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THESIS

SPECIAL WARFARE: RESTRUCTURING FOR THE FUTURE

by

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The special forces operational detachment-alpha (SFODA) has remained virtually unchanged since its inception in 1956. However, throughout its history, the SFODA has frequently been augmented with various assets, particularly civil affairs. The purpose of this thesis is to analyze the SFODA in its current form and make recommendations for its future composition and focusing of resources. Throughout its history, the SFODA has been augmented to accomplish its missions during conflicts. Particularly frequent has been augmentation by civil affairs and psychological warfare personnel. As special forces plays an important if not leading role in low-intensity conflict, they will continue to rely upon these assets.

This thesis approaches the challenge of restructuring the SFODA by examining three cases in which special forces, or special operations forces, were used: World War II (the Jedburghs and Detachment 101), Vietnam (special forces), and Afghanistan (special forces). Based on an examination of these cases, this thesis offers recommendations on force structure, recruiting, and training for the future.

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SPECIAL WARFARE: RESTRUCTURING FOR THE FUTURE

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ABSTRACT

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ALP	Afghan Local Police
ANASF	Afghan National Army special forces
AQ	al-Qaeda
ARSOF	Army special operations forces
BCRA	Bureau Central de Renseignements et d'Action
BSO	battle space owner
C2	command and control
CA	Civil affairs
CAPs	combined action platoons
CAS	close-air support
CBI	China-Burma-India [theater]
CDI	Community Defense Initiative
CENTCOM	[U.S.] Central Command
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
CIDG	Civilian Irregular Defense Group
CJSOTF-A	Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force-Afghanistan
COI	Coordinator of Information
COMUSMACV	Commander, United States Military Assistance Command-Vietnam
GVN	Government of South Vietnam
IO	information operations
IW	irregular warfare
JPOTF	Joint Psychological Operations Task Force
JTAC	joint tactical attack controller
LDI	Local Defense Initiative
LIC	low-intensity conflict
MACV	Military Assistance Command-Vietnam
MACVSOG	Military Assistance Command-Vietnam Studies and Observations Group
MAT	mobile advisory team
MEDCAP	medical civic assistance program
MISO	military information support operations
MOS	military occupational specialty

MWD	military working dog
NCO	non-commissioned officer
NGO	non-governmental organization
NVA	North Vietnamese Army
OPI	oral proficiency interview
OSS	Office of Strategic Services
PCE	populace-centric engagement
PF	popular forces
POW	prisoner of war
PSYOP	psychological operations
RF	regional forces
SERE	Survival, Evasion, Resistance, and Escape
SF	special forces
SFAS	special forces assessment and selection
SFODA	special forces operational detachment-alpha
SFQC	special forces qualification course
SOE	Special Operations Executive
SOF	special operations forces
SUT	small-unit tactics
TF	Task Force
USAF	United States Air Force
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USASFC	United States Army Special Forces Command
USASOC	United States Army Special Operations Command
USSOCOM	United States Special Operations Command
UW	unconventional warfare
VSCC	village stability coordination center
VSO	village stability operations

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I. INTRODUCTION

While one of the special operations forces (SOF) truths is that SOF cannot be mass-produced during a crisis, special forces *were* structured to counter a then-contemporary and specific challenge: the Soviet Union's threat to spread communism. Even in calm times, mass production of SOF seems ill advised. The structure of modern special forces Operational Detachments-Alpha (SFODA) was established prior to the creation of the Internet, social media, and 24-hour news sources. In Iraq and Afghanistan recently, large numbers of military information support operations (MISO) personnel and civil affairs (CA) personnel were attached to SFODAs and other Special Operations units in order to provide expertise in these areas. With the creation of the newly established First Special Forces Command, special forces, civil affairs, and MISO personnel now fall under one overarching command. The creation of this umbrella signifies the importance that leaders within the U.S. Army special operations community now place on integration of these elements. But, what of integration at the ground level?

Special forces have long used psychological warfare and civil affairs tactics in their approach to irregular warfare (IW), either through efforts they have developed themselves, or through the attachment of psychological operations (PSYOP) and CA personnel. Both PSYOP and CA provide unique ways in which to influence local populations—a capability that is arguably becoming more important given the ease with which information is shared and accessed. An argument can be made that if SFODAs are to remain adept at conducting special warfare, the integration of these capabilities –SF, CA, and MISO—must not only take place at senior command levels, but should also be considered at the detachment level to ensure they are fully assimilated. Along with such a restructuring, the composition and capabilities of the SFODA would also need to be reexamined to ensure adequate functions and relevancy. A redesign at the SFODA level would be unprecedented and would surely require significant deliberation and planning if it was to be successful. It also requires revisiting the reasons why special forces were developed as they were, to see if such a model fits current and possible future conflicts that may arise.

Joint Publication 3–05, *Special Operations*, defines unconventional warfare (UW) as "operations and activities that are conducted to enable a resistance movement or insurgency to coerce, disrupt, or overthrow a government or occupying power by operating through or with an underground, auxiliary, and guerrilla force in a denied area."[1] In JP 1, *Doctrine for the Armed Forces of the United States*, irregular warfare is defined as:

> [A] violent struggle among state and non-state actors for legitimacy and influence over the relevant population(s). In IW, a less powerful adversary seeks to disrupt or negate the military capabilities and advantages of a more powerful military force, which usually serves that nation's established government.[2]

Within these two types of related conflict, special forces, military information support operations (MISO), and civil affairs units provide the capabilities necessary to succeed. From their use as force multipliers—training indigenous personnel in warfighting—to their ability to influence the actions and decisions of the local population, special operations forces are ideal for helping to reduce the scale of conflicts and create strategic effects given minimal resources.[3]

U.S. Army special forces, in particular, are "regionally oriented, language-qualified, and specifically trained to conduct UW against hostile nation States and non-State entities to achieve U.S. goals."[4] Special forces teams provide a low-profile alternative when conventional military force is either too costly or politically infeasible. Military Intelligence Support Operations (MISO) forces (formerly referred to as psychological operations) are trained to identify and target the psychological vulnerabilities of foreign target audiences with the primary purpose of behavior modification.[5] The mission of civil affairs units "is to support the commander's

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[1] Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Special Operations* (JP 3–05) (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2014), 7. https://armypubs.us.army.mil/doctrine/DR_pubs/dr_c/pdf/fm3_05.pdf.

[2] Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Doctrine for the Armed Forces of the United* States (JP 1), (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2013), GL-8. http://www.dtic.mil/doctrine/new_pubs/jp1.pdf.

[3] Department of the Army, *Army Special Operations* (FM3–05) (Washington, DC: Department of the Army, 2006), 2–1.

[4] Department of the Army, *Army Special Operations,* 3–4.

[5] Department of the Army, *Army Special Operations,* 3–9.

relationship with civil authorities and the civilian populace, to promote mission legitimacy, and to enhance military effectiveness."[6]

Each one of these elements—SF, CA, and MISO—interact continuously with their respective counterparts and the local population and many of SOF's missions require a combination of these capabilities.

> Four of the five activities and operations the Department of Defense (DOD) identifies as irregular warfare also are specified as Special Operations core activities: counterinsurgency, counterterrorism (CT), foreign internal defense (FID), and unconventional warfare. SOF also contribute directly to DOD's fifth area of irregular warfare—stability operations.[7]

The multi-faceted approach that many SOF missions require underscores the need for capabilities to be well-integrated.

Special Operations units, in particular the SFODA, were developed in response to specific threats. Typically, they perform missions and serve in roles that are outside the capabilities of conventional forces. These roles include missions where brute force may be counter-productive to the overall effort or where the introduction of large-scale conventional forces might prove politically taboo. As the world becomes increasingly connected through information technology, the ability to influence populations will become more important and dynamic. Thus, units well versed in civil-military relations, with a strong ability to influence populations, will also increase in importance. At the same time, while certain features of conflict have changed, the structures of units that are tasked with doing the fighting have, for the most part, retained their original configuration. The purpose of this thesis is to address these issues and highlight an area that has been largely unexplored: how might the SFODA be restructured in the 21st century?

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[6] Department of the Army, *Army Special Operations,* 3–13.

[7] Michele L. Malvesti. "To Serve the Nation: U.S. Special Operations Forces in an Era of Persistent Conflict." Washington, DC: Center for a New American Security, 2010, 7.

Special forces' legacy reflects a mixture of lineages: "I serve with the memory of those who have gone before me."[8] Although the exact wording in the special forces' creed has changed over time, the sentiment has remained. The history of the basic unit of special forces—the SFODA—can be traced back to various organizations. Some of those that are more notable include the U.S. Army–Canadian First Special Service Force, which conducted commando operations during World War II; the U.S. Office of Strategic Services (OSS), which sponsored irregular warfare during World War II; the U.S. Army's 5307th Composite Unit (Provisional), also known as Merrill's Marauders, which also served during World War II; and the U.S. Army Ranger Battalions that likewise served during World War II.[9]

The U.S. Army–Canadian First Special Service Force was initially developed for the purpose of conducting sabotage operations in Scandinavia, but was actually used as an elite infantry fighting unit, earning the reputation of being a tough, bold organization.[10] The Office of Strategic Services was developed under Bill Donovan when President Franklin D. Roosevelt directed that a special operations capability be established similar to Britain's Special Operations Executive (SOE).[11] The OSS was charged with recruiting American, British, and French personnel for what would become known as the Jedburghs—highly trained soldiers who could speak European languages and would assist in training partisan elements to conduct irregular warfare against the Axis powers.[12] The 5307th Composite Unit operated primarily in Burma and took part in five major battles and engaged in some of the most difficult fighting against the Japanese during World War II.[13] As for the Army Ranger Battalions of World War II, they borrowed their heritage from the first American Rangers, volunteers from local militias

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[8] U.S. Army Special Forces Command. Special Forces Creed. "United States Army Special Operations Command," August 7, 2015, http://www.soc.mil/USASFC/SFcreed.html.

[9] Clyde Sincere. *Special Forces: The First 50 Years, The United States Army Special Forces (1952-2002)*, ed. Charles Oldham. Tampa, FL: Faircount LLC, 2002. 22.

[10] Sincere, *Special Forces*, 22.

[11] Will Irwin. *The Jedburghs: The Secret History of the Allied Special Forces, France 1944*. New York: Public Affairs, 2005. 34-39.

[12] Irwin, *The Jedburghs*, xix.

[13] Sincere, *Special Forces*, 23.

who fought against both the British and Native Americans.[14] This history is not just reflected in SOF's heraldry today, but also in the types of missions and the organizational structure still found in special forces.

As noted in "ARSOF 2022," the two critical capabilities of U.S. Army Special Operations are Special Warfare and Surgical Strike. These two capabilities are comprised of several different SOF core activities: Direct Action, Strategic Reconnaissance, Foreign Internal Defense, civil affairs Operations, Counterterrorism, Military Information Support Operations, Humanitarian Assistance, Theater Search and Rescue, Unconventional Warfare, and activities specified by the President or Secretary of Defense.[15] Many would argue that unconventional warfare is the key element that makes special forces unique, as SF is the only special operations organization to have UW as one of its core activities. Then-director of the Central Intelligence Agency, Robert Gates, remarked in 1992 that unconventional warfare was the "soul of Special Forces," the "standard of Special Forces training," and represents a mission that remains "uniquely Special Forces."[16] According to retired Colonel David Maxwell, UW provides the foundation for all other special forces activities, and even if UW itself is not wholly appropriate for the United States to conduct, aspects of it might prove useful.[17] More specifically, if we return to the doctrinal definition, UW consists of "activities conducted to enable a resistance movement or insurgency to coerce, disrupt or overthrow a government or occupying power by operating through or with an underground, auxiliary and guerrilla force in a denied area."[18] At a minimum, Maxwell argues that the United States needs to better understand unconventional warfare since it is being put into practice by our adversaries.[19]

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[14] Sincere, *Special Forces*, 23.

[15] Department of the Army, "ARSOF 2022," 2015, 10. http://www.soc.mil/Assorted%20Pages/ARSOF2022_vFINAL.pdf.

[16] Robert M. Gates. "Remarks at the dedication of the OSS Memorial, Langley, VA, 12 June, 1992." quoted in The Special Forces History Society's The Special Forces Regimental History Calendar. Fort Bragg, NC: Office of the Command Historian, U.S. Army Special Operations Command, 1994.

[17] David Maxwell, "Why Does Special Forces Train and Educate for Unconventional Warfare? Why is it Important? A Quick Response to Robert Haddick." *Small Wars Journal*, 25 April 2010.

[18] Department of the Army, "ARSOF 2022," 10.

[19] David Maxwell, "Do We Really Understand Unconventional Warfare?" *Small Wars Journal,* 23 October 2014.

Unconventional warfare describes a struggle between insurgents and counterinsurgents, both of which are vying for control of the population. Governments and occupying powers, whether authoritarian or democratic, draw their power from their populations. As Robert Helvey notes, there is a constant struggle over freedom and oppression between a population and its government, and when there is an imbalance leaning toward tyranny, change will be sought.[20] While authoritarian governments rely less on their populations for legitimacy, at a minimum, they must have, a population that is compliant lest they risk instability, potentially resulting in their overthrow. From this perspective, unconventional warfare is concerned not only with kinetic operations, but with gaining and retaining the support of the populace, and with indirect and not just direct approaches to warfare.

David Tucker and Christopher Lamb argue that these two approaches, direct and indirect, "may be mutually supportive, producing a greater effect together than separately. Also, not all core SOF tasks fall neatly within one approach."[21] In *Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice*, David Galula argues, "support of the population is as necessary for the counterinsurgent as for the insurgent."[22] Indeed, this is his first law. Galula also argues that the primary method for gaining support needs to be through propaganda, which is of great value to the insurgent as it enables him to disseminate his message without bearing the burden of proof.[23] Essentially, influence is an important element of special warfare, and is crucial in unconventional warfare. In other words, Galula is making a strong case for the importance of psychological operations and those adept at them.

Today, psychological operations is defined as "planned Operations to convey selected information and indicators to foreign audiences to influence their emotions,

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[20] Robert Helvey. *On Strategic Nonviolence Conflict: Thinking About the Fundamentals.* Boston, MA: Albert Einstein Institution, 2002, 2-3.

[21] Christopher J. Lamb and David Tucker. "Restructuring Special Operations Forces for Emerging Threats," *Strategic Forum* (19) January 2006, 1.

[22] David Galula. *Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice*. Westport, CT: Praeger Security International 2006, 52.

[23] Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare*, 9.

motives, objective reasoning and ultimately the behavior of foreign governments, organizations, groups, and individuals."[24]

Galula also argues that, with the support of the population, an insurgency or guerrilla movement can grow whereas, without it, a guerrilla movement cannot grow as effectively.[25] Basically, the population plays an important role in the conduct of unconventional warfare because it can provide the material support necessary to keep insurgents and anti-state actors alive, *or* it can deny insurgents and non-state actors the material and popular support they require. Consequently, civil affairs capabilities are as important as psychological operations. Civil affairs activities today, are defined as:

> Those military operations conducted by civil affairs forces that (1) enhance the relationship between military forces and civil authorities in localities where military forces are present; (2) require coordination [sic] other interagency, intergovernmental and nongovernmental organizations, indigenous populations and institutions and the private sector, (3) involve application of functional specialty skills that [sic] normally the responsibility of civil government to enhance the conduct of civil-military operations.[26]

As "ARSOF 2022" notes, "We will increasingly need special operations campaign designers and planners who understand the full range of special operations capabilities and can weave their operations together over time to achieve U.S. objectives."[27] Consequently, the ability to utilize special forces, MISO, and civil affairs together efficiently will become more important as the future of warfare becomes increasingly "characterized by uncertainty."[28]

As Frank Hoffman has commented, success in hybrid wars will require small unit leaders to be comfortable with the unknown, as well as possess the ability to rapidly

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[24] Department of the Army, "ARSOF 2022," 10.

[25] Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare*, 33-34.

[26] Department of the Army, "ARSOF 2022," 10.

[27] Department of the Army, "ARSOF 2022," 9.

[28] Department of the Army, "ARSOF 2022," 4.

make decisions.[29] In *The Future of Influence in Warfare*, Dennis Murphy writes that mastery of "concepts such as information operations (IO), strategic communications (SC), and public diplomacy" will be achieved "by creating an organizational culture that embraces the criticality of using information to influence across the spectrum of future conflict."[30] Interoperability will be critical not only at senior levels, as was observed during the formation of the First Special Forces Command (Provisional) in October of 2014,[31] but also at the lowest tactical levels. Dennis Murphy argues that the best method for achieving such integration is via doctrine, as doctrine serves as the authoritative guide for how operations and processes are conducted.[32] "ARSOF 2022" argues for something quicker than doctrine: a "thorough review of our existing organizations… all the way down to the detachment level."[33] Indeed, "ARSOF 2022" advocates for "develop[ing] tailored packages to provide a mission command plug to TSOCs for the conduct of special activities including… unconventional warfare."[34] One unanswered question, however, is how best to achieve this integration at the lower levels?

This brings us to the SFODA or A-Team. Special forces A-Teams were initially allotted two officers and 15 non-commissioned officers before being trimmed to the current structure of two officers (one commissioned officer and one warrant officer) and 10 non-commissioned officers.[35] While conflicts have evolved thanks to changing technology, the widespread availability of information, and transfers of power, the organizational structure of the SFODA has remained unchanged. One explanation for this is that the particular sequence of events both before and after the creation of special forces have prevented any change. According to William Sewell, path dependence can be

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[29] Frank Hoffman. "Hybrid Warfare and Challenges." *Joint Forces Quarterly, Issue 52, 1st Quarter,* Washington, DC: National Defense University Press, 2009, 38.

[30] Dennis M. Murphy. "The Future of Influence in Warfare." *Joint Forces Quarterly* (No. 64.) January 2012, 48.

[31] Cleveland, Charles T. "ARSOF Next: A Return to First Principles." *Special Warfare Magazine* 28 (2) April-June 2015, 8.

[32] Murphy, "The Future of Influence in Warfare," 48.

[33] Department of the Army, "ARSOF 2022," 22.

[34] Department of the Army, "ARSOF 2022," 22.

[35] Sincere, *Special Forces*, 71.

described as "what happened at an earlier point in time will affect the possible outcomes of a sequence of events occurring at a later point in time."[36] In other words, the unchanging structure of the SFODA might be a result of path dependence. Margaret Levi likens the process to climbing a tree: "From the same trunk, there are many different branches and smaller branches. Although it is possible to turn around or to clamber from one to the other—and essential if the chosen branch dies—the branch on which a climber begins is the one she tends to follow."[37] Paul Pierson discusses how switching from one construct to another in an organization can become increasingly costly as the organization continues down a specific path.[38]

Arguably, this is what one sees with the special forces branch. Initially conceived while still a part of the Psychological Warfare Center in 1956,[39] SF eventually parted ways with psychological warfare due, in part, to secrecy concerns. However, this split was also partially personality-driven.[40] Special forces leadership felt that the student handbook for the Psychological Warfare Center was "slanted heavily towards Psychological Warfare to the detriment of Special Forces" and this, in essence, marginalized the role of special forces.[41] The bifurcation between SF and psychological warfare, and its subsequent reinforcement can also be explained by the tendency for organizations that develop around specialized functions to implement security measures to protect their existence.[42] The path dependence literature also suggests that when it comes to organizational learning, credit for success within an organization can often be

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[36] William Sewell, "Three Temporalities: Toward an Eventful Sociology." In *The Historic Turn in the Human Sciences,* ed. Terrance J. McDonald. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996, 245-80. quoted in Paul Pierson. "Increasing Returns, Path Dependence, and the Study of Politics," *The American Political Science Review* 94 (2) (June, 2000): 252.

[37] Margaret Levi. "A Model, a Method, and a Map: Rational Choice in Comparative and Historical Analysis." In *Comparative politics: Rationality, Culture, and Structure*, eds. Mark I. Lichbach, Alan S. Zuckerman. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997, 19-41.

[38] Pierson, "Increasing Returns, Path Dependence, and the Study of Politics," 261.

[39] Alfred A. Paddock, The Psychological Warfare Center and the Origins of Special Warfare. In *Special forces: The First 50 Years, The United States Army Special forces (1952-2002)*, ed. Charles Oldham, Tampa, Florida: Faircount LLC, 2002, 80-82.

[40] Paddock, *Special Forces*, 82.

[41] Paddock, *Special Forces*, 82.

[42] Tucker and Lamb, "Restructuring Special Operations Forces for Emerging Threats," 4.

attributed to the wrong source(s) –whether it be temporal ordering or internal or external characteristics - reinforcing incorrect beliefs about which exact part of the organization deserves to be cited for success.[43] In other words, certain attitudes about the utility of psychological operations (or the lack thereof) may have been a by-product of SF's struggle to become a separate, identifiable entity. Notably, "ARSOF 2022" highlights the importance of attempting to return to some of SOF's foundational principles. This would mean reincorporating MISO approaches. Indeed, the document argues for developing "innovative methods of subversion to support enhanced ARSOF UW capability," investing "in high-end communication and influence practice and technologies," and "increasing advanced technology and tools and substantially increase intelligence support, executing mass and precision influence missions in all environments."[44]

While it appears that the effort to restructure U.S. ARSOF to meet future challenges is underway, this transformation will likely be costly, both in terms of manpower and resources. Army special operations forces have long been charged with executing difficult, complex, and often vague missions. In order to successfully execute these missions, it has been imperative that they be equipped with the right tools, both in terms of equipment as well as human capabilities. Tellingly, while there is an extensive literature about the history of special operations, relatively little has been written about the composition and capabilities of SOF units, and whether or not they are adequately prepared to excel in future conflicts. This thesis will address that gap.

The second chapter of this thesis will focus on SOF efforts during World War II, primarily the Jedburgh teams and Detachment 101 of the Office of Strategic Services. Chapter 2 will review the size, effectiveness, need for cultural expertise, and overall capabilities of special operations forces during World War II. However, it will also analyze how integration of SOF capabilities at the tactical level was largely absent. Chapter 3 will seek to similarly examine special forces detachments during the Vietnam War. Chapter 3 will review how integrating civil affairs efforts, psychological warfare, and special forces operations at the tactical level proved to be highly successful, whereas

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[43] Pierson, "Increasing Returns, Path Dependence, and the Study of Politics," 251.

[44] Department of the Army, "ARSOF 2022," 27.

kinetic efforts focused primarily on the enemy without civic action and psychological warfare, were not successful. The fourth chapter will address special operations forces during the U.S. war in Afghanistan. Part of the discussion in Chapter Four will draw on contemporary experiences. The chapter will also relay how integrated SOF approaches were more successful than those centered on insurgent-targeting. Each chapter will discuss a strength that contributed to, or a weakness that hindered, the overall success of special forces units' missions. In most cases, the successful practices have seemingly been forgotten or are not implemented widely throughout the special forces regiment. Finally, in the last chapter, I will provide possible options for restructuring the SFODA.

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II. SPECIAL OPERATIONS IN WORLD WAR II

A. HISTORY

When the United States formally entered World War II, its forces were largely attrition-focused, and while what occurred on the front lines must undoubtedly be considered attrition-based warfare, what took place in the enemy occupied areas would surely be classified today as low-intensity warfare. The most appropriate type of forces to be used in low-intensity conflict are relational-maneuver forces, forces that first identify an enemy's weaknesses or vulnerabilities, and then adjust their internal composition to properly address them.[45] Such forces did not yet exist in the United States until July 1941, when President Franklin D. Roosevelt established the office of Coordinator of Information (COI) whose primary purpose was to oversee special operations and manage secret intelligence.[46] Prior to the establishment of the COI, strategic intelligence was managed by each service; there was no entity responsible for centralizing the information gathered. The services provided by the COI were redundant to those of other organizations—the Federal Bureau of Investigations (FBI), the Department of State, and the Offices of Inter-American and Civilian Affairs, as well as the military—all of which opposed the COI's creation.[47] However, COI's appointed head, William J. Donovan, eventually lobbied, and was successful, in having his organization placed under the recently established Joint Chiefs of Staff.[48] This action provided the COI with military resources while still enabling it to remain a separate organization with its own mission and goals.[49]

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[45] Edward Luttwak. *Notes on Low-Intensity Warfare.* Washington, DC: National Defense University, 1983, 4.

[46] Will Irwin, *The Jedburghs, 35.*

[47] Jay Jakub and D. Phil. *Spies and Saboteurs: Anglo-American Collaboration and Rivalry in Human Intelligence Collection and Special Operations, 1940–45.* New York, NY: St. Martin's Press, 1999, 22-23.

[48] National Archives. "Records of the Office of Strategic Services (record group 226)." 2015. https://www.archives.gov/research/military/ww2/oss/.

[49] National Archives. "Records of the Office of Strategic Services (record group 226)." 2015. https://www.archives.gov/research/military/ww2/oss/

The COI, which was renamed the Office of Strategic Services (OSS), became the parent unit of various entities that would operate behind enemy lines and alongside resistance elements throughout the war, wreaking havoc on the Axis powers. These units varied in composition and mission. Nevertheless, each provided unique capabilities vastly different from those of the large maneuver units that fought on the main fronts. Contributions made by OSS units benefited attrition-maneuver warfare—often in ways that went unnoticed until long after the operations they supported were complete. Sometimes, recognition took decades.

B.   THE JEDBURGHS

While the British government quickly realized that war with Germany would soon become a reality following Germany's invasion of Poland, the possibility of U.S. involvement was not so obvious. Even after conflict became likely, the United States found itself lacking in the area of special operations forces and needed to quickly make up for lost time. One response was the establishment of the Jedburgh teams, representing an alternative form of warfare that would coordinate among resistance movements throughout Europe and help prepare for large scale landings that would ultimately liberate the occupied areas.[50] While the idea was largely ill-received when it was proposed by Britain's Prime Minister Winston Churchill, it gained William Donovan's interest.[51]

The original concept proposed by a member of the British Special Operations Executive (SOE), Lieutenant Colonel Peter Wilkinson, was to develop three-man military teams composed of American, British, and French personnel with the following mission, as defined in the Basic JEDBURGH directive of 20 December 1943:

> [T]o provide a strategic reserve for creating and controlling offensive action behind the enemy lines on and after D-day where existing communications, leadership, organization, or supplies are inadequate, and

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[50] Irwin, *The Jedburghs,* 37.

[51] Irwin, *The Jedburghs,* 36.

for carrying out additional specific tasks demanded by the military situation.[52]

These three man teams would consist of either an SOE or OSS officer, an officer of French, Belgian, or Dutch nationality[53] (determined by where the team would operate), and a British or American enlisted man to serve as a radio operator.[54] It was also critically important that these groups stay small in number in order to avoid arousing the suspicion of the Germans. As noted in the *War Diary of the Special Operations OSS London Branch*, another advantage to using three-man teams was that they could survive for a longer period of time without external assistance, as opposed to "auxiliary operational groups or paratroops, as such large groups of uniformed men could not exist for any length of time behind enemy lines unsupported."[55] For instance, despite infiltrating in uniform, the Jedburgh members brought with them a series of forged documents so that they would also be able to pass as civilians if the situation required it.[56] In short, the organizational structure of the Jedburgh teams afforded them a considerable degree of flexibility in how and where they operated.

Selection of individuals for the Jedburgh teams was meticulous. Initially, the OSS focused on military members with combat experience who knew how to handle weapons, and radio specialists who were exceptionally skilled at their trade.[57] The OSS needed personnel who already spoke French, which was tested during the screening process when it was also revealed that the assignments would entail dangerous overseas duty. This was done without describing the specific nature of the mission or the Jedburgh name.[58] The *Strategic Services Field Manual Number Four* notes that the types of

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[52] John Mendelsohn, ed. *Covert Warfare: Intelligence, Counterintelligence, and Military Deception During the World War II Era*. New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1989, ii.

[53] Irwin*, The Jedburghs*, 64.

[54] Smith, Richard H. *OSS: The Secret History of America's First Central Intelligence Agency*. Berkeley, Ca: University of California Press, 1981, 174.

[55] Mendelsohn, *Covert Warfare*, vii.

[56] Team Dudley Report, p. 5. As cited in Robert G. Gutjahr. *The Role of Jedburgh Teams in Operation Market Garden*. Master's thesis, U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, 1990, 46–47.

[57] Irwin, *The Jedburghs,* 40-41.

[58] Irwin, *The Jedburghs,* 41.

personnel required would be those who were "military or civilian and… individually selected for their ability to perform special functions."[59]

The field manual also directed that:

SO agents and operatives are selected for their intelligence, courage, and natural resourcefulness in dealing with resistance groups. In addition [sic] they must have stamina to be able to live and move about undetected in their area of operation. Normally, they should be fluent in the local language and be a native of a nationality acceptable to the authorities and people of the area.[60]

OSS recruitment emphasized language capabilities, resourcefulness, and nationality, a focus that was necessary in order for Jedburgh members to avoid making themselves targets for German police and other anti-resistance forces. One peculiarity was that, contrary to the strict discipline typically enforced in military organizations, recruiting efforts sought personnel who would question authority and had no problem with speaking their minds.[61] The architects of the Jedburgh teams posited that it would be these individuals who could be counted on to disturb and upset the everyday life in German-occupied territories, thus hindering the Germans' efforts and progress. While the final decision about who was chosen was made by Lieutenant-Colonel Spooner of the British Army (the first Commandant of the Jedburgh training school), attention was also paid to the preferences of the individual team members.[62] The assumption was that by allowing team members to select the personnel with whom they would later operate, the teams would "function smoothly and harmoniously without the friction of personalities."[63] SOE and the OSS leadership understood that cohesion would be extremely important in high-stress situations. One of the major challenges in assembling

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[59] Office of Strategic Services. *Special Services Field Manual – Strategic Services (Provisional).* Washington, DC: Office of Strategic Services, 1944, 5. http://www.soc.mil/OSS/assets/special-operations-fm.pdf.

[60] Office of Strategic Services, *Special Services Field Manual*, 5.

[61] Irwin, *The Jedburghs,* 45.

[62] Mendelsohn, *Covert Warfare*, 1.

[63] Mendelsohn, *Covert Warfare*, 14.

these teams was thus selecting the proper French, Belgian, or Dutch personnel. Refugees who had been out of the country too long proved to be too conspicuous, having "no knowledge of the latest colloquialisms" and being "unaware of the changes in daily life under German domination,"[64] Although fluent in the local languages and familiar with daily life before German occupation, refugees could not be "stale" or out of date, as this would be obvious to German military personnel and any citizens loyal to the occupying military.

The training the Jedburghs received, which focused on "guerilla warfare tactics and skills: demolitions, use of enemy weapons, map reading, night navigation, agent circuit operations, intelligence, sabotage, escape and evasion, counterespionage, ambushes, security, the use of couriers, and hand-to-hand combat,"[65] was designed to prepare them for the type of operations they would conduct in-theater. Partially due to the considerable distance between friendly forces and their insertion points (sometimes as many as 40 miles behind enemy lines), as well as their small numbers and lack of combat power, the Jedburgh teams were supposed to focus their efforts on operations designed to disrupt the enemy's lines of communication, such as rail cutting, destruction of telecommunications networks, attacks on enemy staff vehicles, etc.[66] Operations like these typically required little training on the part of the resistance forces, thereby maximizing the Jedburgh teams' utility as force multipliers. Rail cutting, for example, could greatly disrupt enemy operations for relatively long periods of time. The Jedburgh teams were ideally suited for such operations because of their ability to blend into the environment, which enabled them to repeat these operations often.[67] Also, as a result of the Jedburgh's small numbers, these operations proved low-cost in comparison to those being conducted on the front lines.

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[64] Smith, *OSS,* 175.

[65] S. J. Lewis. *Jedburgh Team Operations in Support of the 12th Army Group, August 1944.* Fort Leavenworth, KS: Combat Studies Institute, 1991. p. 11.

[66] Mendelsohn, *Covert Warfare*, vi.

[67] Mendelsohn, *Covert Warfare*, vii.

Jedburgh operations became so successful that the German high command posted notices about assisting Allied parachutists: "Whoever on French territory outside the zone of legal combat is captured and identified as having participated in sabotage, terrorism, or revolt is and remains a bandit or franc-tireur (guerrilla) and shall consequently be shot, whatever his nationality or uniform."[68] Some of the most telling proof of the Jedburghs' effectiveness came from captured German soldiers who admitted they were terrified of French resistance fighters as this limited their freedom of movement and forced them to live in constant fear of being attacked.[69]

The operations conducted by the Jedburghs were a form of psychological warfare in that they inhibited the Germans' ability to move freely throughout an area that was deemed to be secure behind the front lines. Similar to the paranoia experienced by the occupying forces in John Steinbeck's *The Moon is Down*, German forces lived in a heightened state of anxiety. In order to amplify the success of their kinetic operations, the Jedburghs also engaged in other forms of psychological warfare. For instance, the Jedburghs, along with the French Bureau Central Renseignements d'Action (BCRA, the French equivalent of the American OSS or British SOE),[70] distributed leaflets printed in French that served to fan the flames of hatred for the country's German occupiers.[71] Perhaps the best testament to the psychological effect of operations conducted by the Jedburghs and the resistance elements they supported can be found in this excerpt from *The Jedburghs*: "In a telephone conversation with a general on Hitler's staff, just five days after the Normandy landings, the German commander-in-chief in the west explained how the morale of his troops was suffering as the FFI [French Forces of the Interior], "feeling the end approaching, grow steadily bolder.'"[72]

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[68] Irwin, *The Jedburghs,* 28.

[69] Irwin, *The Jedburghs,* 239-240.

[70] Benjamin F. Jones. *Eisenhower's Guerrilla's: The Jedburghs, the Maquis, and the Liberation of France*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2016, 4.

[71] Jones, *Eisenhower's Guerrilla's,* 122.

[72] Butcher, Harry. *My Three Years with Eisenhower: The Personal Diary of Captain Harry C. Butcher, USNR, naval aide to General Eisenhower, 1942-1945. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1946. Quoted in* Irwin, *The Jedburghs,* 241.

One reason the operations in German-occupied France proved to be so successful is because Eisenhower directed the OSS to focus solely on French operations.[73] However, one unforeseen consequence of such a concentration of efforts was that when instructed to redirect its efforts toward Germany in 1944, the OSS had only four individuals inside Germany and could produce no valuable intelligence.[74] Consequently, senior leaders throughout the U.S. military were disappointed with the OSS' inability to provide information that would aid their operations.[75]

Again, then, the United States found itself lagging behind in the area of special operations and having to scramble to catch up. As part of an "emergency effort," control over all German operations was given to future CIA director William Casey who sent groups of Polish, Belgian, and French operatives to key cities within Germany.[76] It is difficult to gauge the effectiveness of Jedburgh and OSS operators within Germany as this shift in focus came so late in the war and, even then, was aimed at securing the defection of German officers and soldiers[77] rather than sabotage and subversion. Another, different focus for the OSS in Germany was to procure intelligence about what could be done to protect foreign workers from reprisal as Allied forces advanced into the country.[78] By the war's end, the effect of the OSS and Jedburgh teams in Germany was thought to be negligible to the conflict's outcome—a stark contrast to the effect special operations forces had elsewhere in the European theater.

C.   DETACHMENT 101

Detachment 101 was the brainchild of Lieutenant Colonel Preston Goodfellow, a U.S. Army G-2 liaison officer on loan to the COI.[79] Because no organization similar to

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[73] Smith, *OSS,* 221.

[74] Smith, *OSS,* 225.

[75] Smith, *OSS,* 225.

[76] Smith, *OSS,* 225.

[77] Bradley F. Smith. *The Shadow Warriors: O.S.S. and the Origins of the C.I.A.*, New York, NY: Basic Books, Inc., Publishers, 1983, 297.

[78] Smith, *The Shadow Warriors, 297.*

[79] Troy J. Sacquety. *The OSS in Burma: Jungle War against the Japanese*, Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2013, 15.

Detachment 101 existed prior to its inception, its first commanding officer, Captain Carl F. Eifler, had no model to use when it came to recruiting.[80] Unlike the recruiting process used for the Jedburghs, when the military's ranks were combed for qualified personnel, Detachment 101 recruiting based largely on personal relationships. The lack of a precedent for such an organization also provided Eifler with great leeway in selecting those he felt he needed for the mission. Initially, Detachment 101 consisted of 21 men. Each, therefore, had to perform tasks outside his area of expertise.[81] Eifler did not know exactly what the unit's future missions might require. Consequently, everyone was put through a COI training course.[82] This lasted only two weeks, and was considerably shorter than Jedburgh training that lasted for several months (for most).[83]

Once it was clear that Burma would be their area of operations, Detachment 101 confronted two realities. First, there was not a particularly fresh refugee population to work with, and second, white Americans would not be the right people to infiltrate into Burma. Detachment 101 came to the conclusion that, at least initially, it would need native agents.[84] In a sharp departure from the Jedburgh teams, Detachment 101 initially restricted its U.S. personnel to bases behind friendly lines. From these locations, Detachment 101 members trained Anglo-Burmese and other locals in guerrilla tactics and collected information about the surrounding area in order to improve their knowledge of northern Burma.[85] Over time, and by making some tragic mistakes, Detachment 101 learned that the elements it airdropped into Burma should be small, consisting of no more than two to three men.[86]

Here there were distinct parallels with the Jedburghs, since Detachment 101 also sought significant psychological warfare effects. The unit conducted various operations

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[80] Sacquety, *The OSS in Burma*, 16.

[81] Sacquety, *The OSS in Burma*, 18.

[82] Sacquety, *The OSS in Burma*, 19.

[83] William R. Peers and Dean Brelis. *Behind the Burma Road: The Story of America's Most Successful Guerrilla Force*. Boston, MA: Little, Brown and Company, 1963, 30.

[84] Peers and Brelis, *Behind the Burma Road*, 59.

[85] Peers and Brelis, *Behind the Burma Road*, 62.

[86] Peers and Brelis, *Behind the Burma Road*, 65.

designed to undermine Japanese leadership and influence the minds of the soldiers operating under them.

In one case, Detachment 101 members issued fake orders that had the appearance of originating from the Japanese high command, instructing Japanese soldiers to lay down their weapons and surrender. The authenticity of the forged documents resulted in the surrender of a number of enemy forces as well as a decrease in Japanese soldiers' trust and confidence in their leaders.[87] In another case, Detachment 101 placed forged documents indicating that a specific individual was working for the Allies or someone else. Once the Japanese secret police found such documents, they would typically execute the assumed guilty party.[88] While operations like these were conducted with the specific intent of influencing the actions of enemy forces, it is highly likely that Detachment 101's guerrilla and espionage operations served as psychological warfare in their own right. Each operation conducted in what the enemy believed to be a secure area affected enemy morale and heightened anxiety over who could be trusted and who might be an Allied agent.[89]

As Detachment 101 grew in size, its structure and missions changed. Initially, Detachment 101 was tasked with conducting a variety of guerrilla operations, including espionage, sabotage, small-scale attacks, propaganda, and escape and evasion. However, as it and conventional forces achieved success on the battlefield, and given that resources were difficult to acquire, Detachment 101 took on additional missions such as downed pilot recovery and large-scale attacks.[90] The effort to help downed pilots was part of a quid pro quo with the Air Transport Command; Detachment 101 would receive air support and aerial resupply in exchange for retrieving crashed aviators.[91] A significant portion of Detachment 101's success came from its leadership's ability to recognize and capitalize on opportunities in the face of constraints.

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[87] Peers and Brelis, *Behind the Burma Road*, 214.

[88] Peers and Brelis, *Behind the Burma Road*, 214.

[89] Peers and Brelis, *Behind the Burma Road*, 221.

[90] Peers and Brelis, *Behind the Burma Road*, 27.

[91] Peers and Brelis, *Behind the Burma Road*, 70.

The quantity and size of Detachment 101's targets were concomitant with the growth of the organization—its final mission, for instance, resulted in over 600 Japanese killed, over 500 captured, and significantly more wounded.[92] The organization's rate of growth was exponential considering that Detachment 101 started with just 21 U.S. service members. Yet, prior to its disbandment it consisted of over 9,200 personnel.[93] Adding to Detachment 101's accomplishments was the fact that it accomplished these with very few resources; the CBI-theater received substantially less logistical support and strategic focus than did the European theater. Yet, in the end, Detachment 101 was considered "the most effective tactical combat force in OSS," having killed over 5,500 Japanese while sustaining only 184 native personnel losses and accomplishing numerous strategic objectives.[94] While the end state of Detachment 101 might better serve conventional purposes, its beginnings and the critical thinking employed in its creation provide good examples for the future of SOF.

D.   CONCLUSION

The Jedburgh teams and Detachment 101, both with oversight by the COI and later, the OSS, operated in drastically different theaters. The terrain, culture, and language of the European Theater and the CBI Theater were very different. Nevertheless, the two organizations shared certain features, some of which were critical to their overall success. Both units oriented their organizational structure to support their operational elements. Often, these were comprised of two to three man teams. As both units recognized, small elements were more maneuverable and had greater freedom of movement. As happened with Detachment 101, smaller teams meant that each individual had to be knowledgeable in areas beyond just his trained skill set. The Strategic Services Manual Number Four, which covered all OSS personnel (to include the Jedburghs and Detachment 101), summarized what teams needed: personnel who were adaptable and

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[92] Peers and Brelis, *Behind the Burma Road*, 207.

[93] United States Army Special Operations Command. "The OSS Primer: Detachment 101." 2015. http://www.soc.mil/OSS/det-101.html.

[94] United States Army Special Operations Command. "The OSS Primer: Detachment 101." 2015. http://www.soc.mil/OSS/det-101.html.

had a wide range of capabilities. Indeed, fielding teams of individuals with broad skill sets as opposed to specialists in a single area was a recurring theme throughout special operations in World War II—a theme that has carried on into the current SFODA structure.

Both the Jedburghs and Detachment 101 benefited from their small size (initially, for Detachment 101) in other ways as well. Specifically, they had minimal logistical requirements. In the case of the Jedburghs, where small structure enabled them to need to be resupplied less frequently, this lowered the risk of compromise (and risk to resupply elements) and allowed the element to be self-sustaining for longer periods of time. For better or worse, Detachment 101's lack of resources was the result of less importance being placed on its mission than other missions in the CBI Theater. However, this forced Detachment 101 to be creative with its relationships and solve the complicated issues of aviation and logistical support through ingenious means, thereby increasing the unit's long-term effectiveness. As an example, Detachment 101 developed a waterproof radio that could be transported by a single individual and had a range of over 1,200 miles.[95] Not only did both organizations demonstrate that they could operate without large amounts of equipment, but that they could achieve significant effects despite such restrictions.

Despite the significant contributions made by Detachment 101, the Jedburghs, and other OSS units, World War II was largely a conventional war—one that was conducted without sufficient tactical integration of SOF capabilities. Populations of occupied territories needed little convincing to turn against the Axis powers, allowing psychological warfare efforts to be focused on supporting kinetic operations and civic action to be put on hold until the cessation, or near-cessation, of hostilities. Resistance elements, such as the Maquis, developed and grew without the encouragement, and sometimes contrary to the wishes of, Allied forces. While tactical-level integration of special operations forces capabilities was not characteristic of the conflict, such integration may not have been a necessity given the context in which it was fought. The

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[95] Peers and Brelis, *Behind the Burma Road*, 1963.

absence of such capabilities would arguably be a hindrance in contemporary conflicts, where public opinion has had a much greater influence on battlefield success. Without such assets, these units would have likely been unable to conduct influence operations or assist with civic action projects due to a lack of training in the areas.

These units also demonstrated the benefits of recruiting from populations similar to those in which a given unit operated. Aside from the obvious benefit of language capability, immigrant recruits also provided cultural insight and valuable experience not widely available through the standard recruiting pool.

In summary, the successes of the Jedburghs and Detachment 101 came in vastly different forms, and supported different objectives. Yet, the lessons provided by their actions are still applicable: small units that can remain autonomous for long periods of time can have a major psychological warfare impact on the local population and enemy alike. To be truly effective, however, required the cultural expertise of those familiar with—or indigenous to—the area of operations.

III. SPECIAL FORCES IN VIETNAM

A. SPECIAL FORCES IN VIETNAM

If we next turn to U.S. Army SF during Vietnam, we see the effort beginning small and modestly as well. However, the role of special forces SFODAs during the Vietnam War changed over time. The introduction of special forces units into Vietnam was largely a function of President John F. Kennedy's search for a solution that would enable the United States to shape the situation without his needing to introduce a large, conventional force; in the effort to limit Communist expansion, "SF offered a possible means of doing this quietly with a minimum of public attention."[96] President Kennedy felt that President Eisenhower's policy of Massive Retaliation—which promised nuclear retaliation in response to any act of Communist aggression—did not justify the risks entailed in trying to simply confine communism.[97] The transition to President Kennedy's plan, appropriately named Flexible Response, called for a response to Communist aggression wherein the benefits of enforcement were proportionate with the risks required of the United States.[98] Flexible Response would permit the scaled response that later came to characterize U.S. involvement in the Vietnam War, creating the initial opening that allowed for the largely untested special forces to grow in size and influence.

Initially, under the Flexible Response rubric, U.S. troops served in a training role, beginning as early as 1957.[99] Special forces units at the time were assigned to support the Civilian Irregular Defense Group (CIDG) mission. The CIDG was developed and financed by the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA); however, special forces were responsible for its execution.[100] The CIDG mission strategically placed special forces

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[96] Thomas K. Adams. "*U.S. Special Operations Forces in Action: The Challenge of Unconventional Warfare*. Portland, OR: Frank Kass, 1998, 78.

[97] Andrew F. Krepinevich Jr. *The Army and Vietnam*. Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986, 27.

[98] Krepinevich, *The Army and Vietnam*, 28.

[99] Marquis, Susan L. *Unconventional Warfare: Rebuilding U.S. special Operations Forces*. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 1997, 14-15.

[100] Adams, *U.S. Special Operations Forces in Action*, 85.

SFODAs within villages along the border with North Vietnam, with the aim of training their inhabitants in self-defense with the goal of "interdict[ing] the infiltration of men and supplies from North Vietnam."[101] The intent was to spread this to other villages as occupied areas became "pacified," thereby earning it the moniker of the "oil-spot" strategy.[102]

The first CIDG mission was undertaken with the Rhade tribe—an isolated, agriculturally based population whose culture was markedly different from that of most Vietnamese.[103] To prepare, special forces detachments conducted between three and six months of language training, and area and cultural studies.[104] The strategy CIDG employed was not insurgent-focused—it was instead population-centric. The program sought to not only create a self-defense strike force, charged with defending the villages from insurgent attack, it also focused on a variety of civil measures such as "growing field and tree crops, livestock improvement, basic machinery, and irrigation."[105] CIDG was deemed a significant success in its early stages: it "secured several hundred villages, some three hundred thousand civilians, and several hundred square miles of territory from the VC."[106]

In April 1962, the U.S. Army began to question the employment of special forces units in the CIDG capacity; the Army decided that special forces units should be given a more offensive role in the fight against communism.[107] In 1963, control of the CIDG program switched hands from the CIA to the Military Assistance Command Vietnam (MACV), granting full control of the special forces units running the program to the

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[101] Krepinevich, *The Army and Vietnam*, 73.

[102] Krepinevich, *The Army and Vietnam*, 70.

[103] Strandquist, Jon. "Local Defence Forces and Counterinsurgency in Afghanistan: Learning from the CIA's Village Defense Program in South Vietnam." *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 26 (1) (01/02): 96, 2015.

[104] Christopher K. Ives. *U.S. Special Forces and Counterinsurgency in Vietnam: Military Innovation and Institutional Failure, 1961–1963.* New York: Routledge, 2007, 39.

[105] Strandquist, "Local Defence Forces and Counterinsurgency in Afghanistan," 97.

[106] Krepinevich, *The Army and Vietnam*, 71.

[107] Adams, *U.S. Special Operations Forces in Action*, 87.

Army.[108] Along with the change in control came changes to CIDG's effectiveness. The SFODAs' ability to maintain security in the areas they had previously pacified abruptly waned as the Vietnamese government began to withdraw its support, no longer feeling the pressure to devote resources to a program that did not directly fit the conventional U.S. Army's interests. Villagers came to be "used largely as mercenaries paid by the USSF."[109] However, despite the shift in how village forces were being used—from providing security and stability in their own villages to conducting offensive operations elsewhere, relations between special forces and their counterparts remained strong, almost to the detriment of the overall mission.

The strength of the relationship between special forces units and the village defense forces created what amounted to a zero-sum game with the Government of South Vietnam (GVN); as the tribespeople's relationship with their SF counterparts strengthened, they became increasingly distant toward the GVN's military and civil branches.[110] In 1964, MACV issued General Order 6 which created Military Assistance Command-Vietnam Studies and Observation Group,[111] the special operations element of MACV that did not always see eye to eye with its parent organization. MACV took an enemy-centric approach, whereas MACVSOG approached the conflict from a population-centric standpoint.

Vietnamese discontent with the CIDG program was heightened by MACV's inability, or refusal, to understand the cultural dynamics at work—for instance, in how CIDG forces were employed. Special forces advisers, like the CIA planners who set up the initial program, called for CIDG forces to operate in their respective home villages. Also known as home defense militias, these forces were not just supposed to be a deterrent against attacks by Viet Cong Forces, but they had a peculiar expertise (as a result of their living in the areas they defended) that was ineffective when they were

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[108] Strandquist, "Local Defence Forces and Counterinsurgency in Afghanistan," 101.

[109] Strandquist, "Local Defence Forces and Counterinsurgency in Afghanistan," 101.

[110] Adams, *U.S. Special Operations Forces in Action*, 89.

[111] Richard H Shultz. "If They Can do it, So Can We." In *The Secret War against Hanoi: Kennedy and Johnson's Use of Spies, Saboteurs, and Covert Warriors in North Vietnam.* New York: HarperCollins, 1999, 40.

employed outside their home villages.[112] Unfortunately, once MACV realized it would need augmented intelligence gathering and additional infantry to wage the fight it wanted to wage, it turned to the CIDG forces as available forces. Despite the protests by special forces commanders who saw the positive effects pacification was having, MACV repurposed the CIDG units to become mobile strike forces that it then sent to operate outside of their home areas.[113] The reassigned CIDG forces no longer held the advantage of insight into local cultural norms and daily activities since they were no longer operating near their homes.[114] Worse, in some cases, is that they lost their drive since why should they defend the areas to which they had been assigned?

As the CIDG became increasingly conventionalized in its approach, special forces' objectives likewise became more conventionalized:

In 1966, Headquarters 5th SFG underlined this emphasis by advising subordinate SF commanders that the "SF counterinsurgency program" had three objectives: "destroy the Viet Cong," "establish firm governmental control over the population," and enlist the population's active and willing support of, and participation in, the government's programs'.[115]

As attrition-based warfare gradually replaced the idea of pacification in Vietnam, conventional military commanders sought to use special forces as conventional infantry; special forces units' unique capabilities were marginalized, and a new emphasis was placed on the application of overwhelming force to achieve victory.[116] The employment of special forces gradually became shaped by and to the needs of conventional forces; "Thus, the talents of the special forces in pacification were subordinated to the big-unit war."[117] Increasingly, special forces missions were relegated to a kinetic-only focus.

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[112] Adams, *U.S. Special Operations Forces in Action*, 90.

[113] Adams, *U.S. Special Operations Forces in Action*, 90.

[114] Adams, *U.S. Special Operations Forces in Action*, 90.

[115] Adams, *U.S. Special Operations Forces in Action*, 93/

[116] Marquis, *Unconventional Warfare,* 17.

[117] Krepinevich, *The Army and Vietnam*, 230.

1. Special Forces Unit Composition

Apache Forces, created in 1965, served as small scout teams for larger conventional units.[118] Consisting of indigenous personnel and U.S. special forces advisors, Apache Forces located enemy units and relayed their locations to larger conventional forces for intelligence collection purposes or for targeting.[119] The U.S. military also created mobile guerrilla forces for the purposes of conducting small-scale attacks against enemy units; these were part of the larger Sigma and Omega programs designed to conduct long-range reconnaissance patrols in enemy territory[120]. In both cases, the formation and use of the units fell prey to MACV's insistence that they conduct offensive combat operations to assist the growing number of conventional forces flooding into Vietnam. Eventually, U.S. special forces began the process of handing over complete control of the CIDG to the Vietnamese Army, where they were given the new title of "Vietnam Army Rangers."

The newly-formed Vietnam Army Rangers then officially became part of the regular Vietnamese Army.[121] The more distant the Rangers became from the original CIDG mission and the further away from their homes they operated, the more this wholly undermined their usefulness for intelligence gathering purposes.

The 12-man SFODA was the primary unit employed in Vietnam. It consisted of the following positions: a commanding officer, an executive officer, an operations sergeant, a heavy weapons leader, a light weapons leader, an engineer sergeant, a medical specialist, an assistant medical specialist, a radio operator supervisor, a chief radio operator, an intelligence specialist, and an assistant intelligence sergeant.[122] This basic

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[118] These forces were similar in size to the Delta Forces employed in Vietnam. Delta Forces consisted of two U.S. Special forces advisers and eight indigenous personnel. Apache Forces, however, were commanded by a single special forces officer. For more information see Krepinevich, *The Army and Vietnam*, 231 or GlobalSecurity.org, "South Vietnam Special forces - Luc Luong Dac Biet (LLDB)," 2016 http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/vietnam/rvn-lldb.htm.

[119] Krepinevich, *The Army and Vietnam*, 231.

[120] Department of the Army. "Unconventional Operations." In *Vietnam Studies: United States Army Special Forces 1961–1971*.Washington, DC: Department of the Army, 1989, 137.

[121] Adams, *U.S. Special Operations Forces in Action*, 98.

[122] Stanton, Shelby. *U.S. Army Special forces A-Team Vietnam Combat Manual*. Boulder, Colorado: Paladin Press, 1998, xi-xiii.

format was eventually augmented by a civil actions-psychological operations specialist and a civil-actions-psychological operations officer. Both became standard within 5th Special Forces Group later in the war.[123] While these positions were intended to be filled with CA and PSYOP personnel, SF soldiers were oftentimes assigned the tasks due to lack of personnel.

Aside from serving in 12-man SFODAs, special forces soldiers were used in other units that varied in size and composition. For instance, Apache scout teams were led by a single special forces officer who commanded a small team of Vietnamese personnel. In contrast, the Leaping Lena program, developed to train and organize long-range reconnaissance patrols, involved ten man teams comprised of two U.S. special forces soldiers and eight Vietnamese special forces soldiers.[124] In the case of the Leaping Lena program, although U.S. personnel were assigned to the units, they were not authorized to participate in direct operations and played a strictly advisory role.[125] Other SF soldiers who were assigned to Projects Omega and Sigma served on "strike teams," and were assigned the task of conducting assaults deep within enemy strongholds. Strike teams were comprised of between two to three U.S. special forces soldiers and between 22 and 34 indigenous personnel.[126] This is an example of how special forces units became increasingly focused on kinetic operations, in accordance with the overall U.S. strategy in Vietnam at the time. Although modes of employment for special forces differed, soldiers still adhered to an economy of force principle, serving as indigenous force multipliers.

For instance, for cross-border operations in Laos, a few special forces Non-Commissioned Officers (NCOs) participated with roughly eight indigenous personnel.[127] These operations consisted of locating high-value targets (logistical and vehicular storage sites) and relaying their locations to waiting USAF F-4 Phantom aircraft.[128] The benefit

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[123] Stanton, *U.S. Army Special Forces A-Team Vietnam Combat Manual*, xiii.

[124] Krepinevich, *The Army and Vietnam*, 230-231.

[125] William Rosenau. *Special Operations Forces and Elusive Enemy Ground Targets: Lessons From Vietnam and the Persian Gulf War*. Santa Monica, California: RAND, 2001, 9.

[126] Department of the Army, *Vietnam Studies,* 136.

[127] Rosenau, *Special Operations Forces and Elusive Enemy Ground Targets*, 17–18.

[128] Rosenau, *Special Operations Forces and Elusive Enemy Ground Targets*, 20.

of these units, according to a former-MACVSOG member, was that the low U.S.-to-indigenous ratio meant a lower probability of U.S. casualties.[129] These small teams were highly mobile, and could be infiltrated and extracted quickly after inflicting disproportionately heavy losses on the enemy.

2.   Recruitment and Training

To fill its ranks, the fledgling special forces initially benefited from the Lodge Bill of 1950 which allowed aliens to serve in the U.S. military with the supposition that they would later serve to undertake guerrilla warfare in their native countries should the USSR and United States go to war.[130] On December 1, 1969, the U.S. government reinstated the Selective Service System for the first time since World War II.[131] Most soldiers consequently joined special forces in one of three ways: 1) they were recruited by a special forces recruiter, 2) they volunteered after two or more years of service, or 3) they were exposed to special forces during combat.[132] Recruitment literature at the time did not depict special forces as being focused on native populations. This made recruitment for special forces significantly different than it was for the Jedburgh teams in World War II when individuals were sought who spoke the local language and who could work alongside natives who had an inherent understanding of the culture.[133]

3.   Civil Affairs and Special Forces in Vietnam

The special forces "A-teams" in Vietnam that supported the CIDG in its infancy were assigned a much different mission than the one that eventually evolved after MACV took over. The target of the initial CIDG program, as developed by the CIA, was the population.[134] Proponents of the program saw the civilian population as the source of

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[129] Rosenau, *Special Operations Forces and Elusive Enemy Ground Targets*, 17.

[130] Adams, *U.S. Special Operations Forces in Action*, 47.

[131] Selective service system: The Vietnam Lotteries. In Selective Service System [database online]. 2016 [cited March/28 2016]. Available from https://www.sss.gov/About/History-And-Records/lotter1.

[132] Gordon Rottman. *Green Berets in Vietnam.* Oxford, United Kingdom: Osprey Publishing, 2002, 15.

[133] Irwin, *The Jedburghs*, 40-42.

[134] Adams, *U.S. Special Operations Forces in Action*, 83.

power for the government, and to pacify such a population meant not only providing security, but improving quality of life. Through its provision of support and security for the population, the CIDG intended to cut off the insurgency from the population.[135] Although the CIDG was responsible for providing local village security, the offensive capability provided by the forces the program generated was primarily restricted to the village and its immediate surrounding area.[136] To improve the quality of life, special forces teams provided medical assistance and implemented civil programs aimed at improving sanitation, the availability of water, and agricultural capabilities.[137] The sanitation projects that were developed focused on a variety of initiatives, such as personal hygiene instruction in elementary schools, insect and rodent control, and trash disposal.[138] These efforts were at odds with the conventional mindset that saw kinetic operations in rural areas that targeted the Viet Cong as the key to providing security for, and ensuring the welfare of, the indigenous population.

As was noted of the time in the U.S. Army special forces Vietnam combat manual, "Special forces has a definite advantage over most conventional military units in that detachments are located in the same operational area, working in the same hamlets, villages and districts for one, two or three years."[139] In a recommendation to President Kennedy, a study conducted by Robert Hilsman, Director of Intelligence and Research at the Department of State, concluded that through gathering tactical level intelligence, and conducting civic action as well as counter-guerrilla operations, the threat posed by the Viet Cong could be countered.[140] Once civic action became a key part of SF's approach, special forces units provided these capabilities in a single package.

The positive effects of special forces" civic action projects were especially visible with the Montagnards. Special forces medics provided medical treatment for previously

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135 Adams, *U.S. Special Operations Forces in Action*, 83.

136 Adams, *U.S. Special Operations Forces in Action*, 85.

137 Adams, *U.S. Special Operations Forces in Action*, 85.

138 Department of the Army, *Vietnam Studies,* 145.

139 Stanton, *U.S. Army Special Forces A-Team Vietnam Combat Manual, 119.*

140 Ives, *U.S. Special Forces and Counterinsurgency in Vietnam,* 12.

untreated populations along with "two six man Montagnard extension teams [that] trained the villagers in crop care, simple tool making and blacksmithing."[141] Special forces soldiers also assisted in digging wells, making road improvements, and in other projects that improved the Montagnard standard of living without disrupting deeply rooted cultural practices.[142] The result of these projects was a Montagnard population extremely dedicated to the anti-Communist effort and loyal to their special forces advisers.[143] The effects of civic action projects were sufficiently well understood that, by 1966, special forces detachments had attached two personnel to manage the detachment's psychological operations and civil affairs efforts, thereby increasing the size of an organic SF detachment to 14 men.[144]

One of the first attempts to gain the support of the Montagnard population occurred in the Rhade village of Buon Enao, undertaken by special forces Detachment A-113.[145] The "Buon Enao Experiment," as it came to be known, was so successful, that in its first six months, over 200 villages joined the program, including over 10,000 Rhade tribesmen.[146] One of the primary reasons for the program's initial success is that special forces team members demonstrated their willingness to not only work with the Rhade population toward a common goal, but did so within the *context* of the Rhade culture.[147]

> Hunkered down next to small fires in remote villages, the soldiers of Special Forces wore their tribal bracelets, helped dig village wells, delivered Montagnard babies, and assisted the Rhade and other Montagnards in teaching themselves how to defend their families and villages. In Buon Enao and in dozens of other villages and hamlets,

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[141] "Historical Files on Special Forces Medical Activities in the Vietnam War" as cited in Ives, *U.S. Special Forces and Counterinsurgency in Vietnam*, 20.

[142] Ives, *U.S. Special Forces and Counterinsurgency in Vietnam,* 125.

[143] Ives, *U.S. Special Forces and Counterinsurgency in Vietnam,* 125.

[144] Adams, *U.S. Special Operations Forces in Action*, 111.

[145] Shelby L. Stanton. "Vietnam Assignment." In *Green Berets at War: U.S. Army Special Forces in Southeast Asia 1956–1975*. Novato, CA: Presidio Press, 1985, 40.

[146] Stanton, *Green Berets at War,* 42.

[147] Ives, *U.S. Special Forces and Counterinsurgency in Vietnam,* 125.

Special Forces soldiers won the confidence of their residents and gave them the skills and support to defend and improve their lives.[148]

Robert Jones defines populace-centric engagement (PCE) as, "A holistic family of engagement that places primacy on understanding and facilitating meeting the requirements of a target populace for good governance, as shaped by its own unique culture and values."[149] The passage above describes a classic populace-centric approach.

As a result of programs like this, the South Vietnamese government earned the support of village elders who saw the positive effects of special forces kinetic efforts paired with development projects.[150] The combined efforts served to rapidly spread stability in the affected areas and news spread quickly by word of mouth about citizens experiencing medical benefits first-hand, so very little effort needed to be put into recruiting.[151]

In focusing civic action efforts to fit with the Montagnard way of life, special forces soldiers were able to gain and maintain the trust and loyalty of the indigenous populations until later in the conflict, when deep-seated disagreements between the South Vietnamese Government and the Montagnards proved insurmountable.

One effect of having team members well-versed in civic action at the tactical level was that this enabled detachments to train the trainer.[152] Once special forces advisors had provided the training, they could then step back and oversee such programs, as indigenous personnel then provided the services.[153] In addition to the fact that such training helped to ensure the self-sufficiency of villages, it reduced the requirement for U.S. personnel in a given area, as the services that would have been provided by Americans were now provided internally by members of the indigenous population. Even

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[148] Ives, *U.S. Special Forces and Counterinsurgency in Vietnam*, 21.

[149] Jones, Robert C. "Populace-Centric Engagement: A Positive Change of Strategic Perspective for Winning the Long War." *Small Wars Journal*. 30 October, 2008.

[150] Ives, *U.S. Special Forces and Counterinsurgency in Vietnam,* 18.

[151] Kelly, *Vietnam Studies: U.S. Army Special Forces,* 26.

[152] Physical security measures were also taken, such as the building of fortified structures within villages (Ives, *U.S. Special Forces and Counterinsurgency in Vietnam*, 18, 99).

[153] Ives, *U.S. Special Forces and Counterinsurgency in Vietnam,* 18.

better, as the population enjoyed the benefits of additional medical coverage, sanitation projects, and educational efforts, they were receiving improvements the North Vietnamese and Viet Cong simply could not provide, and were thus drawn away from the Communist ideology and closer toward the South Vietnamese government.

4. Psychological Operations and Special Forces in Vietnam

In addition to civil programs, the special forces "A-teams" also incorporated psychological operations into the tactical fight. Although not every detachment was manned with the two psychological operations personnel described in the U.S. Army special forces A-team Vietnam combat manual, there *was* an emphasis placed upon the implementation of psychological operations in detachment-level planning. In the A-team Vietnam combat manual, the recommendation was made (although not always implemented) that if the necessary personnel were not provided for psychological operations planning purposes, then each undermanned detachment should assign the responsibility to a specific team member as his primary task.[154] The assignment of non-PSYOP trained personnel to PSYOP roles did not indicate a lack of emphasis, but rather a lack of qualified personnel.

As with civil affairs personnel on a detachment, personnel trained in psychological operations and assigned at the detachment level were in close proximity to their operating environment and counterparts. Thus, they could understand the target audience and develop messaging on the spot. Psychological warfare elements embedded in the upper echelons of military command structures in Vietnam—e.g. above the tactical and operational levels - did not have unfettered access to intelligence at the village level. In contrast, the psychological operations personnel on special forces detachments would have likely had primary-source access to the same information as their target audiences. Being at the local level also enabled them to work hand-in-hand with their Vietnamese psychological operations counterparts in an attempt to influence the population to view the government as both legitimate and capable.

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[154] Department of the Army, *Vietnam Studies,* 120.

When assigned at the detachment level, psychological operations personnel were also familiar with the civil affairs projects undertaken by the detachment, providing an opportunity to capitalize on successful civic action through tailored messaging based on these projects.[155] This capability, placed at the detachment level, allowed them to effectively and quickly marginalize enemy propaganda efforts.

In addition to marginalizing enemy propaganda, another challenge was to develop support for the government in Saigon. This was difficult to muster, especially since the Vietnamese had long been apathetic toward the Montagnards' needs and had viewed them with disdain.[156] Nevertheless, initial successes achieved through the Buon Enao experiment were due, in part, to this psychological warfare efforts that reinforced the legitimacy of, and local support for, the South Vietnamese government.[157]

Although many of the psychological warfare efforts undertaken by special forces involved attempts to get Viet Cong fighters to surrender, MACVSOG also employed black propaganda and false messaging to confuse and preoccupy enemy forces that otherwise would have been conducting operations against the South Vietnamese government and U.S. forces. Project Borden, begun in 1968, was one such effort. The concept behind Project Borden was to enlist the help of North Vietnamese Army (NVA) POWs who claimed to have had a change of heart, and consequently wanted to work for the South Vietnamese government and U.S. forces. Those recruited would then be fed false information in the hopes that they would later be captured by NVA forces, and would divulge the entirety of what they knew, leading the NVA to believe Saigon and the United States had covert elements operating inside North Vietnam.[158] It was difficult to gauge the effectiveness of this program—although initial results seemed promising—since it was shut down in 1969, roughly one year after its inception.[159]

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[155] Stanton, *U.S. Army Special Forces A-Team Vietnam Combat Manual,* 178.

[156] Kelly, *Vietnam Studies: U.S. Army Special Forces,* 20.

[157] Kelly, *Vietnam Studies: U.S. Army Special Forces,* 25.

[158] Richard H. Schultz. *The Secret War against Hanoi: Kennedy and Johnson's Use of Spies, Saboteurs, and Covert Warriors in North Vietnam.* New York: HarperCollins, 1999, 116-117.

[159] Shultz, *The Secret War against Hanoi,* 117.

Projects Urgency and Oodles were two other attempts at psychological warfare by MACVSOG. Urgency consisted of planting subversive material into the clothing of hardline enemy POWs who could not be turned for use as agents, and then reinserting them into North Vietnam for capture, thereby stirring distrust and inciting paranoia among enemy forces.[160] Oodles involved the use of false messaging to phantom teams inside North Vietnam, making it appear as though the United States had an extensive network of agents within enemy-held territory.[161] MACVSOG was also responsible for running "black" radio stations—broadcasting propaganda material via radio stations that appeared to be of North Vietnamese origin.[162] These efforts represented higher level psychological warfare conducted by MACVSOG and special forces elements.

Although the 5th Special Forces Group was originally designed to pull together special forces, psychological warfare operations, and civil affairs into a single organization, a lack of resourcing prevented its full realization.[163] However, augmentation by civil affairs and psychological warfare operations personnel at the detachment level did serve to link strategically-oriented higher level operations with tactical-level activities. Worth noting is that smaller-scale efforts, such as the showing of American films and other propaganda, also helped strengthen and reinforce relations among U.S. forces, their counterparts, and the local population.[164]

B.   MARINE COMBINED ACTION PLATOONS IN VIETNAM

Special forces was not alone in the execution of such ventures during the Vietnam War. The Marine Combined Action Platoons (CAP) operated in a manner similar to the CIDG. The CAPs lived in the villages for which they provided security, and focused on the population rather than the insurgents.

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[160] Shultz, *The Secret War against Hanoi,* 118.

[161] Shultz, *The Secret War against Hanoi,* 119.

[162] Adams, *U.S. Special Operations Forces in Action*, 121.

[163] Adams, *U.S. Special Operations Forces in Action*, 111.

[164] Ives, *U.S. Special Forces and Counterinsurgency in Vietnam,* 99.

General Lewis Walt, commander of Marines under COMUSMACV, took a tempered approach to the conflict in Vietnam and, upon his arrival in-country, issued orders that firepower be used only with restraint.[165] He considered the use of overwhelming firepower to be counter-productive—and recognized that it only served to validate the Viet Cong's claims that Americans and the South Vietnamese government did not care about the population's welfare.[166] General Walt's goal was to separate the population from the enemy and provide the villages and hamlets with security while simultaneously forcing the enemy to rely on resupply from North Vietnam as opposed to the villagers.[167] Each CAP conducted night patrols and ambushes in order to deny the enemy a safe haven and eliminate any possibility of the VC influencing the population.[168] However, United States Army leaders regarded the CAPs as ineffective and unwilling to fight, with General Harry Kinnard, proponent of the air mobile concept, remarking that he was "absolutely disgusted" with the CAPs. Similarly, Major General Depuy complained that, "the Marines came in and just sat down and didn't do anything."[169]

Despite the disdain with which the Army viewed the Marine CAPs, they were able to achieve remarkably positive results:

> The CAPs produced results, but like all successful counterinsurgency programs, it took time. By the summer of 1967 a DOD report noted that the Hamlet Evaluation System (HES) security score gave CAP-protected villages a score of 2.95 out of a possible 5.0 maximum, as compared with an average of 1.6 for all I Corps villages. Furthermore, there was a direct correlation between the time a CAP stayed in a village and the degree of security achieved, with CAP-protected villages progressing twice as fast as those occupied by the PFs [Popular Forces] alone.

All this was achieved at a casualty rate lower than that found in units conducting search-and-destroy missions. "Gen. Richard Clutterbuck, a British counterinsurgency

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[165] Krepinevich, *The Army and Vietnam*, 172.

[166] Krepinevich, *The Army and Vietnam*, 173.

[167] Krepinevich, *The Army and Vietnam*, 173.

[168] Krepinevich, *The Army and Vietnam*, 173.

[169] Krepinevich, *The Army and Vietnam*, 175.

expert, noted that "although [Marine] casualties are high, they are only 50% of the casualties of the normal infantry or marine battalions being flown around by helicopters on large scale operations.'"[170]

The Marine CAPs achieved these results with relatively small numbers of personnel; each CAP consisted of approximately 15 Marines and 34 Popular Forces in each village or hamlet.[171] It is also important to note that, in the history of the CAP program, only one village was overrun (out of a total of 111 in 1969[172]), underscoring the CAPs' ability to provide security to their respective villages and hamlets.[173] Despite these successes, the CAPs were given little attention in favor of a much more kinetic approach.

Similar to the special forces detachments, it is worth also mentioning that the CAPs attempted to incorporate civic action projects and psychological operations. However, a lack of understanding of both the objectives and their associated tasks led to a mediocre effort in both civic action and psychological operations.[174] The lack of proper employment of civic action and psychological warfare efforts demonstrated that higher levels had either failed to plan for such operations or had not provided adequate training to those assigned to carry out such tasks.[175] If planning for such operations had occurred, it had been done in a state detached from the reality of how such operations occurred on the ground.[176]

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[170] Krepinevich, *The Army and Vietnam*, 174.

[171] Krepinevich, *The Army and Vietnam*, 173.

[172] Bruce C. Allnut. *Marine Combined Action Capabilities: The Vietnam Experience.* McLean, Virginia: Human Sciences Research, Inc., 1969, 11.

[173] Krepinevich, *The Army and Vietnam*, 175.

[174] Allnut, *Marine Combined Action Capabilities,* 69.

[175] Allnut, *Marine Combined Action Capabilities,* 69.

[176] Allnut, *Marine Combined Action Capabilities,* 69.

C.   MOBILE ADVISORY TEAMS

Mobile Advisory Teams (MAT) were five-man teams that, like special forces detachments, lived in the villages and hamlets under austere conditions.[177] The MATs were responsible for training and employing both Popular and Regional Forces throughout Vietnam. The teams "consisted of two combat arms officers… trained at the Special Warfare School plus three experienced noncommissioned officers who were, respectively, a light weapons specialist, a heavy weapons specialist, and a medic."[178] The disposition of these units was typically in isolated areas and, because U.S. forces took priority, were low in the order of precedence for receiving supplies and equipment. MATs often operated in close proximity to and in cooperation with U.S. special forces Mike Forces, conducting ambushes, raids, patrols, and waterborne operations against Viet Cong targets.[179]

Written by David Donovan (a pseudonym), *Once a Warrior King*, details the operations of MAT-IV 32, led by 1LT Terry Turner.[180] During the course of Turner's service, his MAT conducted numerous combat operations, but he acknowledged the importance that civic action played in the team's success. Initially, the team focused its efforts on medical civic action programs. The team ran medical clinics and provided antibiotics, medical supplies, and various forms of basic treatment.[181] The team's civic action efforts also grew to include the "development of village schools, health and maternity clinics, agricultural projects, law enforcement programs, and the establishment of hamlet and village offices," while providing advice and instruction to locals about how to maintain such projects.[182] Schools and medical clinics were especially important in

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[177] Vien, Cao V., Truong, Ngo Q., Khuyen, Dong V., Hinh, Nguyen D., Tho, Tran D., Lung, Hoang N., and Vien, Chu X. *The U.S. Adviser.* Washington, DC: U.S. Army Center of Military History, 1980, 142. *www.dtic.mil/cgi-bin/GetTRDoc?AD=ADA324510.*

[178] Donovan, David. "The beginnings." In *Once a Warrior King: Memories of an Officer in Vietnam.* New York: McGraw-Hill, 1985, 36.

[179] Donovan, *Once a Warrior King*, 208.

[180] MAT IV-32: 1969–1970 Tram Chim Village. in Gia Vuc Tribute website [database online]. 2015 [cited April/14 2016]. Available from http://www.gia-vuc.com/matIV-32.htm.

[181] Donovan, *Once a Warrior King*, 277.

[182] Donovan, *Once a Warrior King*, 269.

helping foster a better image of the government,[183] although at a certain point Turner and his team eventually came to be regarded as the de facto district leadership due to the incompetence and apathetic attitude of the district chief.[184]

One issue that plagued Turner's MAT was the lack of resources to support the team's civic action programs, thereby forcing it to rely on outside donors to provide equipment and materiel to continue its projects.[185] In addition to a shortage of materiel, the team struggled to find both the time and personnel to devote as much attention and planning to the civic action projects as they merited given their other patrolling responsibilities.[186] Again, the team only consisted of two combat arms officers and three non-commissioned officers (two weapons specialists and a medic), none of whom had a civic action background. However, despite the lack of resources and personnel, the team managed to use the programs they established to combat the belief, promulgated by the Viet Cong, that the government in Saigon could not provide for its people.

D.   CONCLUSION

The units examined in this chapter were all force-multipliers consisting of small numbers of U.S. personnel transmitting their skills and knowledge to larger numbers of local forces to achieve a common goal. Most of the organizations discussed ranged in size between three and 12 personnel, augmented by groups of 20 or more indigenous personnel. These units were able to make a difference in their areas of operation because they remained in the same location and were able to offer services the enemy could not provide. When local government officials and members of the security forces were not corrupt, the U.S. units working with their local counterparts represented what local populations hoped for—and expected from—their government. Although each of the missions described differed slightly, they shared the ultimate goal of providing security for locals and denying the enemy the ability to influence them.

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183 Donovan, *Once a Warrior King*, 269.

184 Donovan, *Once a Warrior King*, 126.

185 Donovan, *Once a Warrior King*, 270.

186 Donovan, *Once a Warrior King*, 269.

While small unit size was beneficial throughout Vietnam, it also became a hindrance in some situations as was the case with the MATs. While the small size enabled them to operate on minimal resources, the units were often task-saturated, unable to focus on civic action efforts aside from medical care and largely neglecting psychological operations. Had these units been provided with additional personnel to assist in these areas, their civic action and psychological warfare efforts may have provided significant contributions to their overall success and allowed them to focus more on the development of their respective village.

These units experienced success when they were able to understand the population they were assigned to protect. Success required a restrained, or at least a highly discriminate, use of force. The units' focus needed to be on the population. Most incorporated some degree of civic action into their efforts to improve the local quality of life. Further success was achieved when the results of these civic action projects were amplified by the careful use of psychological operations.

Civic action projects were most likely to resonate with the local population when they provided benefits that were already congruent with local traditions, cultural practices, and needs. The same can be said for psychological operations. To truly understand the target audience and synchronize the messaging required being present at the tactical level. In most cases, units described experienced difficulties if not outright failure when they abandoned these sorts of successful practices in favor of strictly, or predominantly, kinetically focused operations. Once the focus of units was reoriented away from the population to the enemy, the enemy no longer needed to separate the population from anti-communist forces. Anti-communists instead created this separation by ignoring the population.

Units that were untrained in, or provided little resources for, civic action and psychological operations, experienced little success in these areas. One weakness of the CAPs was that they failed to successfully incorporate these efforts into their operations due, in part, to their lack of training in the areas. The MATs were more successful with these operations, but even their efforts were hindered by a lack of resources. However, when these capabilities were successfully employed at the tactical level within SFODAs,

it created a deep sense of trust and understanding between U.S. military advisers and their indigenous partners, as evidenced in the Rhade population and other Montagnard Hill Tribes.

Unfortunately, aside from their use in certain missions, indigenous populations were not widely recruited into U.S. special operations forces as they had been in World War II. The result was a largely homogenous population that lacked in cultural understanding. The knowledge that did exist within special forces was gained through numerous deployments and learned through an outsider's point of view.

To sum up, small unit size, cultural understanding (gained through cultural immersion), remaining population-focused, and augmentation with civil affairs capabilities amplified by psychological warfare techniques proved crucial to successes achieved by special forces and similar units in Vietnam. However, misunderstandings of civic action and a kinetic focus (of the type that was adopted when special forces began to be used as elite infantry) led to a gap between the South Vietnamese government and the Viet Cong, which the latter exploited to their advantage.

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IV.   SPECIAL FORCES IN AFGHANISTAN

A.   HISTORY

Prior to the attacks of September 11th, United States Central Command did not have a plan for Unconventional Warfare to be executed in Afghanistan.[187] In less than a month after the attacks, CENTCOM had not only developed but briefed its plan for UW to General Franks, then-head of CENTCOM.[188] The plan called for members of special forces detachments to infiltrate into Afghanistan, partner with members of the Northern Alliance and, using airpower provided by the United States, overthrow the Taliban government of Afghanistan.[189] For the first two months of the war, U.S. special forces' involvement in Afghanistan consisted largely of providing close air support (CAS) to the Northern Alliance.[190] By December, Taliban and Al-Qaeda forces had been ousted from Kabul and Kandahar, and Hamid Karzai, the newly appointed Prime Minister of Afghanistan, was sworn into office.[191]

From 2002 to 2004, special forces soldiers partnered with local militia chiefs to conduct raids near the Afghanistan-Pakistan border against suspected extremists.[192] As Karzai came under pressure from the international community to establish a more legitimate security arm, portions of these militias were absorbed into the Afghan National Police program while others were simply disarmed.[193] However, without U.S. involvement, these new forces proved unable to maintain security and insurgent forces eventually began to gain support with the local population.[194] A lack of a structured

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[187] John F. Kerry, Ed. *Tora Bora Revisited: How We Failed to Get Bin Laden and Why It Matters Today.* Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2009, 93.

[188] Kerry, *Tora Bora Revisited*, 93.

[189] Kerry, *Tora Bora Revisited*, 93.

[190] Kerry, *Tora Bora Revisited*, 101.

[191] Kerry, *Tora Bora Revisited*, 101.

[192] Mark Moyar. *Village Stability Operations and the Afghan Local Police.* MacDill Air Force Base: The JSOU Press, 2014, 6.

[193] Moyar, *Village Stability Operations and the Afghan Local Police*, 6.

[194] Moyar, *Village Stability Operations and the Afghan Local Police*, 6.

training program, under-funded initiatives, and corruption only served to undermine the overall security effort.[195]

In response, the Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force-Afghanistan (CJSOTF-A), which oversaw all U.S. special operations forces in Afghanistan, assisted in the development of the Afghan National Auxiliary Police in 2009. While initial attempts to build the Afghan security structure were conceptually sound—the aim was to fix issues at the local level—they ultimately failed to "fully incorporate the communities."[196] One effect of this failed integration was that the program expanded too quickly. Without the synchronization of efforts to engage the communities, the Afghan National Auxiliary Police proved ineffective and competent, and were later absorbed into the Afghan National Police.[197]

In 2009, the Community Defense Initiative (CDI) was implemented by CJSOTF in an effort to stamp out resistance.[198] This program was similar to the previous pairing of special forces detachments with local militias. Yet, one difference was that this latest program took a more population-centric approach. In 2010, the program was renamed the Local Defense Initiative and, shortly after, renamed again, becoming known as Village Stability Operations (VSO). In practice, the essence of the program remained much the same despite the name changes.[199]

The intent behind VSO was to take a more indirect approach to insurgency. Similar to CIDG in Vietnam, the VSO program sought to provide security via locally recruited forces and combine these efforts with community development projects. By mid-2010, VSO programs had been established at 20 sites throughout Afghanistan.[200] Each VSO site was overseen by an SFODA, augmented by combat enablers, such as civil

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[195] David J. Haskell. "The Afghan National Police: Turning a Counterinsurgency Problem into a Solution." Master's thesis, Naval Postgraduate School, 2009, 32.

[196] Haskell. *The Afghan National Police: Turning a Counterinsurgency Problem into a Solution*, 40.

[197] Moyar, *Village Stability Operations and the Afghan Local Police*, 8.

[198] Jon Boone. "U.S. Pours Millions Into Anti-Taliban Militias in Afghanistan." *The Guardian*, World Section, 22 November 2009.

[199] Moyar, *Village Stability Operations and the Afghan Local Police*, 9.

[200] Moyar, *Village Stability Operations and the Afghan Local Police*, 10.

affairs or psychological operations elements. Each SFODA was charged with training, equipping, and oversight of what became known as Afghan Local Police (ALP). These were security forces that were (in contrast to previous arrangements which had failed) largely accountable to local officials rather than to the Afghan government.[201]

The VSO program became special forces detachments' primary mission in Afghanistan. VSO sought a balance between the enemy-centric approach, favored in the early years of the conflict and a more population-centric, bottom-up focus.[202] The program was based on a four-step approach: Shape, Hold, Build, and Expand.[203] The first stage, Shape, focused on understanding the cultural dynamics at play in a particular village, assessing the capability of the target village, and gaining the approval of and securing a welcome by local village leaders.[204] The Hold phase was oriented toward maintaining security gains established during the shaping phase by prompting village members to not only provide information about existing threats, but to take part in security efforts themselves.[205] During the Build phase, efforts were made to provide a connection between the national Afghan government and government at the village level. Critical here was expertise provided by civil affairs personnel who were able to coordinate agricultural, health, and other development projects that improved the quality of life for village members.[206] The final Expand phase involved redirecting VSO efforts to nearby areas that were in need of similar improvements in order to realize stability throughout a given district.[207]

The VSO program continued through 2014, when a large drawdown of U.S. forces occurred. As of the writing of this thesis, approximately 10,000 personnel remain

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[201] Moyar, *Village Stability Operations and the Afghan Local Police*, 12.

[202] Saum-Manning, Lisa. *VSO/ALP: Comparing Past and Current Challenges to Afghan Local Defense.* Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2012, 8.

[203] Connett, Ty, and Bob Cassidy. "Village Stability Operations: More than Village Defense." *Special Warfare Magazine* 24 (3) July-September 2011, 23.

[204] Connett and Cassidy, "Village Stability Operations." 23–24.

[205] Connett and Cassidy, "Village Stability Operations," 25.

[206] Connett and Cassidy, "Village Stability Operations," 26.

[207] Connett and Cassidy, "Village Stability Operations," 27.

in Afghanistan with the mission for forces remaining in Afghanistan post-2016 to enable the ANDSF [Afghan National Security and Defense Forces] and combat Al Qaeda and associated groups.[208] Because special operations forces will "operate out of Bagram Airfield, Jalalabad, and Qandahar," the VSO program will not be resurrected.[209]

From 2007 to the present, special forces detachments were also paired with Direct Action-focused Commando Kandaks (Pashto for battalion) who assisted conventional Battle Space Owners (BSOs) and VSO sites shape operations by targeting insurgent resistance in key areas. Modeled after the U.S. Army Rangers, the Commando program saw its first class of trainees graduate in July of 2007.[210] Although the Commandos did engage in some Build phase activities, their primary focus was on kinetic operations. As with the VSO program, special forces had one, or sometimes two, 12-man SFODAs paired with a Kandak. Each SFODA advised and assisted its Kandak with logistics, operational planning, and execution among other things. Often times, SFODAs were augmented by an Air Force Joint Tactical Attack Controller (JTAC) who would direct Close Air Support (CAS) in support of the SFODA. Later, SFODAs were also often augmented by a Military Working Dog (MWD) and handler to detect narcotics and explosives, as well as to search buildings for enemy threats.

Special forces detachments also served in strictly advisory roles with the Afghan National Army special forces (ANASF) Qualification Course, which was designed to train and certify ANASF candidates for service in ANASF detachments. Afghan SFODAs would later serve alongside U.S. SFODAs in various capacities, to include VSO, as well as conduct unilateral missions against high value targets and joint operations with the Afghan Commandos.[211] Developing the ANASF was critical to establishing a link between the population and the Afghan government since it permitted

[208] Katzman, Kenneth. *Afghanistan: Post-Taliban Governance, Security, and U.S. Policy* (RL30588). Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, 2016. https://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/row/RL30588.pdf.

[209] Katzman, *Afghanistan: Post-Taliban Governance, Security, and U.S. Policy,* 29.

[210] Soraya S. Nelson. "New Afghan Commandos Take to The Front Lines." In NPR. Washington, DC, 2007. http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=12127848.

[211] Janice Burton. "Game Changers: ANA Special Forces Impact the Course of Afghanistan." *Special Warfare Magazine* 24, (4) October-December 2011.

the Afghan government to connect with the population in the same manner U.S. forces had done under the VSO program.

B. SPECIAL FORCES UNIT COMPOSITION

The modern version of the SFODA used in Afghanistan was only slightly different from the 15-man version created at SF's inception.[212] The SFODA today continues to consist of a detachment commander, an assistant detachment commander, an operations sergeant, an operations/intelligence sergeant, as well as a senior and junior sergeant in each of the following areas: weapons, engineering, medical, and communications, for a total of 12 personnel that constitute a full detachment.[213] The most notable changes are the addition of NCOs specialized in engineering tasks, and the removal of a commissioned officer as an assistant detachment commander and his replacement by a warrant officer. Also, while this describes the organic composition of an SFODA, detachments were often augmented in Afghanistan with some, or all, of the following: JTAC, MWD and handler, additional intelligence assets, civil affairs personnel, MISO personnel, and other specialized assets as needed, such as combat support teams.

C. RECRUITMENT AND TRAINING

Recruitment methods for special forces soldiers have become increasingly formalized over time. The Special Operations Recruiting Battalion website notes the following prerequisites must be met for an officer to be considered for special forces:

- Must be in the pay grade of O-2 and be in the targeted year group for the Captain's Board.

- Have at least a Secret security clearance prior to final packet approval and meet eligibility criteria for Top Secret clearance.

- Have completed the Officer Basic Course and have been successful in your branch assignments prior to application for special forces.

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[212] Adams, *U.S. Special Operations Forces in Action*, 56.

[213] Department of the Army. *Special Forces Operations (FM3-18)*. Washington, DC: Department of the Army, 2014.

- Have a Defense Language Aptitude Battery (DLAB) Score of 85 or higher or a Defense Language Proficiency Test (DLPT) of a minimum of 1/1 reading and listening score.

- Must be able to meet medical fitness standards as outlined in AR 40–501.[214]

Enlisted personnel must meet somewhat different criteria. Specifically, they must "be in the pay grade of E-3 to E-6 or E-7s with no more than 12 years TIS [time in service] and 9 months TIG [time in grade]."[215] Regardless of whether they are enlisted personnel or officers, all applicants must possess a defense language aptitude battery (DLAB, which assesses a tester's potential to learn a new language) of 85 or better, or possess a defense language proficiency test (DLPT) of 1/1 or better in a given language, and they must be a U.S. citizen.[216] As the special forces regiment has become more formalized in its processes, its selection processes have become more exclusive, a far cry from initial recruiting policies when foreign nationals who possessed the cultural expertise and language capability of their homelands were targeted.

The 18X program, begun in 2001,[217] bore (and still does in its current state) some resemblance to recruiting efforts during the World War II era, in that it seeks to draw applicants from the civilian population who meet the requisite medical, aptitude, and physical standards—individuals who might not otherwise be available for recruitment because they are not prior service and lack the rank.[218] While the 18-X program does broaden the pool, it does not specifically target émigrés—unlike the Jedburghs. Consequently, one can make the argument that a large population of refugees from areas where special forces have been involved, Afghanistan specifically, was overlooked.

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214 Special Operations Recruiting Battalion. "Special Forces Qualification." 2015. http://www.sorbrecruiting.com/SF_Qualifications.htm.

215 Special Operations Recruiting Battalion, "Special Forces Qualifications," 2015.

216 Special Operations Recruiting Battalion, "Special Forces Qualifications," 2015.

[217] Trevor O. Robichaux. "Special Forces Recruiting: The Operational Need for Targeted Recruitment of First and Second Generation Americans." Master's thesis, Naval Postgraduate School, 2008, 46.

218 U.S. Army, "Careers and Jobs," 2016. http://www.goarmy.com/careers-and-jobs/browse-career-and-job-categories/intelligence-and-combat-support/special-forces-candidate.html.

Potential recruits who might have served as culturally and linguistically adept assets went untapped.

Following successful completion of Special Forces Assessment and Selection (SFAS lasts approximately 19 days), candidates in the Special Forces Qualification Course (SFQC) undergo between 60 and 64 weeks of training.[219] As part of the SFQC, special forces soldiers receive approximately four months of language training if studying a Category I or II language (e.g. Spanish, French, Indonesian), or six months of language training if studying a Category III or IV language (e.g. Arabic, Chinese, Mandarin, Tagalog, Russian, Persian, Farsi, Korean, Thai).[220]

Aside from language training, SFQC students also receive training in small unit tactics (SUT), survival training (survival, evasion, resistance, and escape, or SERE), as well as training in their military occupational specialty (MOS) which covers their respective functional area.[221] Once an SFQC student has completed these hurdles, he must then participate in the culminating exercise known as Robin Sage, which tests all of the skills he previously learned in a simulated unconventional warfare environment. Upon successful completion of Robin Sage, the candidate graduates and earns the Green Beret.

D.   SPECIAL FORCES AND CIVIL AFFAIRS IN AFGHANISTAN

Early in the conflict in Afghanistan, special forces and civil affairs units complemented each other's efforts. As the United States Senate Committee on Foreign Relations report on Tora Bora notes, "Civil affairs teams with TF DAGGER began assessing humanitarian needs even as the fighting was winding down in northern

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219 Special forces medical sergeants must also attend a 36 week long course titled the Special Operations Combat Medic Course. Special Operations Recruiting Battalion, "Special Forces Training Overview." 2015. http://www.sorbrecruiting.com/SF_Training2.htm.

220 Special Forces Training Overview, 2015.

221 This includes training for future detachment commanders, weapons sergeants, engineer sergeants, medical sergeants, and communications sergeants. For more on the SFQC see Special Operations Recruiting Battalion, "Special Forces Training Overview. In Special Operations Recruiting Battalion," 2015. http://www.sorbrecruiting.com/SF_Training2.htm.

Afghanistan."[222] Although civil affairs personnel were never organically incorporated into SFODAs, as they were during the Vietnam War, they nevertheless maintained a close relationship throughout the conflict.

For instance, civil affairs members were heavily involved in the special forces' VSO program. The prototype for VSO was first conceived and implemented in 2009 in Day Kundi Province and carried out by SFODA 7224.[223] The detachment undertook an intensive study of the area and sought to recreate what the CIDG had done in the villages in Vietnam.[224] A large part of this effort depended on facilitating and working through the local government. 7224's detachment leaders participated in all of the village's shuras and consulted local leaders before taking action.[225] After securing the population and continuing security efforts through the Shape and Hold phases, the SFODA sought to connect the local government with district and regional level government leadership. By using civic actions projects, detachments were able to turn the population away from the insurgency and reorient it toward improving the situation in the village and surrounding areas.[226] Similar efforts in Khakrez from 2009 to 2010 not only contributed to the development of the district and its villages, but also convinced civilians who had fled to return to their homes.[227]

Although missions varied, at least one SFODA experienced significantly increased success when civic action was incorporated into its mission. A vignette in *On the Ground in Afghanistan: Counterinsurgency in Practice* describes an SFODA's[228] two deployments to Afghanistan, operating in two different areas under two different

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[222] Kerry, *Tora Bora Revisited*, 96.

[223] Brown Jr., Mark L. "Village Stability Operations: An Historical Perspective from Vietnam to Afghanistan." *Small Wars Journal* 9, (3) 28 March 2013.

[224] Brown, "Village Stability Operations," 5.

[225] Brown, "Village Stability Operations," 5.

[226] Brown, "Village Stability Operations," 5.

[227] Brown, "Village Stability Operations," 6.

[228] The detachment number was not provided with only dates and locations made available.

missions.[229] During its first deployment, the SFODA participated strictly in Direct Action missions targeting enemy insurgents. The offensive operations were poorly planned and based on weak intelligence that was not corroborated, resulting in a population that distanced itself from the Afghan Government and U.S. forces.[230] During its second deployment, the SFODA operated in a much different manner; the detachment's focus was counterinsurgency through less-kinetic means—direct action and counter-terrorism operations were low priority.[231] Throughout the deployment, the detachment and its partner force, consisting of two companies of Afghan soldiers, conducted medical civic assistance programs (MEDCAPs) in the village they were living near, as well as travelled to outlying villages to provide medical care. Additionally, the detachment employed village members for any work needed on their camp by going through the local village elders and they purchased a majority of their supplies from local markets and participated in the local government meetings (shuras).[232] The result was a population that became genuinely interested in the development of its village which received relatively few attacks.[233] "Insurgents operating in these villages reportedly carried out few or no attacks on the SF team, for fear of alienating the locals."[234] Thanks to its participation in local government, support to the local economy, and provision of medical care and by undertaking other civic action projects, the detachment was able to showcase both the capability and legitimacy of its partnered force and, in turn, the credibility of the Afghan government, while isolating insurgents from the populace. Arguably, had there been greater integration at the tactical level between special forces and civil affairs, special forces detachments such as the one just described would not have had to undergo a "trial and error" period, and more synergy would have been achieved sooner.

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[229] Jerry Meyerle, Megan Katt, and Jim Gavrilis. "Vignette 7: U.S. Army Special forces Team, Kandahar and Zabul, 2003–2005." In *On the Ground in Afghanistan: Counterinsurgency in Practice.* Quantico, VA: Marine Corps University Press, 2012, 95.

[230] Meyerle et al., *On the Ground in Afghanistan*, 101.

[231] Meyerle et al., *On the Ground in Afghanistan*, 98.

[232] Meyerle et al., *On the Ground in Afghanistan*, 100.

[233] Meyerle et al, *On the Ground in Afghanistan,* 101.

[234] Meyerle et al, *On the Ground in Afghanistan*, 101.

Although civil affairs involvement in VSO was heavily emphasized during the Build phase, emphasis on governance and humanitarian efforts was a Combined Forces Special Operations Component Command-Afghanistan (CFSOCC-A) priority from the outset. Much of this capability was provided by civil affairs teams assigned to VSO sites.[235] At the tactical level, the expertise of civil affairs teams assigned to work at VSO sites had the intended effect of bolstering stronger relationships between villages and their district governments; however, a lack of capability at the district or provincial government level hindered some of these efforts.[236] Indeed, SOF VSO efforts "made considerable progress where the Afghan government's district leaders were capable and approved of these programs."[237]

Civil affairs actions also contributed to pacifying a potentially hostile population. During Operation Anaconda, villagers in the Shah e Kot valley may have aided Taliban forces during the battle that followed had it not been for the humanitarian aid provided weeks previously by members of the 96th CA Battalion.[238] The 96th Civil Affairs Battalion distributed building materials, food, and agricultural aid to over 5,000 Cuchi gypsies, which "created a less-hostile environment for the Special Forces" advance patrols before Anaconda was launched."[239]

One of the most pervasive issues encountered at VSO sites was the widespread corruption and tribalism that bred deep local resentments. One civil affairs team assigned to a VSO site attempted to remedy this situation through the use of local contractors to execute village projects while also making the monetary transactions transparent to the public.[240] However, similar efforts were not always successful.

Village Stability Coordination Centers (VSCCs) were sites that promoted better integration between civil-military efforts, linking SOF elements with other government

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[235] Meyerle et al, *On the Ground in Afghanistan*, 37.

[236] Meyerle et al, *On the Ground in Afghanistan*, 38.

[237] Meyerle et al, *On the Ground in Afghanistan*, 39.

[238] Linda Robinson. "Afghanistan." In *Masters of Chaos*. New York: Public Affairs, 2004, 183.

[239] Robinson, *Masters of Chaos,* 182.

[240] Moyar, *Village Stability Operations*, 40.

organizations, such as the "State Department, U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), U.S. Agency for International Development, Department of Agriculture, among others," as well as Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) such as the "Afghan Social Outreach Program, Medicins sans Frontieres, and Red Crescent."[241] They provided the forum for undertaking coordination, as well as for demonstrating the capability of local and regional governance. Civil affairs personnel were critical to these efforts as Linda Robinson notes, "The common principle that unites special forces, civil affairs, and psychological operations is that the population is the center of gravity, and the key to winning in any war."[242]

E.   SPECIAL FORCES AND PSYCHOLOGICAL OPERATIONS IN AFGHANISTAN

While special forces has used psychological warfare in nearly every conflict in which it has been involved, its employment has not always been effective due in part to a muddled command and control (C2) structure. For instance, while some products were approved in-theater in Afghanistan, others needed approval from the Joint Psychological Operations Task Force (JPOTF), located in Tampa, Florida.[243] In addition to the confusion caused by the unclear C2 structure, this process also resulted in lengthy approval times; "A common complaint is that, although everyone pays lip service to integrating IO and operations, the lengthy coordination process and inherent delays mean that the IO element is often ignored in operational planning and execution."[244]

Another issue, as described in *Afghanistan and the Troubled Future of Unconventional Warfare,* was the lack of a "coherent psychological operations plan or counterpropaganda plan to relay the progress made by the central government or to counter the claims of the insurgents as to the corruption and lack of progress of the

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[241] Robert Huslander and Jake Spivey. "Village Stability Operations and Afghan Local Police". Prism, 3, June 2012, 134.

[242] Robinson, *Masters of Chaos*, 183.

[243] Hy Rothstein. *Afghanistan and the Troubled Future of Unconventional Warfare*. Annapolis, Maryland: Naval Institute Press, 2006, 117.

[244] Arturo Munoz. *U.S. Military Information Operations in Afghanistan: Effectiveness of Psychological Operations 2001-2010.* Santa Monica, CA: RAND National Defense Research Institute, 2012, 121.

Karzai regime."[245] Rothstein notes that as a result of the murky C2 structure, psychological warfare operations were poorly integrated into broader military operations.[246] Again, one drawback was the length of time required to develop and disseminate psychological warfare messaging.

A lack of proactive messaging (staying ahead of the insurgents' counter-propaganda) and delays in producing approved messaging can have disastrous effects on operational tempo. Such was the case early in the war when, in December 2001, a food airlift effort was stymied. Taliban propaganda claimed airlifted food was poisoned. Despite U.S. efforts to counter the message and claim any poisoning was done by the Taliban, the airlift was unsuccessful in distributing food.[247]

However, none of this means that psychological operations were a complete failure in Afghanistan. As with civil affairs operations, psychological warfare personnel were integrated into SF operations from the outset of the war and made "significant contributions."[248] Incorporated into the initial TF Dagger invasion force, commanded by then-Colonel John Mulholland, psychological warfare personnel immediately began developing and distributing leaflets that "offered rewards for fugitive Taliban and AQ leaders, informed the Afghan people about their pending liberation, and warned them of the dangers of unexploded ordnance and mines."[249] Simple leaflets, handbills, and posters proved very effective early on especially when messages highlighted Afghan-U.S. cooperation, U.S. reliance on Afghans to defeat the Taliban, and monetary rewards for cooperation and the turn-in of weapons and Taliban leaders.[250]

A MISO team co-located with the 6th Kandak and an associated SFODA at Camp Morehead outside of Kabul, offers another example of the synergies that could be

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[245] Rothstein, *Afghanistan and the Troubled Future of Unconventional Warfare*, 117.

[246] Rothstein, *Afghanistan and the Troubled Future of Unconventional Warfare*, 117.

[247] Tanner, Stephen. *Afghanistan: A Military History from Alexander the Great to the War against the Taliban.* Revised Edition. Cambridge, Massachusetts: De Capo Press, 2002, 301.

[248] Kerry, *Tora Bora Revisited*, 96.

[249] Kerry, *Tora Bora Revisited*, 96.

[250] Munoz. *U.S. Military Information Operations in Afghanistan*, 74.

attained when psychological warfare personnel work with special forces at the detachment level. In the winter of 2010-11, the two elements coordinated efforts to acquire airtime for a live call-in show on which the Commando Kandak Commander could field questions about the Commandos' goals, operations, makeup, and so on. The show was developed in concert with the SFODA's Afghan counterparts, as well as the MISO team's Afghan counterparts. This lent more authenticity than if the SF and MISO detachments had acted alone. The show, given its unrehearsed style, offered transparency about the military and enabled the Kandak Commander to dispel any rumors and counter enemy propaganda. The SFODA and its partnered unit received increased intelligence from human sources, as well as a more favorable attitude from the local populace as a result.[251] A similar win-win-win situation is described in *Villages of the Moon* by M.E. Roberts, written about a MISO team embedded with an SFODA in southern Afghanistan which derived a significant amount of human intelligence from its civic action projects and humanitarian aid missions.

In both cases, HUMINT gathered during civic action engagements provided the co-located SF detachment with credible information that resulted in several successful operations.[252] But also, use of psychological warfare and PSYOP personnel provided the SFODA with examples that highlighted for Afghan counterparts what they could do by employing similar tactics. Even better, with inputs from their Afghan counterparts, the Americans could better tailor efforts to the target population with an authenticity that could not be achieved by U.S. actors alone.

It must also be said that often the civil affairs projects undertaken by the teams served as a kind of psychological warfare in their own right, especially when projects provided something that the Taliban were unable to deliver due to a lack of resources or a lack of access to the population. Also worth noting is that these efforts were generally most successful when they were implemented early on in the planning process rather than when they were added onto an operation as an afterthought.

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[251] This vignette is based on the author's personal experience.

[252] M. E. Roberts. *Villages of the Moon: Psychological operations in Afghanistan*. Baltimore, Maryland: PublishAmerica, 2005, 81.

F.   CONCLUSION

Special forces have played a considerable role in the war in Afghanistan, and while there may be similarities to SF's role in Vietnam, it is important to not push the comparison too far. In both conflicts, special forces took a bottom-up approach (at least early on in Vietnam with the CIDG program), whose aim was to focus on the population rather than the enemy. In Afghanistan, for instance, special forces recognized the importance of a population-centric approach as evidenced by its development of the VSO program which aimed to promote stability and development through the provision of security and encouragement of self-reliance.

Other special operations forces beyond SF also played a critical role at the local level in Afghanistan. For instance, civil affairs personnel provided much needed expertise and cultural understanding in situations where detachments lacked knowledge, such as at VSO sites. Civil affairs personnel were better able to advise the local population on which civic action projects would provide their respective villages with the greatest benefit. As Admiral Eric T. Olson noted, "Under the umbrella of civil affairs operations, we do not paint schools and dig wells, but we help determine which schools need to be painted and where the wells should be dug. We normally contract with local organizations to do the work so everybody benefits."[253] Civil affairs operations and projects were instrumental in helping to persuade the civilian population that the local government was both legitimate and capable.

For its part, psychological warfare proved to be both beneficial and a hindrance in terms of how it was employed. At times, confusion over approval processes and the need to receive approval at very high levels resulted in significant delays. These delays, as previously mentioned, could disrupt or completely negate operations as the enemy faced no such restrictions. Yet, when properly coordinated, such efforts could bolster kinetic and civil-military efforts to multiply the positive effects or undermine the enemy's efforts to dissuade the population from supporting special forces' and special forces counterparts' efforts. When PSYOP personnel were attached at the detachment level,

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[253]Olson, Eric T. "A Balanced Approach to Irregular Warfare." In *Irregular Warfare: A SOF Perspective*, Solon, Jenny, Ed. Fort Leavenworth, Kansas: Center for Army Lessons Learned, 2009, 6.

they could both provide teams with a better understanding of the approval requirements and ensure effective messaging was developed. The genuineness of PSYOP was further enhanced when input was acquired from indigenous counterparts who knew and understood Afghans better than did their American advisors. Working with Afghans also meant they could be trained in how to develop and disseminate such messaging themselves, thereby increasing their organic capabilities.

SFODA 7224 learned with difficulty the importance of civic action. However, when the detachment took a different focus during its second deployment, concentrating largely on the population through medical care, local governance, and development of internal infrastructure, it experienced considerable success in its mission. If the detachment had civil affairs expertise at the tactical level during its first deployment, it may have fared better and avoided the steep learning curve.

As Roberts notes in *Villages of the Moon*, psychological operations teams integrated at the tactical level were instrumental in providing tactical intelligence through their efforts, as well as gauging the local populations' sentiments. These teams were arguably able to provide valuable expertise on different effects they could provide or how to manage the effects that certain operations would invariably have.

Similar to Vietnam, the indigenous population was largely absent from U.S. military recruitment aside from employment as interpreters. This population could have provided valuable cultural expertise as well as input on psychological operations products and civic action projects. While interpreters could provide some of this information, they were for the most part, not recruited into U.S. military service.

Many lessons learned from Vietnam were seemingly unlearned in the time that elapsed between the two conflicts. Although it is important to view Afghanistan and Vietnam as uniquely different conflicts, at least some information gained from past conflicts is likely to always remain applicable. The proof of this comes in how many of the same mistakes are repeated. Consequently, it is critically important that hard-won recent takeaways be remembered as special forces prepares for future conflicts.

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V. SPECIAL FORCES AND THE WAY AHEAD

This thesis does not mean to imply that the current SFODA structure is broken—only that it could be enhanced to better cope with current and likely future conflicts. For instance, over the past decade information has reached wider audiences, at a faster rate, and can be disseminated by organizations that were previously incapable of doing so. As noted in the *ARSOF 2022 Operating Concept*, the threats posed by non-state actors and subnational groups through their increased "information and communication capabilities historically held by nation-states" will result in an increased "threat posed by irregular forms of warfare."[254] Consequently, as the *ARSOF 2022 Operating Concept* notes, future conflicts will "require enhanced mission command capabilities; a deep understanding of the culture, relationships, and capabilities of partners; decisive situational awareness; and the ability to generate persistent influence to counter irregular warfare threats to the nation."[255] A closer integration among special forces, civil affairs, and PSYOP would help to address that need.

One advantage in World War II—unlike in Vietnam or Afghanistan—was that the civilian populations in most occupied countries overwhelmingly supported an Allied victory. Consequently, civil-military operations and PSYOP efforts to persuade the population did not need to be at the forefront of the Jedburghs'—or other U.S. forces'—efforts. Special operations elements in World War II were instead able to focus primarily on kinetic operations and on targeting enemy forces and logistics through sabotage and subversion. U.S. forces in Vietnam and Afghanistan did not have this luxury. Nor are they likely to in the conflicts of the future. As the world becomes increasingly globalized and interconnected—or until a war reaches the magnitude of an existential threat as it was the case in World War II—public opinion will continue to impact military action. As a result, civil-military operations will continue to play a role, to the point where they might

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[254] United States Army Special Operations Command. *ARSOF 2022 Operating Concept: 25th Anniversary, 1989-2014.* Fort Bragg, NC: United States Army Special Operations Command, 2014, 7. http://www.soc.mil/Assorted%20Pages/ARSOF%20Operating%20Concept%202014.pdf.

[255] United States Army Special Operations Command, *ARSOF 2022 Operating Concept,* 11.

actually determine a conflict's outcome. If the U.S. becomes too narrowly focused on kinetic operations, as it did during the latter part of the Vietnam War, this will likely alienate the population it is seeking to influence, and will thereby provide the enemy with the opportunity to exert its influence.

So long as conflicts continue to be of the type classified as low-intensity, special forces will continue to play an important role. In their NPS thesis, David O'Hearn et al argue that given the nature of future conflicts, SOF may even need to take a leading role since doing so would reduce the need for other units to climb a steep "learning curve."[256] O'Hearn et al base their argument on the understanding that SOF was developed for operating in irregular warfare environments, an area not particularly well suited for conventional forces.[257]

Also, as special forces soldiers deploy to areas that require cultural and political sensitivity, it becomes ever more critical that the narrative that is broadcast is one that favors U.S. forces and their allies. Since the enemy in a low-intensity conflict seldom abides by the same rules as U.S. forces, it is important that the capability and expertise to develop positive messaging and counter-enemy information operation (IO) efforts be integrated at the lowest levels. In the modern era of cell phones, social media, and other technology, information can be transmitted around the world in real, or near-real, time. To create and propagate narratives in the time required for them to be most effective requires that the capacity and the authority to execute be devolved to the lowest possible levels. Mandating that such products must be approved at the strategic level causes delays and makes it unrealistic that the material will reach its target audience(s) in sufficient time.

To be wholly effective at civil-military operations and psychological operations requires being able to communicate with and understand the local population. Misunderstandings due to cultural differences dampen the effects of such efforts and can

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[256] David J. O'Hearn, Damon S. Robins, and Aaron C. Sessoms. 2012. "Flattening the Learning Curve: SOF as the Supported Command in the Irregular Warfare Environment." Master's thesis, Naval Postgraduate School, 2012.

[257] O'Hearn et al., "Flattening the Learning Curve," 2.

even bring them to a standstill. Greater emphasis on culture is needed if special forces soldiers are truly expected to be knowledgeable about their respective areas of operation.

But—we might wonder—how else might special forces better prepare for the next conflict(s)? There is no clear answer to this question, but if we turn to history as a guide there are several steps that can be taken. At the same time, while some of the efforts described in this thesis are surely worth emulating, it is also important to be mindful of their shortfalls.

A. SPECIAL FORCES: INTEGRATING CIVIL AFFAIRS AND PSYCHOLOGICAL OPERATIONS

Since the end of the Cold War, there has been an ever-increasing integration among special forces, civil affairs, and psychological warfare. This increased integration has occurred because the environment in which special forces operate has demanded it. Changes have been made to the organic structure of the SFODA over time—for example, as previously described, two positions were added to the structure for civil affairs and PSYOP personnel during the Vietnam War. One possible adjustment to today's SFODA would be to, in effect, reinstate these positions. Adding a civil affairs officer or enlisted soldier would add a non-kinetic perspective to the SFODA, and this individual could serve as a guide in all matters pertaining to civil stability and governance. Such a fusion has already occurred at the strategic level with the creation of the First Special Warfare Command.

By integrating capabilities at the detachment level early on in the careers of special operations forces soldiers, stronger relationships would develop among practitioners of all three disciplines—SF, CA, and PSYOP—as they advance in their careers. If the aim is for special operations forces to become better integrated as a whole, then forging these relationships early on would foster better mutual understanding of each element's capabilities and shortcomings, resulting in increased efficiency when planning and operating together.

At the tactical level, civil affairs personnel serving on an SFODA would be able to make civic action projects the focus of their efforts at the outset of a conflict, rather

than attempting to rectify humanitarian issues well into the fight. Having a dedicated civil affairs position would also absolve other specialty personnel from having to balance civil affairs and civic action duties with those of their primary field. For their part, by being on SFODAs, civil affairs soldiers would be well positioned to develop a stronger understanding of the operational situation, and thus would be better able to coordinate their efforts *with* kinetic operations to produce results that better contribute to the overall effort. The access granted by tying in CA would also ensure humanitarian efforts do not lag behind, but are well integrated and synergistic from the beginning.

If, meanwhile, this course of action is deemed to be a step too far, another way to address the growing need for cultural expertise would be to provide additional training to special forces soldiers in the area of civil affairs. Current training on civil affairs receives little time in the SFQC and only basic concepts are covered. At a minimum, a better understanding of civil affairs capabilities and limitations would benefit special forces soldiers. This understanding would help to ensure integration between personnel across the two branches (SF and CA), especially among officers as they rise in rank.

Critics might point out that in adopting such an approach, special operations would be putting the proverbial cart before the horse—if security is not yet established via kinetic operations, proactive measures like civic action would be ineffective. But while this might be true in some situations, assessments for future projects still need to be undertaken; the timing of their execution can always be delayed so that they are not initiated until the security situation is deemed appropriate. However, a good argument can be made that if CA-oriented assessments are made at the beginning, this will facilitate the timely delivery of assistance to then consolidate and capitalize on kinetic gains.

Another set of possible criticisms when it comes to augmenting SFODAs with CA soldiers has to do with the impact on the civil affairs branch and the career paths of CA soldiers. Yet, this criticism does not merit much discussion once one can considers two alternative courses of action. The first course of action would be to make these CA positions additional identifiers for the 18-series (special forces qualified) soldiers. Selected individuals would attend the same courses as other special forces candidates

with the exception of the MOS phase which would be tailored toward the civil affair specialty. The second course of action is little different from what already occurs with support personnel from other branches. Special forces battalions and even companies have assigned supply, communications, and other support personnel. These soldiers remain in their respective branches during and after their service with a special forces unit. To assign a civil affairs soldier to an SFODA would be similar, but would push the augmentation down to the SFODA level. Although this might require designing a separate, abbreviated qualification course for soldiers wishing to choose this path, integration would not be difficult.

While the inclusion of civil affairs soldiers might seem to present difficulties, these were overcome in the past—particularly in Vietnam, where special forces detachments were also involved in a war that not only required interaction with the population but where interaction represented the only possible path to success. At a minimum, how to add individuals at the tactical level who are skilled in the areas of culture and governance is a question that should receive careful and considerable thought.

Adding soldiers capable of understanding and implementing psychological operations to SFODAs should likewise be given serious consideration. The positive effects such personnel have had on both success and the amplification of success, as well as in countering enemy narratives, is indisputable. Psychological operations personnel have long had close relations with special forces at the tactical level. By combining SF and PSYOP efforts and by adding PSYOP personnel to SF teams, both SF soldiers and PSYOP soldiers would gain a greater understanding and appreciation of each other's capabilities. As a long term benefit, soldiers would then carry this knowledge with them as they advance in their careers and particularly if they advance into positions of strategic relevance. For instance, the lengthy processes to gain approvals for psychological operations at the tactical level are often due to a lack of understanding of how PSYOP messages are developed, and what kind of messaging will be most effective. Assigning PSYOP personnel at the detachment level might help to resolve some of these issues as individuals assigned at the ground level would be able to advise tactical level commanders on how to better make use of PSYOP tactics, techniques and procedures

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(TTPs) to enhance their operations. This would also enable tactical level commanders to better sell their concepts of operations to those whose approval they need.

Critics might make the same arguments about adding psychological warfare personnel as they would about CA personnel. But then, the counter to their arguments would likewise be the same. Furthermore, both psychological operations and civil affairs are already within the special operations fold, so career progression for these soldiers would presumably be all the better if handled by leaders who grew up with an understanding of their capabilities.

B.   SPECIAL FORCES RECRUITMENT

Having a modicum of cultural expertise is critically important to special forces operations. However, a majority of special forces soldiers are U.S.-born citizens who lack the understanding that comes from being a native citizen of another country. One way to mitigate these issues would be to expand the pool of those recruited into special forces. Just as the Jedburghs sought émigrés and refugees, special forces could target similar populations. It is well known that large numbers of civilians, specifically in Iraq and Syria, are fleeing the region for a number of reasons. At the very least, some of these individuals could be offered incentives to participate in programs similar to the original Jedburgh program. Of course, the United States is not facing the same kind of existential threat as it did during World War II, but nevertheless the threat it faces could be serious enough to warrant such measures. Applicants to such a program would probably have to undergo even more stringent security and background checks as do special forces candidates entering through the typical candidate process. But if one considers that recruits from immigrant populations not only speak target languages fluently, but they also have the non-verbal communication skills to appear authentic, they can be used for various missions most Americans would not be suited for.[258] It is also possible that units with individuals recruited from refugee populations would be received more favorably by local populations in some places. An added benefit of recruiting such individuals would be that it would negate the need for all such SF personnel to receive extensive language

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[258] Robichaux. "Special Forces Recruiting," 20.

lab training. When not deployed, these individuals could provide cross-training in both language and culture, just as detachments already cross-train in other MOS specialties.

Opponents might consider such a method to be too high-risk, and might object that individual applicants could not be properly screened to ensure they do not pose a security threat. However, additional screening processes, or simply a more in-depth screening process, could be implemented. Although no such process is failsafe, this could also be said of the current process used to screen applicants who apply through normal channels. Ultimately, no process can completely verify the intentions and motives of any individual applying to special forces, while to use this as a reason to overlook large numbers of potential recruits writes off numerous individuals who have unique and much needed qualifications.

C.   DETACHMENT SIZE

If my suggestions about augmenting the SFODA with CA and PSYOP-qualified soldiers were accepted and implemented, the SFODA would begin to resemble a platoon more than a detachment. However, one of the reasons for success of the units examined in previous chapters was their relatively small size, which created flexibility and maneuverability for their parent organizations. While the redundancy built into the SFODA (two sergeants, one each for weapons, engineering, medical, and communications specialties, as well as the assistant detachment commander) allow it to operate as split team elements if need be, the same missions that would require a split team element could be conducted by two smaller groups of similar composition. That is to say, each SFODA could have only one each of the enlisted positions (to include the suggested CA and PSYOP positions), with the possibility of removing, or making optional, the assistant detachment commander position. Restructuring the SFODA in this manner would be an attempt to maintain the approximate size of the current unit.

Detachments frequently operate without all of their authorized personnel due to personnel shortages, training, or other requirements, and perform without a significantly diminished capacity. Granted, doing away with the redundancy currently built into SFODAs would face significant opposition, particularly from the warrant officer

community, and with good reason—their jobs would appear to be at stake. However, concerns could be resolved by making the detachment commander position fillable by either an O3 or a WO1/WO2. Often times, due to a shortage of personnel and for no other reason, this already occurs. Detachments have either a warrant officer serving in the detachment commander position or a captain as the detachment commander (with no warrant officer in the assistant detachment commander position).

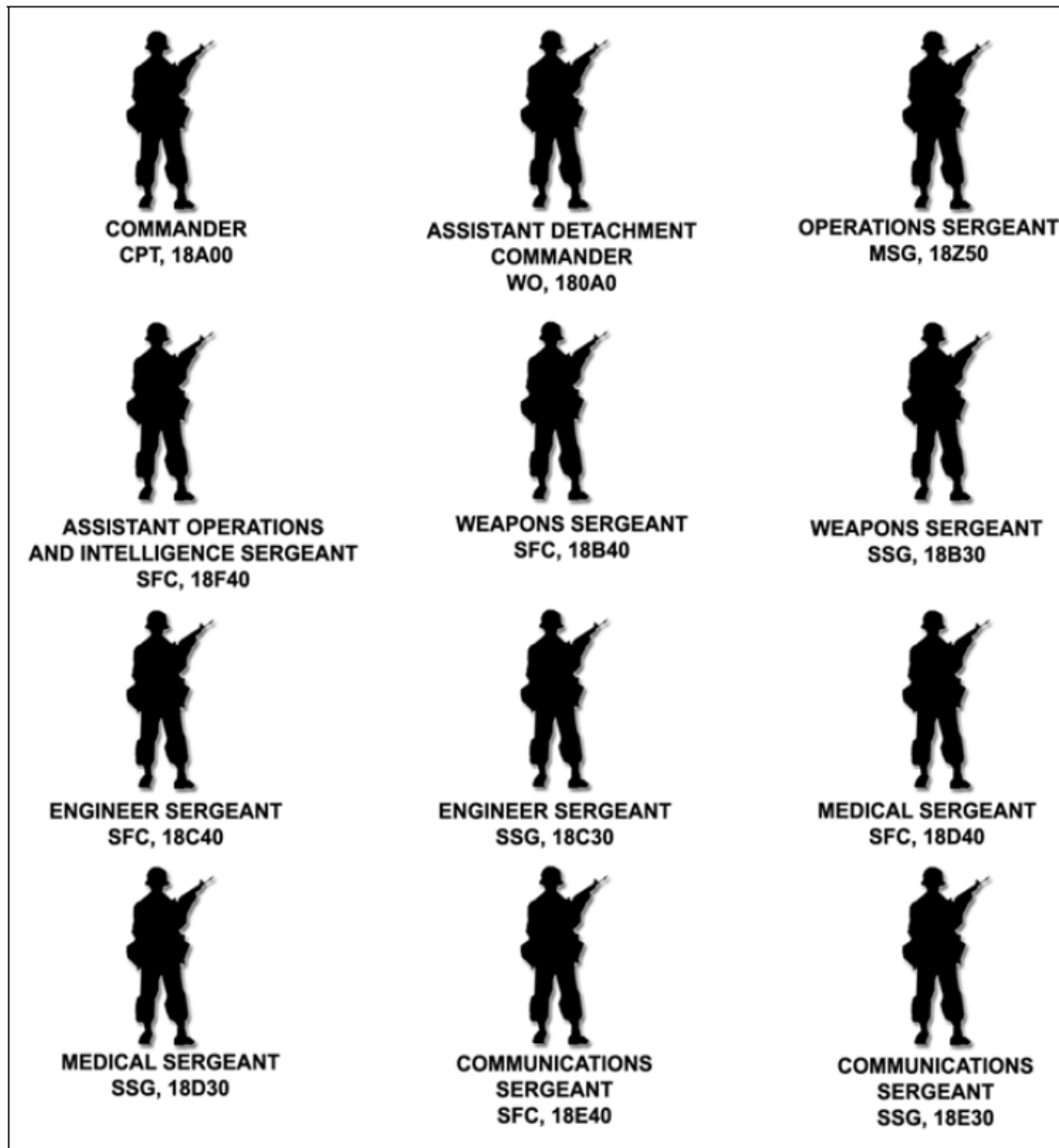Figures 1 and 2 illustrate the current and proposed concepts:

Figure G-1. Special Forces operational detachment-A.

Figure 1. Current SFODA[259]

[259] Source: Department of the Army. *The Infantry Battalion (FM3-21.20).* Washington, DC: Department of the Army, 2006, G-2. http://armypubs.army.mil/doctrine/DR_pubs/dr_a/pdf/fm3_21x20.pdf.
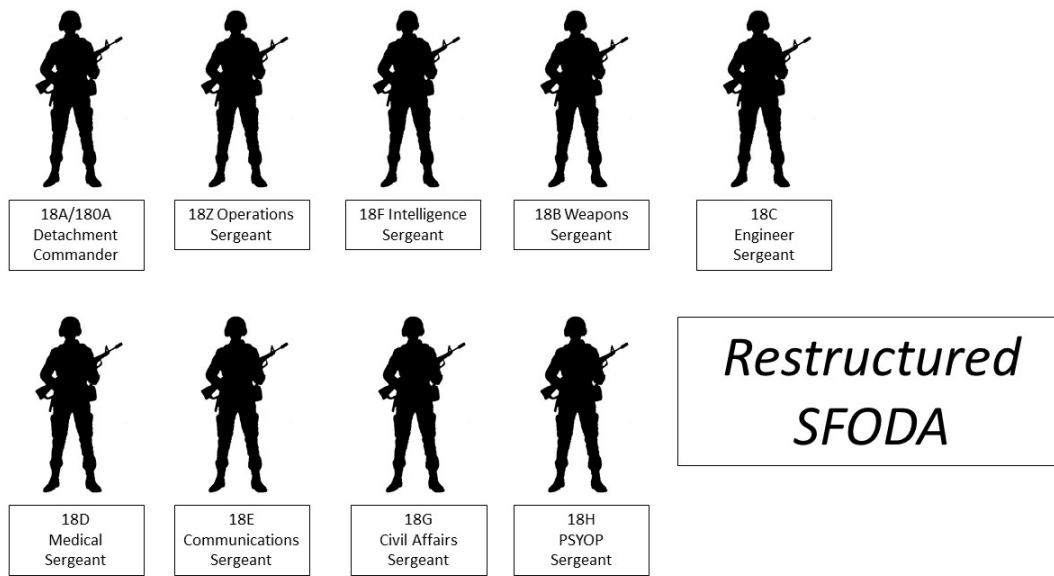
Figure 2. Restructured SFODA[260]

If the current SFODA structure were retained, the 12-man SFODA would include two additional billets—one for a PSYOP NCO and one for a civil affairs NCO. During split-team operations under the current SFODA structure, the leadership (18A, 180A, 18Z, and 18F) are typically divided up as requirements demand, while the remainder of the detachment (two NCOs of each MOS: 18B, 18C, 18D, and 18E) are divided evenly. The assistant detachment commander position serves as the detachment commander during split team operations, and thus they are not co-located.

One criticism of removing the assistant detachment commander position and making the SFODA smaller is that it would result in an overabundance of warrant officers and commissioned officers. However, if the SFODA's organic size were reduced to half its current size, there would be a symmetrical increase of detachment commander positions, providing roles for such individuals. This reorganization would require significant Human Resources effort, but it could be done incrementally to dampen any negative effects.

[260] WorldArtsMe.com, "Silhouette soldier image" 2016. http://worldartsme.com/soldier-silhouette-clipart.html#gal_post_58184_soldier-silhouette-clipart-1.jpg.

Again, some might argue that such a change would eliminate an SFODA's capacity to conduct split-team operations. While this is true, it is not a significant loss. Any missions that would require split-team operations could be serviced by two of the smaller-sized SFODAs instead. While this would require greater coordination among detachments, interpersonal skills and the accompanying ability to communicate are two attributes which are sought after in special forces soldiers, and so this should not prove to be an insurmountable hurdle.

D.   CONCLUSION

The previous suggestions constitute what might appear to be a radical shift at first glance. Or, a modest one considering there have been no major changes to the SFODA's structure since its creation. And though changes of this magnitude have not been previously attempted, preserving the status quo is never a valid argument against attempting transformation.

Each of the initiatives described above could be executed gradually—and via pilot efforts. A phased introduction would allow for adjustments or cancellation of these policies if they did not meet their original intent or needed further adjusting. One thing that is certain is that the current SFODA, developed as it was in the 1950s to fight communism via acts of sabotage and subversion performed by a partisan force, if left unchanged, will continue to *try* to meet the challenges posed by a modern enemy in a technologically changed world. But, changes in technology alone since special forces' inception 70 years ago have been profound. Information can now travel instantaneously from its sender to receiver, over thousands of miles, and be broadcast to millions of people. This reality alone requires that future special forces soldiers have a more informed understanding of their operational environment, and of civil-military relations both where they are operating *and* at home: what seems clear is that soldiers will continue to be forced to operate with the knowledge that their every action could potentially be broadcast to the masses, so each act must be weighed for its intended and possible unintended effects. The addition of civil affairs and PSYOP soldiers, as well as

increased cultural expertise, would help assure that SFODAs make better informed, and thus better, decisions.

Change will always generate opponents, but its consequences—good and bad—will only be known once it has been attempted, and once new and possibly improved SFODAs are given a genuine opportunity to prove themselves.

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