated to an overview of those various themes and thoughts. Some of the latter are narrowly defined and contained within a single theme. However, most reflect the complexity of the challenge by crossing presentation boundaries and resulting in inevitable overlap and occasional contradiction.

Given the evolving quantitative restrictions on what has been a largely unconstrained resource environment for the past decade-plus of war, SOF face more missions that are qualitatively altered from recent experience with the gradual shift in emphasis from direct to indirect action. The way ahead for Global SOF Networks relies on the collective embrace of critical thinking, innovation, and change management to be effective.

### 1. Networks require persistent attention and sustained nurture.

There was a consensus, expressed in a variety of ways, that the concept of SOF is “riding high” and has experienced a bit of a “Renaissance” over the

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past 11 years. Consequently, the next major goal is to take the necessary steps to retain what has been established over that time by strengthening and expanding existing networks. Recalling that it took a decade to “get all the SOF guys into one tribe,” Rear Admiral Kerry Metz, Deputy Commander, Special Operations Command Central, suggested, “let’s not repeat the 10 year-lesson.”

He went on to stress the importance of a unified effort by suggesting that “when we go, we go together.” While not embracing entirely the terminology to “thicken the Global SOF Network,” he did say that “strengthening such networks is ok.” When faced with complicated and diverse environments—populated with multiple cultures, languages, and problem sets—relationship building and sustainment are central to success in strengthening/thickening.

Rear Admiral Metz reminded the attendees that networks can be very dissimilar, with uneven interaction among members featuring a mosaic of bilateral and multilateral partnerships. The attitudes of network partners toward SOF can also vary. He noted that “some countries will take as much as we can give them; others are not as welcoming of SOF.”

In discussing the nature of these relationships, Rear Admiral Metz emphasized that they are neither position-based (commanders don’t automatically “match up”) nor, certainly, rank based, a point made by various speakers. For instance, General (retired) Charles Holland, former Commander USSOCOM, noted that once, as a major general, one of his counterparts was a major. Rear Admiral Metz asserted that “if you don’t have a personal relationship, they’re not picking up the phone to talk with you.”

Perhaps more than ever, the establishment and sustainment of such relationships remains the center of gravity for SOF success. Mr. J.Q. Roberts, Principal Director, Special Operations and Combating Terrorism, Office of the Secretary of Defense, spoke of “shared values, shared skills, shared burdens, and shared costs,” all of which “result in expertise that the United States and Canada might not have themselves.”

Mr. Roberts established as an achievable goal an “international, inter-agency, SOF-centric, networked collection of like-minded security officials who ideally will collaborate and cooperate in the future to address the threats that I think we’ll see over the next 20 to 30 years.”

One venue for such cooperation lies in the energizing of diverse domestic and international partners to shift the focus of the effort from direct action (“where we act and our partner gains deniability”) to indirect action (“where

our partner takes the action on his own behalf”). This shift in missions generates fewer requirements for the direct approach while increasing the need for multiple skill sets from various sources to build partner capacity and effectiveness. Thus the focus on assisting a partner to “help himself will help us all.”

Mr. Roberts argued that the shift in American security focus will assist in the migration of mission focus from the direct to the indirect. As part of this process, the central question that needs to be asked is whether the “footprint of governance matches the footprint of sovereignty.” If so, then there is no area for instability to take root “without either the encouragement, tolerance, or at least the benign neglect of the government.” However, in situations where there are gaps in sovereignty, “we can’t close those ungoverned spaces ... It’s up to the guy who owns the land to close the ungoverned space.” That effort demands a variety of partner organizations and skill sets.

Within that context, Rear Admiral Metz included a discussion of the diverse cultures encountered within domestic, whole-of-government networks as well as in partner nations. Echoing his comment above about a Global SOF Network unity of effort, he said that the inclusion of the State Department/Ministry of Foreign Affairs, government-wide intelligence agencies, law enforcement, diplomatic country teams, and other relevant organizations is essential because “if we’re going to get this done, we’re going to have to get it done together.”

Acknowledging the difficulty of building such relationships, Rear Admiral Metz noted that “we could say it’s too hard ... and we’d get nowhere ... or we could reach across the aisle and tell them, ‘here’s what we need.’” A predictable response from such potential partners to the high-energy, self-confident SOF Warrior is, “don’t overwhelm us, don’t outrun us, and we’ll be your partner.”

Brigadier-General Denis Thompson, Commander, CANSOFCOM, spoke of the unique capabilities of the SOF “3-D Warriors” who animate the whole-of-government process by bringing with them defense, diplomacy, and development capabilities that result in positive effects within the area of operations.

Rear Admiral Metz reminded the audience that partners “do what they can do.” Patience and understanding are essential because, after all, “we need to take advantage of the skill sets, capabilities, and resources of other organizations.”

Consistent with this point, General (retired) Holland discussed the virtue of patience as a critical aspect of SOF operation when dealing with various partners who field different capabilities. He reminded the group that “what we want to do is to make sure we have a framework to make sure everyone is successful.”

In speaking of the roles of networks, Lieutenant General John Mulholland, Deputy Commander, USSOCOM, identified some of the challenges of melding together diverse partners and the absolute need to “sustain the connecting tissue” that has grown and strengthened over the “nearly 12 years of battle together.”

“It seems easy, but when people come together, there’s friction, even among friends.” The process brings together partners with different capabilities, capacities, and limitations. It is necessary to “overcome the friction that coalition warfare and coalition efforts require.”

Yet Lieutenant General Mulholland argued that “there is no better element to do that than the Special Operations community because we have so much in common and we share so much together.”

Mr. Roberts and General Holland addressed the important roles that conventional forces play in the effective functioning of a SOF network. In fact, the fifth SOF Truth has captured the essence of this relationship: “Most Special Operations require non-SOF support.”

Other organizations that have played major roles during the past decade of war are the private military companies who bring skill sets, experience, and responsiveness to the fight. Colonel Horn’s earlier chapter spoke to the dynamics and complexities of the roles of the PMCs.

Linked to this discussion of networks is the need to identify responsibility for leadership. Both presenters and participants were among those who spoke to this issue. “Who takes the lead?” asked Rear Admiral Metz. “The U.S.? Allies? Regional Partners?” One of the attendees noted that, “we don’t always know or understand the results that flow from the SOF networks ... We don’t have to own or manipulate the network; we need merely to invest in people.”

In response, Mr. Roberts commented that “no single nation should try to control the SOF network ... all should use and leverage the bounce we get out of the network.”

Various speakers, panelists, and participants spoke to the continuing need to be adaptive to the specific environments in which SOF find themselves.

The evolution of regionally focused fusion centers, variously referred to as International Support Centers or Regional SOF Coordination Centers, was portrayed as a way to gain efficiencies in relationship building by focusing on the complexity and diversity of specific environments.

Rear Admiral Metz was the first of several to speak about the value of building SOF network structures within environments where organizations such as the North American Air Defense Command and NATO have established structures and records of effectiveness.

Absent the stability and predictability of such legacy organizations, General Holland asserted that it is necessary to “take in the culture of those you are dealing with ... the strategic thinking and cultural roots of interagency organizations and others who don’t plan like us, don’t act like us, don’t think at the ‘speed of war.’”

Adding complexity to the sustainment of networks built over the past decade of war and the establishment of new ones was the clear awareness that the resource environment is becoming increasingly constrained. One oft-repeated concern was for the need to pay attention to the uncertain consequences of budget cuts and austerity on SOF institutions and mission sets. In his opening comments, Dr. Brian Maher suggested that SOF are “good at economies of scale.”

Consistent with that observation, one of the panelists argued that it is not possible to “do all things well in a time of declining resources.” Thus it is essential to establish priorities for skill set proficiency and network expansion to achieve maximum effects.

As part of the discussions, an important question was posed that asked, “what does ‘value-added’ mean” when diverse partners are seeking to gain from a network relationship? With that question came the caution that “networks will fail if those invested don’t get out of them what they desire.” Especially in times of constrained resources, SOF need to prioritize their requirements and then develop innovative ways to meet them, to include leveraging the capabilities and capacities of network partners. This concern directly contributes to the uncertainty about the identification, assessment, and achievement of measures of effectiveness as addressed in the final theme discussed later.

## **2. Cultural intelligence/cross-cultural competence programs contribute significantly to SOF network effectiveness and should be viewed as force multipliers, especially in times of diminishing resources.**

Perhaps more than anyone else, SOF must be able to adapt to and navigate through the complex human and cultural terrain in which they operate. Dr. Emily Spencer's chapter—*Solving the People Puzzle: Educating and Training SOF Operators for Enhanced Cultural Intelligence*—addresses this issue in great detail.

During his comments about NATO SOF Headquarters, Mr. Scott Morrison, Director, Commander's Action Group, NATO Special Operations Headquarters, spoke about the "human network" as the key center of gravity. Later a senior leader reminded the symposium attendees of the importance of "understanding the roles, perspectives, and cultural nuances of those you're working with." While it is true that conventional forces and other partners such as nongovernmental organizations must also do so, the former generally pursue different mission sets and the latter maintain a long-term presence that allows for a more measured immersion into a culture. That is usually not a luxury available to SOF.

In addressing the guiding theme of the symposium, presenters spoke of the time investment required to gain proficiency in cultural issues. Dr. Spencer argued that "time is more often the issue than money—cultural intelligence involves a huge amount of time." Complicating the matter is the fact that the cultural landscape is constantly in flux. As Dr. Kerry Fosher, Anthropologist, Director of Research, USMC Center for Advanced Operational Culture Learning, pointed out, "cultures don't hold still and wait for you to show up with your 'smart card.'"

Cultural effectiveness is a function of education, training, and experience. Typically budget fights debate issues such as whether resources should be devoted to cultural training or to language training. The correct answer, suggests Dr. Spencer, is "yes." Both need to be addressed in a balanced manner.

Focusing on the future operating environment, Dr. Spencer sought to distinguish between cultural general and cultural specific knowledge. Cultural general knowledge enables a person to "learn and understand in a different way." What cultural cues should I be looking for? What are the cultural cues that I am seeing? How do I read them? By contrast, cultural specific efforts

require “frameworks to build and assess culturally specific information.” What are a (specific) culture’s core values? How can I identify them? How might they impact my mission?

**3. The traditional values of trust and confidence among SOF network partners become even more important in times of constrained resources as the mission sets expand while the margin for error diminishes. Each network partner, whatever their role, must contribute effectively.**

The effectiveness of SOF networks relies to a large degree on the trust and confidence shared by its human and institutional partners. These central features of any relationship require time and effort to mature. Several participants invoked Admiral McRaven’s admonition that “You can’t surge trust.” It is a condition that must be in place and credible when circumstances demand. It can never be an afterthought.

In discussing the challenges of “sustaining the connecting tissue,” Lieutenant General Mulholland cited the familiar concerns over national agendas, different cultures, and national caveats. Several speakers spoke about the fact that it took a decade or more to get all the SOF “tribes” onto the same campaign plan and of the need to build on the linkages that have evolved over time.

There was also discussion at different times about the capabilities of the partners. Lieutenant General Mulholland asserted that “I’m more concerned with capabilities than caveats. There’s always something to be done; we just have to vet the capabilities to see what is possible.” Another panelist spoke of capacity-building missions that involve assessments of a military organization’s current state of training and an evaluation of the country’s “suitability as a partner.” In building trust and confidence, “we’ve got to be honest with each other about what we can and cannot do.” It may be that certain partners will, by necessity, be limited to “important niche capabilities.” But each partner must be able to perform as promised and justify the trust and confidence that are central to the effectiveness of the SOF network.

#### **4. The ongoing shift in emphasis from direct to indirect action is increasing SOF engagement in Phase Zero shaping activities, thus placing increased demand on network partners who bring with them 3-D (defense, diplomacy, and development), security assistance, and governance skill sets.**

There was considerable interest expressed in the shift of mission sets resulting from the increased emphasis on shaping, capacity building, and governance. Several of the senior leaders endorsed the need to be involved with Phase Zero operations. This would include the placement of liaison elements in various domestic and international organizations, a practice carried out by Canada, the U.S., and other countries. Their role is to develop understandings of partner systems with an eye toward leveraging diverse capabilities in times of need.

Lieutenant-General Beare was adamant that SOF “need to be there before the bang—in fact, to prevent the bang!” SOF need to “be out there before the crisis.” Several panelists discussed foreign internal defense missions as central platforms for shaping the environment. Working with host nation SOF, conventional forces, and other government institutions allows SOF to “get closer to the problems” and develop “recommendations for future engagements” in coordination with partner SOF.

CSM Dave Betz reinforced the view that “FID is used for persistent engagement ... it’s not glamorous; it’s a hard, challenging job.” He went on to challenge the attendees to “develop imaginative ways to train,” especially in times of resource constraints. One of the challenges to FID and other Phase Zero activities posed by reductions in resources is that personal assessment visits will become less frequent, and deploying SOF units will have to become proficient in relying on written assessments rather than personal contacts to prepare themselves for the areas in which they will operate.

#### **5. Persistent attention to interoperability and integration protocols is essential to leverage the contributions of others and to maximize SOF network effectiveness in a resource constrained environment.**

There was considerable interest in the need to seek efficiencies in the functioning of SOF networks. Discussions about interoperability and integration concerns began with the truism that “no nation can [act] alone.” Care

was taken to distinguish between interoperability and integration, with the former meaning “coexisting within the same space” and the latter the “synchronization of activities.” Awareness of partner capabilities and priorities assists in identifying those partners with whom we must maintain interoperability and those with whom we need to integrate. Such awareness comes from relationships built during “quiet times” so they are available when necessary.

Yet uncertainty persists in the different approaches to building required trust and confidence. Recognizing that building upon existing structures such as NATO and the North American Aerospace Defense Command eases the challenge of forming and sustaining networks, speakers and panelists spoke of the need to identify and exploit existing protocols such as agreements among domestic interagency partners and international treaties among countries. Especially at the tactical level, experience teaches that the leveraging of common tactics, techniques, and procedures helps to ensure a common effort.

There was also the recognition that circumstances can make it necessary for SOF to “be prepared to engage with people you never thought you would (“unnatural relationships”). One issue that arose several times was the need to integrate with conventional forces for various forms of support. General Holland stated that the “integration piece with conventional forces is the key to success.”

Integration with interagency and international partners is advanced through the employment of SOF liaison officers and others who serve as functioning members of organizations, not just as points of contact for data exchanges. Through such arrangements we develop the common understanding that “if we’re going to get this done, we’re going to have to get it done together” (Rear Admiral Metz and others). Even so, as pointed out elsewhere, it took more than a decade to bring the various SOF communities together in Afghanistan to achieve a unity of effort. The challenges of integrating the efforts of interagency partners, intergovernmental organizations, and nongovernmental organizations are inevitably more difficult because of the different agendas and cultures they bring with them.

Among others, the senior leaders spoke of the “interoperability gap” and noted that it is “tough for many countries to keep up.” Because technology often provides the leverage to close many of those gaps, it is not always



possible that all SOF partners are equally equipped, either because of their own resource constraints or “national decisions.”

**6. Especially in a time of constrained resources, it is imperative to develop and communicate a “compelling narrative” to educate various stakeholders about the value SOF provide.**

One of the shared realities is that SOF represent very small segments of any country’s defense establishment and, therefore, risk being overwhelmed or shoved aside as battles for resources are fought by the larger and bureaucratically more powerful members. Quite simply, many—if not most—of those not associated with SOF neither know nor understand what SOF is about. Lieutenant General Mulholland expressed amazement at the “amount of continuing adult education required to help people understand what we do ... and that’s after 12 years!” He went on to assert that there is “always, always a requirement for an ongoing program to educate and inform.”

Thus, SOF networks must rely on compelling narratives to inform and persuade various stakeholders. Their purpose is to strengthen ties and educate decision makers and enablers such as conventional forces who are critical members of any SOF network. Mr. J.Q. Roberts noted that while resource constraints are a harsh reality, the emerging security environment remains complex and dangerous and must be addressed. He presented what he saw as the specific elements of the contemporary security environment, portraying a mix of non-state actors, such as terrorist groups and various criminal elements, and state actors who seek to act either directly through cyber attacks and other forms of direct action or through surrogates who can be difficult to identify, trace, and neutralize. He briefly summarized the details of the January 2012 U.S. Strategic Guidance and concluded, “it sure sounds like SOF to me!”

**7. Measures of effectiveness must be clear, understood, shared, and practiced by members of the SOF network.**

Of all the various themes and issues that emerged from the symposium, the discussion of measures of effectiveness was perhaps the most incomplete. The issue emerged during various sessions, sometimes in the form of a question, but it remained largely unresolved. For instance, the effort to create a

“compelling narrative” is dependent on the ability to track, document, and communicate SOF effectiveness. Success narratives are essential to informing and persuading influential constituencies about the value-added provided by SOF. Thus the requirement for both an ongoing education program about the value of SOF and the creation of SOF success narratives depends on clearly defined measures of effectiveness.

Recalling Lieutenant-General Beare’s comments about the necessity to “deliver operational success,” questions and concerns emerge that demand attention. What specific examples demonstrate when and how SOF achieved the measures of effectiveness set for a mission? These must not be superficial “good news stories,” but rather substantial cases where SOF’s unique capabilities achieved important strategic goals.

Mr. Roberts’ vision of “an international, interagency, SOF-centric, networked collection of like-minded security enterprises” certainly provides a structure within which to pursue Lieutenant-General Beare’s imperative. Given both the current and future international security environments discussed during the gathering, such a structure can respond effectively to situations through direct (“we act”) or indirect action (“they act”).

Some basic questions that must be addressed about measures of effectiveness include: What are the measures of effectiveness for the functioning of the SOF network? For instance, “how can you tell if all of this [cultural and language training] is having a positive effect?” What should the measures of effectiveness be? How do we gain common acceptance of the measures of effectiveness? How do we communicate them to all of the SOF network partners? How do we assess how well we’ve done in achieving those standards?

## Senior Leadership Perspectives

The symposium was fortunate to host several senior leaders who presented their perspectives on the roles of SOF networks and then participated in discussions of topics addressed by the symposium. As noted earlier, they spoke of the high regard that SOF presently enjoy, but warned that the current respect for SOF competence and success is fragile and in need of continuous attention. Thus it is necessary to be able to tell the story of SOF, to educate so that those stakeholders in the non-SOF communities know and understand what value SOF bring to the national security mosaic, especially in times of diminishing resources.

One of their shared themes addressed a sense of purpose, of the need to answer the question “Why are we here?” Some addressed the utility of the national military establishment and its role and purpose in specific contingencies. Others more narrowly focused on the role and purpose of SOF, offering suggestions on how to build the educational narrative so frequently mentioned during the symposium.



Figure 4. Brigadier-General Denis Thompson (left), Dr. Brian Maher (center), and Lieutenant General John Mulholland discuss key issues during The Role of the Global SOF Network in a Resource Constrained Environment symposium at MacDill Air Force Base on February 27, 2013. Photo by Marine Master Sergeant Fred Zimmerman.

One issue that arose from this group addressed the challenge of balancing national political guidance—typically concerning indirect activities such as building justice and corrections systems; facilitating job creation; building an effective education system; ensuring safe water delivery; and other activities associated with good governance—with the operational requirements of the mission. The latter tend to address more frequently the “defense” component of the 3-Ds and require a more immediate and responsive posture.

More generally, the strategic perspective provided by the senior leadership during the two days served as a source of context and a sense of what is possible in times of resource contraction. Not surprisingly, much of what is possible depends on a diverse and capable network of perspectives, expertise, and skill sets. What is possible is not always obvious, and requires leadership attention to take advantage of what various partners bring with them to the challenge.

## Conclusion

The symposium succeeded in remaining focused on the role of SOF networks in a time of resource constraints and uncertainty. Though many broad themes and issues arose during the panel discussions and questions from the attendees, these were typically talked about more narrowly in terms of their implications and consequences for SOF networks.

By remaining on topic, the gathering was able to advance the agendas of last year's symposium in Canada while raising fresh topics that suggest themselves for further discussion during next year's and subsequent symposiums. Comments by attendees and feedback from presenters and panelists affirmed the symposium's educational and relationship-building success. In his closing remarks, and with an eye toward subsequent gatherings, Brigadier-General Thompson spoke of the need to sustain the continuity of the SOF effort and noted the value of "deconfliction conferences like this" in achieving that goal. ↑



# Endnotes by Chapter

## CHAPTER 1

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## CHAPTER 3

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Senate Armed Services Committee Emerging Threats and Capabilities Subcommittee,” 9 April 2013, 2.

2. Linda Robinson, “The Future of U.S. Special Operations Forces,” Council Special Report No. 66, April 2013, 5. Specifically, Robinson notes, “One of the most cost-effective elements of the defense arsenal, special operators are mature and highly skilled.”
3. In fact, recent experience demonstrates the value of this course of action. For example, NATO SOF Headquarters was able to assure an increase in SOF partnering efforts and the expansion of overall SOF capabilities throughout the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan. After only six years of operations, NATO SOF Headquarters standardized SOF practices throughout Europe resulting in an estimated fivefold increase in the number of operators deployed to Afghanistan. Shane McGalun, “SOCOM Commander Wants Global Special Operations Network” *Daily Tech*, 14 May 2012.
4. Robinson, “The Future of U.S. Special Operations Forces,” 6-7.
5. “U.S. Seeks Global Spec Ops Network,” *Defence News*, 12 May 2012.
6. McRaven, “Written Statement of Admiral William H. McRaven,” 6.
7. Ibid.
8. Notably, there is long standing debate about the nature and definition of culture. The 2006 American counterinsurgency manual, for example, contrasts cultural and social structures. It explains: “Social structure comprises the relationships among groups, institutions, and individuals within a society; in contrast, culture (ideas, norms, rituals, codes of behavior) provide meaning to individuals within the society.” It defines culture as a “‘web of meaning’ shared by members of a particular society or group within a society.” The manual explains this definition in terms of people’s identity, beliefs, values, attitudes, perceptions, and belief systems. It also emphasize that cultural knowledge about insurgents, as far as the military is concerned, should be exploited to be used to further U.S. national objectives. *Counterinsurgency*, 2006, 3-6, 3-8. Similarly, scholar Adam Bozeman, defines culture as “those norms, values, institutions and modes of thinking in a given society that survive change and remain meaningful to successive generations.” Adam Bozeman cited in Montgomery McFate, “The Military Utility of Understanding Adversary Culture,” *Joint Force Quarterly*, 38, 2005, 48, note 4. While all these definitions (as well as most of the plethora of available definitions of culture) are complementary, Alan English does an exceptional job of breaking culture down into its component parts and thereby, arguably, make the concept of culture more understandable at a structural level. English defines culture as a set of common beliefs and values with a group of people that combined, transform into attitudes that are expressed as behaviors. Allan



D. English, *Understanding Military Culture: A Canadian Perspective* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2004), 12.

9. Notably, it is not just in the role of SOF networks that enhanced cultural intelligence is important. It is also important to the “shaping” piece before a conflict actually happens. Moreover, it is paramount when dealing with local populations, other governmental departments (OGDs) and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), just to mention a few. In fact, there is no SOF task, including direct action (DA), where enhanced cultural intelligence would not be a benefit to operators. For example, cultural intelligence can help with targeting, determining what type of resistance might be met during an attack and also what the retaliation might be. It can also help predict what the domestic reaction might be if information is leaked in the media and what type of collateral damage might occur as a result.
10. For a further elaboration on cultural intelligence see Emily Spencer, *“Solving the People Puzzle”: Cultural Intelligence and Special Operations Forces* (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 2010).

Also, it should be noted that there are several different terminologies used to express the advantageous use of cultural knowledge. These terms include, but are not limited to, cultural savvy, cultural astuteness, cultural literacy, cultural appreciation, cultural expertise, human terrain, cultural awareness, cultural competency, and cross-cultural competence. There are also many different proposed acronyms for cultural intelligence, for example, CI, CULTINT, and CQ.

CQ draws parallels to the more commonly used term Intelligence Quotient (IQ). IQ is based on the early twentieth century findings of German psychologist William Stern that the mental age to chronological age remains relatively constant throughout one's life. This suggests that an individual's IQ does not change throughout his or her lifetime. “What Does IQ Stand for and What does it Mean?” [http://www.geocities.com/rnseitz/Definition\\_of\\_IQ.html](http://www.geocities.com/rnseitz/Definition_of_IQ.html); Accessed on 14 July 2007.

The way that CQ is used in this chapter, however, does directly argue that individuals can increase their CQ with knowledge and the motivation to apply that knowledge toward a specific goal. Indeed, Christopher Earley and Soon Ang, the originators of the term, are also clear on this point. They write, “We use the shorthand label of CQ as a convenience to remind the reader that this is a facet of intelligence. However, we do not use CQ in a strict fashion as is implied by ‘IQ’; that is, we do not mean to denote a mathematical relationship generated from normative data of capability. In this sense, our usage parallels that from the literature on emotional intelligence and their usage of ‘EQ.’” Christopher Earley and Soon Ang, *Cultural Intelligence: Individual Interactions Across Cultures* (Stanford: Stanford Business Books, 2003), 4. Notably, whatever the label one applies to the concept, in the end, the issue is to determine what

enables people to function effectively in cultural settings. One should not lose sight of this objective.

11. Interview by author with a Canadian SOF operator, November 2012.
12. See for example, Michael T. Flynn, James Sisco and David C. Ellis “‘Left of Bang’: The Value of Sociocultural Analysis in Today’s Environment,” *Prism* 3(4) 2012, 13-21.
13. Nonetheless, there is much valuable research that has been done and continues to be conducted. A good starting point to explore the topic is: Jessica A. Gallus, Melissa C. Gouge, Emily Antolic, Kerry Fosher, Victoria Jasparro, Stephanie Coleman, Brian Selmeski and Jennifer L. Klafehn, “Cross-Cultural Competence in the United States Department of Defense: An Annotated Bibliography,” *Technical Report*, United States Army Research Institute for the Behavioral and Social Sciences, February 2013.

## CHAPTER 4

1. J.Q. Roberts, Principal Director Special Operations and Combating Terrorism, Office of the Secretary of Defense, presentation at the Joint Special Operations/Canadian Special Operations Conference, held in Tampa, Florida on 27 and 28 February 2013, entitled *Global SOF Networks—A Policy Perspective*.
2. Ibid on the conference and Defense Strategic Guidance, 5 January 2012, Sustaining U.S. Global Leadership: Priorities for 21st Century Defense. Like-minded nations, p. 1.
3. President Obama’s 3 January 2012 Forward to the January 2012 Defense Strategic Guidance.
4. Rick “Ozzie” Nelson and Michael Stieg, Center for Strategic and International Studies, *Implications of the 2012 Defense Strategic Guidance for U.S. Special Operations Forces*, 13 February 2012, accessed on 29 April 2013 at <http://csis.org/publication/implications-2012-defense-strategic-guidance-us-special-operations-forces>.
5. *The Irregular Warfare: Countering Irregular Threats*, Joint Operating Concept, 17 May 2010, Version 2.0, lists counterterrorism, unconventional warfare, foreign internal defense, counterinsurgency, and stability operations as the five IW operations and activities. Joint Publication 3-05, *Special Operations*, 18 April 2011, lists the first four (CT, UW, FID and COIN) as Special Operations core activities and then describes its support for stability operations.
6. United States Special Operations Command, *SOCOM 2020*, accessed on 28 April 2013 at <https://sof.socom.mil/sites/opt/global/Readingroom/Shared%20Documents/current/2020StratDoc.pdf>.
7. Dr. Emily Spencer, editor, *Special Operations forces: Building Global Partnerships*, dated 2012, was published after the December 2011 symposium. Chapter 6, “The

Acid Test of Reality: Accounts of Working with Others from the Front Lines in Iraq and Afghanistan,” provided the themes from that panel. Those included Operational Culture. Although that was also a dominant theme for this panel, the perspectives were very similar and the author chose to cite other themes for discussion. Please see that document to gain an understanding of their perspectives on operational culture.

8. Mali, formerly a French colony, became independent in 1960 under a military dictatorship. By 1991 Mali was democratically ruled.
9. Simon Tisdale, Mali, Fragile Democracy and Clumsy U.S. Policy, *The Guardian*, 18 January 2013, accessed on 20 January 2013 at <http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2013/jan/18/mali-fragile-democracy-clumsy-us-policy>. According to the article, Sanogo had trained in the United States at Fort Huachuca, Arizona, Quantico, Virginia, and Fort Benning, Georgia.
10. Central Intelligence Agency, World FactBook, accessed on 29 April 2013 at <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ml.html>.
11. Stew Magnuson, “Mali Crisis Officer Lessons for Special Operations Command,” *National Defense*, May 2013, 28.
12. Tom Shanker, “To Track Militants, U.S. Has System That Never Forgets a Face,” *New York Times*, 13 July 2011, [http://www.nytimes.com/2011/07/14/world/asia/14identity.html?pagewanted=all&\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2011/07/14/world/asia/14identity.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0) on 12 May 2012.
13. Mission Afghanistan, accessed [http://www.fbi.gov/news/stories/2011/april/afghanistan\\_042911](http://www.fbi.gov/news/stories/2011/april/afghanistan_042911) on 12 May 2013.
14. Joint Publication 3-24, Counterinsurgency Operations, 5 October 2009, page X-8.
15. This was not a matter of “innocent until proven guilty.”
16. “The Eyes Have It,” *The Economist*, 7 July 2012, <http://www.economist.com/node/21558263>.
17. Normally, you would also expect that of computers, but according to SGM Miller, “Not as much in Afghanistan.”
18. USSOCOM Vision 2020, and LTG John Mulholland, Deputy Commander USSOCOM, Panel Member.
19. Joint Publication 5, Joint Operational Planning, 11 August 2011.
20. Brigadier-General Denis Thompson, Commander, CANSOFCOM, Canada, during a presentation at the Joint Special Operations/Canadian Special Operations Conference, held in Tampa, Florida 27-28 February 2013.
21. Chairman’s Strategic Direction to the Joint Force, 6 February 2012.

## CHAPTER 5

1. Thomas Adams, "The New Mercenaries and the Privatization of Conflict," *Parameters*, Summer 1999, 104.
2. Jose L. Gomez, "The Role of Private Military and Security Companies in Modern Warfare," Global Research, 11 August 2012, accessed 4 November 2012, <http://www.globalresearch.ca/the-role-of-private-military-and-security-companies-in-modern-warfare/32307>.
3. Quoted in Eugene B. Smith, "The New Condottieri and US Policy: The Privatization of Conflict and Its Implications," *Parameters*, Winter 2002-03, 105. Another useful definition of PMC is: A registered civilian company that specializes in the provision of contract military training (instruction and simulation programs), military support operations (logistic support), operational capabilities (special forces advisors and command and control, communications and intelligence [C3I] functions) and or military equipment, to legitimate domestic and foreign entities. The emergence of the term is not entirely clear. Major S. Goddard, "The Private Military Company: A Legitimate International Entity Within Modern Conflict," MA Thesis, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, 2001. Researcher Owen Greene insists the term gradually entered the NGO vocabulary around 1997. He believes, "People came up with this as a brand new idea. It was trying to find a word that gave them some respectability - a cleaner term." Quoted in The International Consortium of Investigative Journalists, "Marketing the New 'Dogs of War,'" 2002, 7. The US government defines the meaning and roles of battlefield contractors in such publications as Army Regulations 715-9, *Contractors Accompanying the Force* (1999); Field manual (FM) 100-21, *Contractors on the Battlefield* (1999); FM 100-10-2, *Contracting Support on the Battlefield* (1999); and FM 63-11, and Department of the Army (DA) Pamphlet (PAM) 715-16, *Contractor Deployment Guide* (1998).
4. Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces (DCAF), "Private Military Companies," DCAF Backgrounder, 04/2006. They also state that "Terms such as mercenaries and private security companies (PSCs) are often used interchangeably with PMCs."
5. Goddard.
6. Adams, 105-106.
7. *Ibid.*, 107. At least two Vinnell-trained Saudi armored brigades fought in the 1991 Gulf War.
8. See Christopher Spearin, "Special Operations Forces a Strategic Resource: Public and Private Divides," *Parameters*, Winter 2006-2007, 62.
9. Smith, 108.
10. Adams, 108.

11. Ibid.
12. Ibid., 104.
13. Ibid., 108.
14. Ibid. The Sierra Leone government maintained 60 percent ownership.
15. Quoted in, The International Consortium of Investigative Journalists, "Marketing the New 'Dogs of War'," 2002, 5.
16. Smith, 110 and Adams, 110. The contract was worth tens of millions of dollars and was funded by a number of Islamic countries. Tammy Arbuckle, "Building a Bosnian Army," *Janes International Defence Review*, August 1997.
17. John G. Roos, "Army Begins Four Year Experiment with Contracted Employees Filling Selected ROTC Positions," *Armed Forces Journal International*, September 1997.
18. DCAF Backgrounder, 04/2006.
19. Blackwater USA promotional brochure, No Date, 8.
20. Adams, 114. The firm apparently received \$10 million for its assistance, as well as the cost of weapons and ammunition.
21. Felix Soh, "Mercenaries as tomorrow's peacekeepers," *The Straits Times*, 22 June 2002.
22. Quoted in, "Marketing the New 'Dogs of War'," 15.
23. David Simons, "Occupation for Hire. Private Military Companies and their Role in Iraq," *RUSI Journal*, June 2004, 68.
24. Barry Yeoman, "The growing role of mercenaries," *International Herald Tribune*, 3 April 2004, <http://www.ihf.com/articles/513165.html>; and David Simons, "Occupation for Hire. Private Military Companies and their Role in Iraq," *RUSI Journal*, June 2004, 71.
25. Jose L. Gomez, "Impact on Human Rights of Private Military and Security Companies' Activities," *Global Research*, 11 October 2008. <Http://www.globalresearch.ca/impact-on-human-rights-of-private-military-and-security-companies-activities/10523>, accessed 4 November 2012.
26. "Marketing the New 'Dogs of War'," 5.
27. Ibid.
28. "The men behind the 'Guinean plot'," *BBC News*, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/uk/2/2/jo/africa/3504748.stm>, accessed 3 December 2004; and Araminta Wordsworth, "Zimbabwe Says Plane of Spies Plotted Coup," *National Post*, 11 March 2004, A3.
29. "Blackwater in Iraq given wide latitude," *Washingtonpost.com*. <Http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/20884905/from/ET>, accessed 20 September 2007.
30. Ibid.
31. Ibid.
32. Gomez, "The Role of Private Military..."

33. Ibid. Accountability of the Blackwater personnel became a huge dissatisfier. Under the existing Status of Forces Agreement contractors had immunity from prosecution. Only in January 2009, with the implementation of a new agreement and the cancellation of the Coalition Provisional Authority Order 17 (which granted immunity to contractors) was the Iraqi government able to deny Blackwater an operating license in the country. See also Gomez, "Impact on Human Rights..." A 2007 House of Representatives oversight committee determined that Blackwater was involved in 196 firefights in Iraq since 2005. They noted that in 84 percent of those cases, Blackwater opened fire first, despite contract stipulations that they were to use force only in cases of self-defense.
34. Gomez, "Impact on Human Rights..."
35. Tom Blackwell, "Canadians killed in fiery Iraq Ambush," *National Post*, 29 March 2004, A3.
36. "The Baghdad Boom," *The Economist*, 25 March 2004. A local/host nation national earns \$150 a month; a third-country national 10-20 times as much and internationals 100 times as much. The relative cost savings fuel the continuing use of PMCs—why pay for a Western platoon when you can hire a similar sized force for a fraction of the cost?
37. Christian Jennings, "Special forces quitting to cash in on Iraq," *The Scotsman*, Scotsman.com website, accessed, 21 February 2004.
38. Adams, 114.
39. "The Baghdad Boom," *The Economist*, 25 March 2004.
40. David Simons, "Occupation for Hire. Private Military Companies and their Role in Iraq," *RUSI Journal*, June 2004, 69.
41. Ibid., 69.
42. See James Cockayne and Emily Speers Mears, "Private Military and Security Companies: A Framework for Regulation," *International Peace Institute*, March 2009.
43. Tom Rothrauff, speaker, "The Role of the Global SOF Network in a Resource Constrained Environment," Tampa, 28 February 2013.
44. Ibid.
45. Blackwater USA promotional brochure, No Date, 8.
46. Adams, 114.
47. See Deborah Avant, "Private Companies and the Future of War," Foreign Policy Research Institute, April 2006.
48. Alan Bell, the president of Globe Risk International has catalogued a wide number of conventional and nonconventional services that PMCs can cover.







