

Special Operations: Reexamining the Case for a Sixth Service

**A Monograph
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The end of communism changed the global strategic environment marked by a bipolar world and replaced it with uncertainty and a readily defined threat. Over a relatively short period of time, a multipolar world began to emerge while academia and the military continued to debate the identity of the future threat. The military began to transform to meet the uncertainty of the future while attempting to maintain a capability to meet conventional threats. As tension continued in the Middle East and attacks continued against U.S. interests, the events of 11 September 2001 presented a clear and present danger to the United States and punctuated the identity of the threat in the new strategic environment. To frame the problem of how to transform the Department of Defense, meeting the competing demands on the military required a review of change theory, history of changes, and doctrine to assist with this challenging new environment. It is clearly evident that the Cold War military was not trained or organized for success to meet its future requirements. Changing the military meant characterizing the types of change and choosing the one most suited for this situation. The last time the global strategic environment shifted was at the end of the Second World War when a bipolar world emerged with the United States on one side and the Soviet Union on the other. The Air Force was created as a separate Service from the Army Air Corps as its final evolutionary step towards autonomy. Looking at the historical evolution of the Air Force as a case study presented evidence that special operations was also an evolution of a force with the unique capability to meet the strategy needs in the Global War on Terrorism, and other global insurgency threats in the new multipolar environmental setting. The answer to the requirements for the future does not exist in current or previous doctrine. The solution requires a new Service that is trained, manned, and equipped to lead the strategy requirements that the United States faces for the foreseeable future.

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Abstract

SPECIAL OPERATIONS: REEXAMINING THE CASE FOR A SIXTH SERVICE by MAJ Douglas G. Overdeer, 53 pages.

The end of communism changed the global strategic environment marked by a bipolar world and replaced it with uncertainty and a readily defined threat. Over a relatively short period of time, a multipolar world began to emerge while academia and the military continued to debate the identity of the future threat. The military began to transform to meet the uncertainty of the future while attempting to maintain a capability to meet conventional threats. As tension continued in the Middle East and attacks continued against U.S. interests, the events of 11 September 2001 presented a clear and present danger to the United States and punctuated the identity of the threat in the new strategic environment.

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Dedicated in memory of Colonel (retired) Aaron Bank, the “Father of Special Forces” – 23 November 1902 – 1 April 2004.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

The fall of the Berlin wall in 1989 and the disintegration of the Soviet Union marked the end of communism and the Cold War. This historical period ushered in a new strategic environment, an environment with no immediately identifiable enemy or threat to the United States or its interests. The Cold War paradigm was finally broken, a paradigm that started at the end of the Second World War (WWII), led to a strategy of deterrence through mutually assured destruction, and the creation of the Air Force as a separate Service with its strategic bombing capability and the ability to deliver nuclear weapons. Like the change in the strategic environment that was ushered in by the atomic bombs at the end of WWII, the fall of the Iron Curtain signaled another shift in the global security environment. It is time to examine the need for a new service for special operations forces (SOF) to meet the challenges of the new threat in this environment.

As the world celebrated the fall of the Iron Curtain, a multipolar world filled with uncertainty replaced the Cold War, bipolar world that had lasted nearly forty-five years. Some saw this as the beginning of world peace, however the dawn of a new era concerned both the U.S. government and the military due to the lack of a clearly defined threat in the new strategic environment. There was little question that continuing instability in the Middle East and tension with Korea provided potential threats, but were these the threats U.S. strategy should focus on? The end of Cold War provided regional powers new opportunities to gain power and wealth through corruption and exploitation of advances in technology and new global economic markets. Over time, it became evident that these opportunities and ethnic issues were leading to political fragmentation and radical ethno-national and religious conflict that would mark the landscape of the new strategic environment.¹ Operations into this new strategic landscape like the Balkans,

¹ Richard H. Shultz, Robert L. Pfaltzgraff, Jr., and W. Bradley Stock, eds., *Special Operations Forces: Roles and Missions in the Aftermath of the Cold War* (Tampa: USSOCOM, 1995), 38.

Haiti, and Somalia conflicted with the Cold War military's function. The threat and requirements for the military's future still lacked fidelity.

The military wrestled with deploying forces in support of the changing landscape and transforming to meet future requirements while terrorists attacked the World Trade Center in 1993, military installations in Saudi Arabia, embassies in Africa, and the USS *Cole* in Yemen. On 11 September 2001, Al Qaeda provided the answer to the question of the next threat to the United States in the new strategic environment. Nations and transnational organizations, like Al Qaeda, entering into the global arena are trying to influence the United States and its national interests using a variety of tactics aimed at perceived weaknesses within U.S. instruments of national power. America's initial response to this transnational insurgency was Operation Enduring Freedom against Al Qaeda and its host the Taliban in Afghanistan. What followed was a national strategy for combating terrorism. As part of the new strategy, the mission of the United States Special Operations Command (USSOCOM) changed from a supporting command to the supported command with the lead responsibility for waging war on terrorism. USSOCOM is responsible for planning, directing, and executing special operations in the war on terror.²

Just as the Cold War required a new military Service to address the nature of warfare in the new strategic environment, the Global War on Terrorism (GWOT) requires a new Service. Historically the U.S. Armed Forces struggle when facing conflicts outside conventional warfare.³ The current organization within the Department of Defense (DOD) is not trained, manned, nor equipped to deal with this emerging threat due to its focus on defeating an enemy on a conventional field of battle. USSOCOM is uniquely qualified to deal with military operations other than war (MOOTW) across the full spectrum of warfare. The command's rapidly deployable forces are able to function in ambiguous environments and are organized, trained, and

² United States Special Operations Command, Posture Statement 2003-2004: Transforming the Force at the Forefront of the War on Terrorism (Tampa: USSOCOM, n.d), 13.

³ Thomas K. Adams, *US Special Operations Forces in Action: The Challenge of Unconventional Warfare* (London: Frank Cass Publishers, 1998), 1-2.

equipped specifically to accomplish the nine core tasks outlined in law and doctrine⁴. These nine core tasks are not mutually exclusive, are very pertinent to counterinsurgency operations, and are equally pertinent for winning the war against transnational terrorists waging a global insurgency. Based on the new strategic environment, the emergence of a global insurgency as a clearly defined threat, and USSOCOM's responsibility for the GWOT, special operations forces should become a separate branch of Service to properly address the U.S. strategy of defeating terrorism.

IMPORTANCE AND RELEVANCE

The Department of Defense and each of the Services, including USSOCOM, are in the process of transforming to meet the challenges of the new strategic environment. Since the post-WWII environmental shift, special operations experienced cyclical periods of support and cutbacks as it was coming of age. USSOCOM was created by law in 1986 in an effort to reverse a downward trend of support for SOF after the Vietnam War and to revitalize special operations.⁵ During the legislative process leading up to the creation of USSOCOM, a separate branch of Service was considered as a course of action.⁶ The final legislation was a compromise solution that resulted in the current organization of over 49,000 personnel engaged across the full spectrum of operations around the world. The legislation also gave USSOCOM "Service-like" responsibilities over SOF.⁷

Since its creation, USSOCOM continued to evolve and mature from primarily a force provider to a role as a supported warfighter in the GWOT. This was an important evolutionary

⁴ Department of Defense Joint Publication 3-05, *Doctrine for Joint Special Operations* (Washington, D.C.: 2003) - SOF are specifically organized, trained, and equipped to accomplish the following nine core tasks: direct action, special reconnaissance, foreign internal defense, unconventional warfare, counterterrorism, counterproliferation of weapons of mass destruction, civil affairs operations, psychological operations, and information operations. The current core tasks vary slightly from the original special operations activities listed in Title 10 USC – Armed Forces, sec. 167 (2002).

⁵ United States Special Operations Command, *History: 15th Anniversary* (Tampa: USSOCOM, 2002), 3-6.

⁶ Daniel, Dan. "U.S. Special Operations: The Case for a Sixth Service." *Armed Forces Journal International* (August 1985): 70-75.

⁷ *SOF Posture Statement*, 9.

step in USSOCOM's 16 year history. Regardless of this evolutionary step for USSOCOM, doubt exists within DOD about the measures required to fight terror. The Secretary of Defense sent a memo to top-ranking Defense officials dated 16 October 2003. In the memo, the Secretary of Defense asked regarding changes made towards fighting terror, "My impression is that we have not yet made truly bold moves, although we have made many sensible, logical moves in the right direction, but are they enough?" The Secretary of Defense also said "that 'it is not possible' to transform the Pentagon quickly enough to effectively fight the anti-terror war and that a 'new institution' might be necessary to do that."⁸ Given the current threat to national security and requirements within DOD to meet these threats, it is time to revisit the proposal for a separate Service for special operations.

METHODOLOGY

In the wake of the Second World War and at the dawning of the Cold War, the nation determined it needed a new Service to address the unique technological and environmental issues associated with global nuclear deterrence. The answer to that new strategic security environment was the U.S. Air Force. This evolutionary event for aviation serves as a case study for change. By comparing the events, political activities, doctrinal issues, strategic discussions, and legislative actions leading up to the National Security Act of 1947 and the creation of USSOCOM, this paper will make the analogy that conditions today equate to those that led the nation to create the U.S. Air Force as the fourth separate Service. Therefore, the time is now to establish USSOCOM as the sixth separate Service.

SCOPE

The National Security Act of 1947 set the precedence for establishing a separate Service by creating the Air Force. I will not outline or address all the nuances related to separating SOF from the Services they currently reside under for administrative control. Details relating to costs

⁸ *USA Today* (Virginia), Defense Memo: A Grim Outlook, 22 October 2003.

and budget, logistics, personnel, and any other resources required to expand USSOCOM from a Service-like command to that of a separate Service are beyond the scope of this monograph. Any recommendations for a new organizational structure or modifications to the roles, functions, and missions resulting from creating a new Service for SOF are topics for other academic studies. This paper will focus on defining and framing the problem presented by the current strategic environment and reexamining the case for a sixth Service.

KEY DEFINITIONS

Considerable confusion exists between definitions outlined in doctrine and their use in practice; the media and variations in the definitions used by each Service helps to propagate the confusion. Based on SOF residing in three of the five current Services, I will use approved joint definitions contained in Joint Publication 1-02, *DOD Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms*, as amended through 17 December 2003. The list below provides required definitions not defined in joint doctrine, exceptions to joint definitions, and definitions requiring clarification.

Conventional War – Direct military combat or the threat of such combat between the organized professional military establishments of states. It normally involves large-scale sustained combat operations to achieve national interests, objectives or to protect national interests.⁹

Functions – specific responsibilities assigned by the NCA to enable the Services to fulfill their legally established roles.¹⁰

Missions – the tasks assigned by the President or Secretary of Defense to the combatant commanders.¹¹

⁹ The definition of conventional war or warfare does not exist in joint doctrine; I am using the definition from Adams, xviii.

¹⁰ Department of Defense, Joint Publication 0-2, *Unified Action Armed Forces (UNAAF)* (Washington, D.C.: 2001), ix.

¹¹ Ibid.

Roles – the broad and enduring purposes for which the Services and the United States Special Operations Command (USSOCOM) were established in law.¹²

Unconventional Warfare (UW) – Two definitions readily exist for UW, the antonym of conventional war and the joint definition that defines this SOF core task. Many references used for this monograph describe the evolution of special operations prior to the activation of USSOCOM. When not addressed as a SOF core task, UW refers to those military activities conducted within a conflict environment that are not directed toward or directly supporting conventional warfare. It is distinguished from conventional warfare chiefly by the fact that UW does not seek to directly defeat or destroy enemy military forces in combat.¹³

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Author's definition from Adams, xxviii.

CHAPTER TWO

HISTORY

USSOCOM TODAY

USSOCOM is located at MacDill Air Force Base in Tampa, Florida. Currently personnel from the active, reserve, and National Guard components of the Army, Navy, and Air Force man the command. Not all of the approximately 49,000 personnel within the command are special operations personnel. This number includes non-SOF personnel from the Services, including Marines, assigned for duty in special operations units, numerous support personnel from each Service, and civilians filling key positions within the command.¹⁴ The command has three component commands and one sub-unified command, and includes special operations forces stationed outside the continental United States (OCONUS), assigned to geographic combatant commands.

The Army component is the United States Army Special Operations Command (USASOC). This Command oversees all active duty and Reserve Component soldiers assigned to and training for Special Forces, Civil Affairs (CA), and Psychological Operations (PSYOP) personnel along with their respective units. The 75th Ranger Regiment and the Special Operations Aviation Regiment (SOAR) are also assigned to the command.

The Navy component under USSOCOM is the Naval Special Warfare Command (NAVSPECWARCOM) that oversees all active duty and Navy Reserve personnel and training for the Sea, Air Land (SEAL) Teams, SEAL Delivery Vehicle Teams (SDV), and Special Boat Teams (SBT). NAVSPECWARCOM (NSW) deploys forces in support of joint operations, as well as providing NSW support to fleet operations worldwide.¹⁵

¹⁴ *SOF Posture Statement*, 11 & 91.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 12.

The Air Force Special Operations Command (AFSOC) is equipped with specialized fixed and rotary wing aircraft and is comprised of forces that are highly trained and rapidly deployable in support of special operations. It commands and trains the special operation personnel on active duty, in the Air National Guard, and in the Air Force Reserve assigned to the fixed and rotary wing squadrons, special tactics squadrons, the Foreign Internal Defense (FID) squadron, and the combat weather squadron.¹⁶ Additional AFSOC capabilities include, “airborne radio and television broadcast for psychological operations, as well as combat aviation advisors to provide other governments military expertise for their internal development. Special tactics squadrons combine combat control, combat weather, and pararescue personnel to ensure air power is integrated and interoperable with special operations and conventional forces.”¹⁷

The Joint Special Operations Command (JSOC) is the sub-unified command of USSOCOM. JSOC is a joint headquarters to study special operations requirements, ensure interoperability and equipment standardization, develop joint special operations plans and tactics, and conduct joint special operations exercises and training.¹⁸

ROOTS OF AMERICAN SPECIAL OPERATIONS – THE SPARK AND BIRTH

The origins of American special operations began in the colonial era to combat threats to the “new world.” America lacked a standing military capable of defeating an enemy on a conventional field of battle. The solution was asymmetrical warfare epitomized by Major Robert Rogers’ New England Companies of Rangers in the French and Indian War, the American Revolutionary War guerrilla leader Francis Marion “The Swamp Fox”, and Sergeant Ezra Lee’s use of David Bushnell’s oaken submersible Marine Turtle to attack the English frigate *Eagle* in

¹⁶ Ibid., 23.

¹⁷ Ibid., 24.

¹⁸ Ibid., 25.

New York Harbor in 1776.¹⁹ There was no need for unconventional forces after the Revolutionary War and this form of warfare lay dormant until the American Civil War.

Confederate States of America (CSA) Colonel John Singleton Mosby, “The Gray Ghost,” commanded the 43d Battalion of the Virginia Cavalry, know as Mosby’s Rangers, during the Civil War. From 1863 to the end of the war, this guerrilla unit conducted operations in northern Virginia and Maryland, striking supply lines, conducting harassing attacks on Union forces, and gathering intelligence. Mosby incorporated the use of partisans just outside of Washington, D.C., for food, lodging and information on Federal activities. Special operations forces using nontraditional tactics like those used during the Revolutionary and Civil Wars did not resurface until the Second World War. During this period between the Civil War and WWII, civic action and psychological operations began to emerge while Army forces continued to learn skills for counter guerrilla warfare.

ADAPTATION OF MODERN SPECIAL OPERATIONS²⁰

Before the Nunn-Cohen amendment to Goldwater-Nichols Defense Reorganization Act, both signed in 1986, SOF history and lineage was codified within each Services’ unique special operations units. Neither the United States Special Operations Command *History* nor the United States Special Operations Forces *Posture Statement* mentions the unique history of each of the SOF units assigned to the command. Special Forces, the SEALs, and AFSOC all trace their heritage back to WWII.²¹

¹⁹ United States Special Operations Command, Publication 1, *Special Operations in Peace and War* (Tampa: USSOCOM, 1996), 9-10.

²⁰ The use of Special Forces, SEAL, and Air Force special operations history depicts the evolution of special operations within the three services. It is not intended to minimize or ignore the history of the Rangers, Civil Affairs, Army Special Operations Aviation, or Psychological Operations units and their important roles in the command.

²¹ Susan L. Marquis, *Unconventional Warfare: Rebuilding U.S. Special Operations Forces*, (Washington, D.C: Brookings Institute Press, 1997), 8, 20, & 28.

The U.S. Army's Special Forces traces its roots to the Office of Strategic Services (OSS), an agency created to handle unique intelligence gathering and unconventional warfare in occupied France and the China-Burma-India Theater during the Second World War. Also part of Special Forces ancestry is the affiliation with the joint U.S.-Canadian 1st Special Service Force. This unit trained for and focused on high risk, direct action missions that required a group of highly trained commandos. Both these units, as well as the Ranger units, were deactivated at the end of the war.

During the early stages of WWII the Navy formed Underwater Demolition Teams (UDT) and the Scouts and Raiders to conduct special operations in support of amphibious landings in both the European and Pacific Theaters. These units are the forerunners of today's SEAL Teams, SBTs, and SDV Teams. Similar to the Army's response after WWII, the majority of the Navy special operations personnel returned to the fleet and the units were largely disbanded.²²

General Henry "Hap" Arnold coined the term "Air Commando" for the Air Force special operations force created in early 1944. The 1st Air Commando Group was based in India and supported British long-range penetration forces in Burma. This organization had a long list of accomplishments and established a number of airpower firsts, but suffered a similar fate to the OSS, UDTs, and the Scouts and Raiders. The Air Force inactivated the Air Commandos after the war and disestablished it on October 8, 1948.²³

After WWII, the conventional leadership in the military turned its focus to war with the Soviet Union and had little use or trust for elite organizations that did not focus on large-scale warfare.²⁴ Aaron Bank, Russell Volckmann, and Wendell Fertig, all officers with extensive experience conducting unconventional warfare during WWII, convinced the Army it needed to

²² Ibid., 20-25.

²³ U.S. Department of the Air Force, *16th Special Operations Wing Commando Heritage & Park Guide*. [On-Line], (Hurlburt Field, Florida, n.d., accessed 7 September 2002). Available from <http://www.hurlburt.af.mil/heritage/guide/index.htm>; Internet.

²⁴ Marquis, 6-13.

retain some unconventional warfare capabilities in the military, however. Their efforts resulted in establishing Special Forces, which modeled itself after the OSS Jedburghs and operational groups. The Army allowed the organization to exist and slowly expand, but put little emphasis or support into this group of nontraditional soldiers.²⁵ For Navy special operations, the interwar years between WWII and Vietnam were a period of redefining their role for the future. The result was an expansion of their commando capability, with a focus on raids near the water's edge and various infiltration/exfiltration techniques. The new commandos, designated SEALs, shared the hydrographic reconnaissance mission with the UDTs, but the emphasis was on their inland warfare capability.²⁶

SPECIAL OPERATIONS IN VIETNAM

As tension increased in Southeast Asia during the 1950s, special operations capabilities regained interest within the Department of Defense. When John F. Kennedy became President in 1961, his Flexible Response doctrine and concern for “wars of national liberation” replaced the previous administration’s policy of Massive Retaliation. The Department of Defense and the White House were both concerned about “non-nuclear war, paramilitary operations and sub-limited, or unconventional wars.”²⁷ Special Forces activity increased in Thailand, Taiwan, Vietnam, South Korea, the Philippines, Laos, and Indonesia prior to the Vietnam War. President Kennedy’s emphasis on Special Forces and focus on counterinsurgency was not embraced by military leaders, however.

In fact, there was considerable evidence that there was actual disdain among the senior leadership of the services for SOF. LTG William Yarborough, who commanded the Special Warfare Center at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, during Kennedy’s time in office wrote that: “In the early 60s it was generally accepted in America’s high military command and staff circles that there was nothing unique about Ho Chi Minh’s war. As far as most of the senior leaders were

²⁵ Hogan, David, *U.S. Army Special Operations in World War II*. (Washington, D.C., Center of Military History Department of the Army, 1992), 138-139.

²⁶ Maquis, 25.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 13.

concerned, the basic training, leadership, organizational principles, tactics, and strategy that had won America's wars in the past would be more than adequate for Indochina. *Both Special Warfare and Special Forces were terms that raised many hackles among the conventional regulars.*"²⁸

President Kennedy's approach was on changing national strategy to focus on the threat of the spread of communism and wars of national liberation, and included increasing the number of Special Forces units and reorienting them for this counterinsurgency environment.

The impact of the Vietnam War would revitalize each of the Services' special operations units and capabilities. Special Operations played a large role during the Vietnam War and by the late 1960s had reached its pinnacle of expansion and employment; the Services' active special operations force structure included seven Special Forces Groups, two SEAL Teams, two UDT Teams, and a robust Air Force Special Operations Wing.²⁹ This peak did not last, and as with the reductions after WWII, the drawdown of SOF in all three Services began in the early 1970s as the U.S. started its withdrawal from the war.

POST VIETNAM CUTBACKS AND THE IMPACT OF TERRORISM

America wanted to forget the Vietnam War. In the Department of Defense, this meant drawing down forces and shifting focus to the Cold War. Special operations units were not cutback proportionally to other military organizations; their cuts were much deeper. This inequity happened for a variety of reasons. Conventional leaders who ran the military did not trust special operations personnel, considering them as less than professional. To some degree, special operations bore the brunt of the backlash for Vietnam's negative impact on the military. The military's focus again turned to the Soviet Union, and as doctrine responded to this threat, there was little requirement for special operations or unconventional warfare.³⁰ Drawdown and orientation on the Soviet threat affected each of the Services' special operations units differently.

²⁸ Boykin, Willam G. "Special Operations and Low-Intensity Conflict Legislation: Why Was it Passed and Have the Voids Been Filled?" Individual Study Project (U.S. Army War College, 1991), 5-6.

²⁹ Marquis, 34.

³⁰ Ibid.

Post Vietnam cuts resulted in a "near-eradication" of the Air Force's special operations units and a substantial cut into the Army's Special Forces.³¹ Air Force AC-130s were scheduled for deactivation or transfer to the Reserves. No further funding for the aircraft was planned beyond the 1979 budget. There also was no interest in updating the aging MC-130 fleet, and the only deep penetration helicopters existed in combat search and rescue wings.³²

The decline of Special Forces did not reach the 1,500 man low of 1957, but comparatively, the reduction was deeper, leaving only 3,600 men spread over 3 understrength active SF Groups, and an additional 5,800 men in 4 Reserve/National Guard groups. The post-Vietnam era affected the quality of the soldiers manning SF units, as with conventional units. It was common to see SF operational detachments-Alpha (ODA) manned by young privates first class (PFCs) and corporals, and led by lieutenants. Personnel assigned to SF units were still required to serve in conventional units to ensure career advancement. The rigorous training required of SF personnel was virtually eliminated and garrison activities took precedence over joint and regional training overseas.³³

The Army and Air Force special operations communities suffered because there was little advocacy for continued special operations capability in the expected future conflict, World War III with the Soviet Union. Conventional forces and AirLand Battle doctrine replaced the unconventional warfare doctrine of the '50s and '60s, and the requirement for SOF with it. It was difficult to convince conventional Army and Air Force commanders that there was a need for SOF in the next war.³⁴ The result was a 95 percent reduction in funding and a 70 percent manpower reduction in the 1970s.³⁵

³¹ Marquis, 35.

³² Boykin, 5.

³³ Marquis, 40-43.

³⁴ Marquis, 40-43.

³⁵ Billy B. Napier, "USSOCOM Legacy," (briefing conducted during the Joint Special Operations Intermediate Seminar at Hurlburt Field, Florida, 16 April 2002), JSOIS 2002 CD.

The fate of the naval special warfare SEALs and UDTs was quite different. The Navy offered a special warfare (SPECWAR) designation for its officers, allowing continual service with the SEALs and UDTs. This meant that an officer was not required to take positions in the fleet to ensure career advancement. This came at a cost, however, limiting their possibilities for promotion and pushing the problem out of the mainstream. Officers were discouraged from seeking special warfare designation. As with the Army and the Air Force, the Navy was wrestling with roles and missions after the war. Some advocated keeping the UDT's role with the fleet, yet there was little support for maintaining any real SOF capability within the Navy. The Chief of Naval Operations (CNO), Admiral Elmo Zumwalt, prevented the decommissioning and placement in the Reserves of the Navy's special warfare units and began a campaign to revitalize their role with the fleet. Still, Zumwalt's sponsorship did not prevent the loss of funding and emphasis. The SEALs and UDTs faced similar challenges to the Army and Air Force special operations units.³⁶ "In 1983, existing Underwater Demolition Teams [UDT] were re-designated as either SEAL Teams or Swimmer Delivery Vehicle (SDV) Teams and hydrographic reconnaissance and underwater demolition became SEAL or SDV missions."³⁷

In 1975, a group of Cambodians took the freighter *Mayaguez* and kidnapped the crew. The United States' response was sending a Navy carrier task force including Marines, and a small contingent of Navy and Air Force SOF. Over 200 Marines aboard Air Force helicopters assaulted Koh Tang Island, off the Cambodian coast, in an attempt to rescue the hostages. Due to poor intelligence, communications difficulties, and command failures the Marines were withdrawn. Fifteen Marines were killed, three were missing, and most of the helicopters were destroyed.³⁸ In an attempt to salvage the operation, the carrier task force commander tasked the

³⁶ Marquis, 35-39.

³⁷ *UDT/SEAL History*. [On-Line], (accessed 16 August 2003). Available from <http://www.navyspecialoperations.com/new-udt-seal-history.html>; Internet.

³⁸ Tom Clancy, Carl Steiner and Tony Koltz. *Shadow Warriors: Inside the Special Forces*, (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 2002), 216.

SEAL platoon commander to approach the island unarmed and under a white flag. A leaflet drop would notify the Cambodians that the SEALs were on a humanitarian mission and should not be harmed. This would allow the SEALs to recover the bodies, as well as the black boxes and coding devices, from the helicopters. This mission was a waste of the SEAL's unique capabilities and the platoon commander argued that the chance of success was slim. He proposed a night swim to the island in order to conduct a strategic reconnaissance and recovery of the bodies, black boxes, and coding devices. Before resolution of the mission, the Cambodians returned the missing crewmembers.³⁹

The Mayaguez incident is a display of the misunderstanding of capabilities and employment of SOF by conventional commanders. This incident was a precursor to the invasion of Grenada in 1983 where SOF was again misused. The Mayaguez incident, along with the 1972 massacre of Israeli athletes at the Munich Olympics and the successful raid on Entebbe by Israeli paratroopers to rescue the hijacked passengers, concerned senior U.S. governmental and military officials. The United States lacked a credible capability to respond to terrorist threats or to rescue hostages in a terrorist situation.⁴⁰ One additional incident, the German rescue of hostages in Mogadishu, would also serve as a catalyst during the Carter administration for the creation of a similar American capability.⁴¹

REBUILDING SPECIAL OPERATIONS – OPERATION EAGLE CLAW

At the height of the drawdown of SOF, there were two major advocates for maintaining a special operations capability in the armed forces. Army Lieutenant General Samuel Wilson served as a lieutenant in Burma during WWII as a member of Merrill's Marauders, commanded the 6th Special Forces Group (SFG) as a colonel, and was the Director of the Defense Intelligence

³⁹ Orr Kelly, *Brave Men Dark Waters: The Untold Story of the Navy SEALs*, (Presidio: Presidio Press, 1992), 175-179.

⁴⁰ Clancy, 4.

⁴¹ Boykin, 4.

Agency (DIA) before retiring from active military service. He was deeply concerned by the military's lack of foresight regarding the capabilities special operations brings to conventional warfare and SOF's ability to respond to conflicts short of major theater war (MTW). After his retirement, LTG Wilson would play a crucial role in the efforts to revitalize SOF during the 1980s.⁴²

The second advocate was General Edward Charles "Shy" Meyer. General Meyer's career began as an infantry 2LT during Korea and he retired as the chief of staff of the Army (CSA) in 1983. He never served in a special operations unit, but gained appreciation for SOF's capabilities from missions he served on that integrated conventional and special operations forces. By the 1970s, like senior governmental officials and LTG Wilson, he also was concerned about the military's apparent lack of a counterterrorist capability. A terrorist bomb that exploded outside his office in Germany solidified his conviction. GEN Meyer's concerns over this lack of a capability and the military's narrow focus on the Soviet threat would shape his support for revitalizing the special operations community.⁴³

General Meyer began assisting the revitalization of SOF while serving as the Army's Assistant Deputy Chief of Staff for Operations. General Meyer met Robert Kupperman, a scientist responsible for the government's studies on terrorism, and Major General Bob Kingston, the Commander of the Special Forces Center at Fort Bragg. Colonel Charlie Beckwith presented a concept for an elite counterterrorist unit to Kingston, and General Meyer forwarded the briefing to the Army's Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC). There was little interest within the Department of the Army or TRADOC for a new elite unit, but the void needed filling and required a unique capability not found within the current Army structure. The capability would have a direct command and control relationship to the Pentagon. This concept would avoid the

⁴² Marquis, 60-61.

⁴³ Ibid., 61-62.

anti-elite sentiments within the Army, but fostered resentment among commanders who believed this capability should fall to their organizations.⁴⁴

Kingston was able to push the proposal through TRADOC, with approval from the Joint Staff's Special Operations Division. The successful hostage rescue by the GSG-9 in Mogadishu, Somalia, escalated President Carter's interest in an American counterterrorist capability. The president's interest increased the priority for this issue and expedited the approval process within the Pentagon. The activation of this new unit, Special Forces Operational Detachment-Delta (SFOD-D) or just Delta, occurred on 19 November 1977, and COL Charlie Beckwith was the first commander.⁴⁵ President Carter's interest and the subsequent activation of Delta was the first positive action for SOF since Vietnam and the first step in revitalizing special operations in the U.S. after years of decline. This did not signify a change in attitude within DOD however, and obstacles and setbacks were common during this effort to revitalize SOF.⁴⁶

It took Delta two years to man, equip, and train the new unit. The culminating event for the organization was a validation exercise in November 1979. The team received high marks for its capabilities and accomplishments. Included as a member of the validation team was LTG Sam Wilson. One of LTG Wilson's recommendations was a permanent joint task force to provide command and control for the unit, along with the support Delta would require. On 5 November 1979, the day after the validation of Delta, militant supporters of Imam Ayatollah Khomeini took 53 members of the American Embassy staff in Tehran, Iran, hostage. The unit was ready for deployment as America's first and premier counterterrorist organization, but lacked any organic aviation support and operated without a joint headquarters to oversee its employment and

⁴⁴ Ibid., 62-63.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 62-65.

⁴⁶ Boykin, 2-6.

operations. These two issues, and others, would result in disaster during its first mission, the rescue of the hostages.⁴⁷

On 24 April 1980, disaster struck. The six months of planning and preparation, dubbed Operation RICE BOWL, and later named EAGLE CLAW for the actual hostage rescue, ended at a remote desert site in the Dasht-e-Kavir area of Iran, also called Desert One. Due to a lack of Air Force Special Operations rotary wing aircraft, Navy minesweeping helicopters launched from an aircraft carrier were tasked to fly to a staging area to linkup with the 132-man ground element flown in on MC-130 aircraft. Two of the eight helicopters, Navy RH-53Ds Sea Stallions piloted by Marine Corps pilots, failed to rendezvous with the ground force due to mechanical problems and another helicopter that did reach the Desert One site had a mechanical failure after refueling. The mission required six operational aircraft to proceed.⁴⁸ COL Beckwith recommended aborting the mission. This reached Harold Brown, Secretary of Defense, who notified President Carter, “I think we have an abort situation.” The President responded, “Let’s go with his [COL Beckwith’s] recommendation.”⁴⁹

Further tragedy struck minutes after the abort call. One of the RH-53D helicopters became disoriented in the dust it created while hovering and collided with one of the EC-130s used for refueling. Eight crewmen perished in the crash, three from the helicopter and five in the EC-130. Due to the volatile situation on the ground, the crews retrieved as much of the classified information as possible from the remaining helicopters and abandoned them. The helicopter

⁴⁷ See Marquis, 69; Boykin, 14; Charlie A. Beckwith and Donald Knox. *Delta Force*. (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich Publishers, 1983), 181-186; James J. Klingaman “Prepotency for Military Operations Other Than War: The Case for the United States Special Operations Command.” Thesis, (U.S. Army Command And General Staff College, 1995), 17.

⁴⁸ Marquis, 69-72; Beckwith, 194-280.

⁴⁹ USSOCOM History, 3.

crews, survivors and wounded from the accident, and the remaining task force members left Iran on the five remaining C-130s.⁵⁰

While the hostages remained incarcerated in Tehran, American pride and confidence in the government deteriorated as images of the wreckage and bodies of the dead crewmen in the Iranian desert appeared on television.⁵¹ The president was concerned about getting the hostages out of Iran. Two days after the first attempt, President Carter ordered the Pentagon to prepare for a second rescue and told the Secretary of Defense to ensure it had all the resources necessary. This mission was code-named HONEY BADGER.⁵²

Delta and the other men of the task force were not the cause, nor blamed for the failure. A flawed chain of command, fragmented planning and preparation, the ad hoc nature of the rescue task force, and lack of a special operations rotary wing capability were all contributing factors to the mission's failure.⁵³ In March 1993, while serving as the commander of USSOCOM, General Carl Stiner stated, "the failure revealed serious shortcomings in the ability of the United States to equip, employ, and command special operations forces effectively in complex, high-risk operations."⁵⁴ According to, then, COL William Boykin, "Many political analysts believe that this failure also cost President Carter his bid for re-election in 1980."⁵⁵ The failure had one positive impact; it strengthened General Meyer's resolve, now the CSA, to reform SOF.⁵⁶

⁵⁰ See Marquis, 69-72; Beckwith, 194-280; James Kyle and John Eidson, *The Guts to Try* (New York: ballantine Books, 1995), 307-345.

⁵¹ Marquis, 72; USSOCOM History, 3.

⁵² Clancy, 9.

⁵³ Paul B. Ryan, *The Iranian Rescue Mission: Why It Failed* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1985), 17-43.

⁵⁴ General Carl Stiner, briefing (March 1993), quoted in Marquis, 72.

⁵⁵ Boykin, 1.

⁵⁶ USSOCOM History, 3.

THE EMERGENCE OF ADVOCATES AND REFORMERS

Shortly after the failed mission, the Pentagon convened an investigative panel of former generals and flag officers to determine why the mission failed and to recommend improvements for the future. The Special Operations Review Group chairman was a former CNO, Admiral James Holloway, and Lieutenant General Sam Wilson, retired, was his deputy. The group, also known as the Holloway Commission, published its findings in what is generally referred to as the Holloway Report. The report lists some of the factors mentioned above and made two major recommendations, create a standing Counterterrorist Joint Task Force with a headquarters and forces possessing the capabilities to effectively respond to a national level authority, and create a Special Operations Advisory Panel to advise the Secretary of Defense and senior staff.⁵⁷

The findings resulted in the creation of a Joint Special Operations Task Force (JSOTF) and a subunified command, JSOC. The preparations for HONEY BADGER incorporated lessons learned from the failed mission. The final rehearsal for the operation coincided with the inauguration of President Ronald Reagan on 20 January 1981. Release of the hostages immediately following the inauguration rendered the mission unnecessary.⁵⁸

General Meyer continued to press for reform of SOF. In August 1981, he proposed creating a new combatant command called the Strategic Services Command (STRATSERCOM). The command would counter terrorism during peacetime and conflicts short of war, while protecting the U.S. leadership and critical command and control nodes if a major war with the Soviet Union erupted. This “fifth service” met with much debate from those who despised elitism, feared infringement on combatant commanders’ control of operations in their theaters, and within the SOF community for failing to adequately incorporate psychological operations and civil affairs into the proposed command. Even though a 1982 study identified a requirement for a joint

⁵⁷ Marquis, 72-73; History, 3; Clancy, 9; Klingaman 17.

⁵⁸ Clancy, 9.

command and control structure to respond to the National Command Authority (NCA), the concept died. General Meyer, realizing reform at the joint level was not possible, turned his efforts inwards to the Army. He provided additional funding and manpower, and consolidated all Army special operations under the 1st Special Operations Command (1st SOCOM) at Fort Bragg in 1982. The new command included Special Forces, Rangers, Psychological Operations, and Civil Affairs units in and out of CONUS. The Army was now in the lead for SOF reform.⁵⁹

The failure of EAGLE CLAW exacerbated the embarrassment and frustration of Air Force special operations forces (AFSOF) – their rotary-wing pilots and outdated aircraft were left home. Major General Hugh Cox, vice wing commander of 1st Special Operations Wing (SOW), published a letter in the *Air Commando Newsletter* summarizing the status of Air Force special operations and the Air Force’s long history of ignoring SOF.⁶⁰ “Those of us in the 1st SOW in the early 80’s were suffering from a ‘hangover’ due to the failure of Desert One. Morale was low, the wing was overtasked, and SOF personnel were still suffering from a lack of promotions and general higher headquarters indifference. The failure at Desert One and the high-pressure preparations for the planned second hostage rescue attempt had taken its toll. Wing operations were asking too much from the aircraft maintainers and the downward spiral of mission capability was pervasive.”⁶¹ Cox later commanded the 1st SOW and served as the deputy commander in chief of USSOCOM. General Cox’s letter was often presented as evidence of the lack of support for Air Force special operations.⁶²

The general problem was that the corporate Air Force did not understand the nature of special operations and how to utilize AFSOF. The 1st SOW reported directly to the Tactical Air Command (TAC) until Lt Gen Larry Welch assumed command of the Ninth Air Force, a

⁵⁹ Marquis, 73-75.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 75.

⁶¹ Hugh Cox, “The 1980’s: A Decade of Evolution for Air Force Special Operations,” *Air Commando Newsletter* (December 1992) quoted in Marquis, 75-76.

⁶² Marquis, 75.

subordinate command under TAC. Moving the 1st SOW under Ninth Air Force and the attention and resources provided by Lt Gen Welch served as a turning point for AFSOF. Influenced by the findings from Desert One, Lt Gen Welch's interest helped relieve the "hangover" for the personnel and began the process of replacing the aging fleet of AFSOF helicopters with the MH-53 PAVE LOWs assigned to Air Force combat search and rescue.⁶³

One year later, combat rescue and the 1st SOW were consolidated under the Twenty-Third Air Force, a new numbered air force under the Military Airlift Command (MAC). The perception by members of the AFSOF community was that reassigning them from a combat command to a transport command diminished their role and reflected the Air Force's misunderstanding of SOF's unique mission.⁶⁴ Upgrading and acquiring additional airframes for AFSOF would become an issue between the Air Force and Congress who each saw different priorities for SOF aviation reform and improvements. Eventually, improvements and acquisition would begin for the MH-53 PAVE LOW fleet, the MC-130 COMBAT TALONS, and the AC-130 gunships.

Interest from the civilian administrators and lawmakers lagged behind activity within the Defense Department. There were individuals who shared concern after the failed rescue attempt, but no consolidated effort to improve SOF was evident on Capitol Hill. One concerned individual was Congressman Dan Daniel (D-VA). Congressman Daniel served on the House Armed Services Committee and chaired its Readiness Subcommittee. He was also a friend with a fellow Virginian he met during a visit to Vietnam, LTG Sam Wilson. As early as 1980, Congressman Daniel felt that special operations was not a priority, lacked any Congressional interest, and numerous factors prevented any progress for operations focused at the low-visibility level.⁶⁵ His concerns would permeate Congress in the coming years and he played a key role in generating the debate that ultimately led to legislative reform of SOF.

⁶³ Ibid., 76.

⁶⁴ *16th Special Operations Wing Commando Heritage*

⁶⁵ Boykin, 12 & 16.

Supporters for reforming special operations “included members of the conventional military forces, civilians in the Department of Defense, members of the press and publishing world, and members of Congress and their staffs. . . . they have been called the SOF Liberation Front or the SOF Mafia.”⁶⁶ Many were former special operations personnel who worked hard on SOF reform behind the scene as staffers, helping their principals’ focus on the complexities of reform issues. This led to clashes of good intent when the views of civilian administrators differed from well-intentioned improvements or resistance by the military.⁶⁷

One of the first clashes of good intent occurred with the STRATSERCOM proposal by General Meyer. A member of the SOF Liberation Front who opposed the STRATSERCOM concept was Ted Lunger, a former Special Forces officer serving as a staff member for Congressman Daniel. Lunger and others felt that the vision of the proposed command was too narrow, based on its counterterrorism focus and failure to incorporate psychological operations and civil affairs during conflicts short of war.⁶⁸ It is unclear if this opposition by members of the SOF Liberation Front prevented General Meyer from reforming SOF at the joint level, but serves as an indicator for future clashes, such as those surrounding SOF aviation revitalization.

LEGISLATIVE REFORM

By 1983, the Senate realized there existed a requirement for reform within the military, including SOF. The Senate Armed Services Committee (SASC) began a two year study of the Department of Defense and special operations. Mr. James Locher was the director and during the study, two events occurred that influenced the report. On 23 October 1983, terrorists bombed the Marine barracks in Beirut, Lebanon, resulting in the death of 237 Marines. Two days later, on 25 October 1983, American forces invaded the island of Grenada (Operation URGENT FURY) to

⁶⁶ Ted Lunder, interview by John Partin, memorandum for the record, (Washington, 1988); and Colonel Scott Stephens, interview, (March 1993), quoted in Marquis, 57-58.

⁶⁷ Marquis, 74 & Napier briefing.

⁶⁸ Marquis, 74.

rescue American students held captive by a Cuban-backed, leftist regime and restore the island to a non-communist status quo state. Terrorism and communist-sponsored “small wars” continued to plague the United States. Congressional attention grew, focusing on the ability to respond to low intensity conflicts and on the issue of joint interoperability.⁶⁹

The Pentagon’s creation of JSOC and the Special Operations Policy Advisory Group, based on the Holloway Commission’s recommendations, along with General Meyer’s consolidation of Army SOF under 1st SOCOM, were cosmetic fixes and failed to address the issue of SOF readiness or operational capabilities. On 1 January 1984, the Defense Department created the Joint Special Operations Agency (JSOA) after the Beirut bombing and Operation URGENT FURY. The creation of the JSOA did not impress Congress, primarily because the agency lacked any operational or command authority over the Services’ SOF. Congress also questioned the appointment of a Marine general as director since the Marines possessed no special operations forces or special operations experience.⁷⁰

Congressional interest in revitalizing SOF increased in both the House and Senate. Former SOF members contacted Senator William Cohen (R-ME), requesting his support on the reform issue. Senator Cohen joined forces with fellow SASC member, Senator Sam Nunn (D-GA).⁷¹ The House Armed Services Committee formed a subcommittee chaired by Representative Earl Hutto (D-FL), to track SOF improvements and provide recommendations for SOF to be included in the 1986 defense budget. Noel Koch, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs, testified before the House subcommittee expressing his concerns

⁶⁹ History, 3; Boykin 10; Clancy 10.

⁷⁰ Boykin, 20.

⁷¹ Ibid., 11.

over SOF reform, the priority for special operations within DOD, and sustaining the reforms over the long term.⁷²

Noel Koch carried the torch for SOF reform within DOD after General Meyer retired. One of Koch's greatest concerns was the lack of long term funding and resources for the SOF community. Koch was critical of how the Services viewed SOF, "If you look at the Service programs historically, you'll see that they don't change very much or very fast in their emphasis. The traditional 'core' will get funded first and foremost, then the programs that are peripheral to the individual Services' core interests, missions and traditions 'compete' for the resources that are left. For the Services, SOF have [*sic*] never been a core program."⁷³ Examples include a long-range communication system for Special Forces and the upgraded MC-130 aircraft. Funds were allocated specifically for both projects, but were cancelled and the funds reallocated by the Services. Civilian lawmakers shared Koch's concern on more than one occasion. Senator Nunn was frustrated after Congress mandated the inclusion of aircraft for special operations in the five-year defense plan, and held up other Air Force programs until they did. The aircraft were removed from the five-year defense plan by the Air Force after the funds were released, though.⁷⁴

By late 1984, plans for increasing the force structure for Special Forces, Rangers, and SEALs addressed manpower issues. In addition, the plan for future aircraft procurement for SOF nearly doubled.⁷⁵ Changes in the personnel systems in the Services provided equal career opportunities for special operations personnel. The Army went so far as to create a branch for Special Forces.⁷⁶ The implementation of these improvements is a tribute to the efforts of Noel Koch. Koch was not

⁷² Schemmer, Clinton H. "House Panel Formed to Oversee Special Operations Forces." *Armed Forces Journal International* (October 1984): 17-18.

⁷³ Meyer, Deborah G. and Benjamin F. Schemmer. "An Exclusive Interview with Noel C. Koch." *Armed Forces Journal International* (March 1985): 50.

⁷⁴ Boykin, 19.

⁷⁵ Schemmer, 17-18.

⁷⁶ Meyer, 36-52.

satisfied with the pace and direction of improvement, however. At this point Koch decided to go public.

The *Armed Forces Journal (AFJ)*, currently the *Armed Forces Journal International*, published interviews and articles written by Koch and others in the SOF Liberation Front, that brought SOF reform issues into a public forum. Advocates and the opposition began to debate the issues. Benjamin Schemmer was the editor and owner of *AFJ* and was personally concerned about America's special operations capability.⁷⁷ Between February 1985 and April 1986, 45 articles and letters related to SOF reform appeared in the magazine. The articles not only informed interested readers, but also escalated the level and intensity of the debate.⁷⁸

To this point, SOF reform advocates operated in isolated pockets within the Congress and DOD. For the issue to move forward, it needed greater attention, increased priority, and more advocates. Dan Daniel published an article in *AFJ* designed to create controversy over SOF reform and to take it to the next level, legislative action. The article, collaboratively ghostwritten by SOF Liberation Front members Ted Lunger and Lynn Rylander (Noel Koch's deputy), titled *US Special Operations: The Case for a Sixth Service*, created the desired effect – controversy and polarization on both sides of the issue.⁷⁹ The article gave seven reasons why a separate Service better addressed the differences between the conventional military and SOF; Philosophy, Professionalism, Budgets, Continuity, Unique Solutions to Unique Problems, Advocacy, and Relationship with the NCA. The article's closing section stated, "No amount of directive authority – budgetary or otherwise – will overcome the capacity of Service staffs to commit mischief should that be their bent. And, so long as SOF remain outside the Service's

⁷⁷ Schemmer's concern over shortcomings in SOF were reflected in his 1976 book *The Raid* discussing the failed rescue attempt at Son Tay prison in 1973. The tragedy at Desert one rekindled Schemmer's frustration and he used his magazine to support SOF reform.

⁷⁸ Marquis, 116-118.

⁷⁹ Boykin, 21-22.

philosophical core, the temptation to do so will be near-irresistible.”⁸⁰ Additional ghostwritten articles followed to maintain the intensity of the debate. Articles rebutting the notion of a sixth Service, also written by Lunger and Rylander, achieved the desired controversial effect.⁸¹

The SASC published the findings from the two-year study, in October 1985, entitled “Defense Organization: The Need for Change.” Regarding special operations, it found that the Services had failed to develop a low-intensity conflict (LIC) capability in favor of conventional war requirements, generally responded in an ad hoc nature, and lacked any innovative approaches to meeting the unique requirements of LIC.⁸²

Members of Congress began aligning themselves with the two sides for SOF’s future, maintaining status quo or radical change. To close the gap between the House and Senate, Ted Lunger contacted another SOF Liberation Front member, Chris Mellon, in Senator Cohen’s office. This contact, along with the SASC report, encouraged Senator Cohen and he joined the debate in the media. He published an article in *AFJ* expressing Congressional views of where special operations should be in the 1986 Defense Budget and advocated an increased role for SOF.⁸³ “The sense of the Congress is that: (1) The Office of the Secretary of Defense should improve its management supervision; (2) Joint command and control should permit ‘direct and immediate’ access to SOF by the National Command Authorities; and (3) The Commanders-in-Chief of the regional commands should have sufficient SOF in-theater to execute their war plans and deal with contingencies.”⁸⁴

This was not the only information from the period influential to SOF reform. Major General Richard Scholtes commanded the newly created JSOC and SOF during the rescue operation in

⁸⁰ Daniel, 70-75.

⁸¹ Boykin, 22-23.

⁸² Ibid., 10-11.

⁸³ Ibid., 23-24.

⁸⁴ Cohen, William S. “A Defense Special Operations Agency: Fix for a SOF That is Most Assuredly Broken,” *Armed Forces Journal International* (January 1986): 38.

Grenada. In August 1986, he testified before the Senate Sea Power and Force Projection Committee, explaining why the misuse of SOF by conventional leaders resulted in high SOF casualties during Operation URGENT FURY. His testimony changed the course of Congressional action.⁸⁵

The Senate and House came to different conclusions regarding reform measures to improve SOF. The House, through Congressman Dan Daniel, secured a neutral stance by the Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger to counter the opposition by Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS), Admiral William Crowe. The House wanted a new civilian agency, the National Special Operations Agency (NSOA), with a civilian director reporting directly to the Secretary of Defense, to keep the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) out of the budget process for SOF. The Senate, with William Cohen championing the cause, was not certain if the issue required a “Sense of Congress” or mandatory legislation. Both sides of Congress submitted different bills drafting legislative changes to fix the SOF problem.⁸⁶

In the summer of 1986, Admiral Crowe testified twice before Congress on special operations issues. He argued that SOF reform was an internal problem and any mandated external solutions created future command and control problems. He stated that the Department of Defense recognized the problem and was instituting changes. The DOD proposal was a Special Operations Forces Command, with a three star officer reporting to the Secretary of Defense through the JCS, like a unified or specified commander. The three proposals discussed above appeared in *AFJ* in a September 1986 article titled, *SOF Reorganization: Everyone Has a Plan-Senate, House and DoD*.⁸⁷ Figure 1 depicts the three proposals from the *AFJ* article with highlights added to indicate the legislative results.

⁸⁵ Klingaman, 18-20.

⁸⁶ Boykin, 24-25.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 26-27

FUNCTION	JCS	SENATE	HOUSE
Organization	Special Operations Force Command	Special Operations Unified Command	National Special Operations Agency
Commander	3-Star Flag Rank	4-Star Flag Rank	Civilian Director
Civilian Oversight	Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs	Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations and Low Intensity Conflict	Director NSOA
National Security Council	Not Addressed	Board for Unconventional Warfare	Not Addressed
Active SOF, US-Based	Assigned	Assigned	Assigned
Reserve SOF	Assigned	Assigned	Assigned
JSOC	Not Assigned	Not Assigned	Assigned
Budget Control	Services	Services	NSOA
Defense Resources Board Advocacy	Cmdr SOFC, CJCS, ASD (ISA)	Cmdr Unified Cmd, CJCS, ASD (SO/LIC)	NSOA

Figure 1. Proposed SOF Structures⁸⁸

Sam Wilson also testified before Congress in 1986, disagreeing with Admiral Crowe and the DOD. Wilson felt only legislation could solve what DOD could not. The most compelling testimony, though, came from MG Scholtes. His remarks described how the command relationship between SOF and the conventional forces changed prior to execution of Operation URGENT FURY, and SOF was subsumed under the larger JTF. His testimony in 1986 also explained how the special operations forces were misused, resulting in relatively significant casualties. Senator Cohen took MG Scholtes to the chambers of numerous Senators not present at the hearings. After these private meetings, Senator Cohen was certain that a “Sense of the Senate” was insufficient to overhaul SOF and he determined to mandate the change through legislation.⁸⁹

The DOD (JCS) plan was no longer an option. Noel Koch resigned, fed up with the resistance and parochialism in the Pentagon regarding SOF reform. Neither the House nor Senate intended to compromise on their plan. It looked as if SOF reform needed a miracle to get over

⁸⁸ Odorizzi, Charles D. “SOF Reorganization: Everyone Has a Plan – House, Senate, and DOD,” *Armed Forces Journal International* (September 1986): 18.

⁸⁹ Boykin, 28-29.

the last hurdle. Congress convened a Conference Committee to find a compromise between the two different versions. Sam Wilson, at Congressman Daniel's invitation, led the negotiations. It was determined that the House proposal with the NSOA was inconsistent with the pending Goldwater-Nichols legislation. Jim Locher and members of the SOF Liberation Front, Ted Lunger, Chris Mellon, and Ken Johnson, attended the conference. LTG Wilson focused this opinionated group on the issues and fixated their attention on reforming rather than winning. The group agreed and it decided that Jim Locher was best qualified to rewrite the SOF legislation based on his involvement in the Goldwater-Nichols bill.⁹⁰ Both sides remained firm on different issues for reform, and it took him numerous drafts over a ten-day period to integrate the Senate's proposed structure for reorganizing SOF with the House's desire for near fiscal autonomy from the military Services.⁹¹

REALIZATION – PUBLIC LAW AND THE ESTABLISHMENT OF USSOCOM

Public Law 99-433, *The Goldwater-Nichols Department of Defense Reorganization Act of 1986*, directed DOD to review the missions and functions of the unified commands and consider “creation of a unified combatant command for special operations missions which would combine the special operations missions, responsibilities, and forces of the armed forces.”⁹²

SOF reform came one month later, the final bill passed as an attachment to Public Law 99-661, *The 1987 Defense Authorization Act* amending the Goldwater-Nichols Act. The attachment, nicknamed the Nunn-Cohen amendment, called for a unified combatant command headed by a four-star general for all SOF, an Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations and Low-Intensity Conflict [ASD (SO/LIC)], a coordinating board for low-intensity conflict within the National Security Council, and a new Major Force Program (MFP-11) for special operations

⁹⁰ Ibid., 30-33.

⁹¹ Marquis, 145; Boykin, 32.

⁹² *Goldwater-Nichols Department of Defense Reorganization Act of 1986*, PL 99-433 (1986), quoted in Boykin, 7-8.

unique requirements. The Nunn-Cohen amendment changed the Goldwater-Nichols Act, and for the first time Congress mandated the creation of a combatant command.⁹³

There was much debate on the actual establishment of USSOCOM. Finally accepted was a plan to designate an older and underutilized command, the United States Readiness Command (USREDCOM) at MacDill Air Force Base, as the new home for special operations. The USREDCOM commander at that time was General James Lindsay who had special operations experience. President Reagan approved the Command's establishment on 13 April 1987, and DOD activated USSOCOM on 16 April 1987, with General Lindsay as its first commander.⁹⁴

The Nunn-Cohen amendment required legislators to pass two additional laws to ensure proper implementation. The first, Public Law 100-180, directed that Secretary of the Army serve as the ASD (SO/LIC) until DOD actually filled the position and gave USSOCOM "Head of Agency" status to better manage its MFP-11 funds and fulfill its Service-like responsibilities. Public Law 100-456 provided "Program and Budget Authority for USSOCOM," therefore closing the issue of managing USSOCOM's budget and removing the JCS from the process. Other issues included the assignment of the SEALs, CA and PSYOP units, and the status of units in the Reserves. Ultimately all were assigned to the new command.⁹⁵

SOF RENAISSANCE

As the command was getting organized and adapting to its new role as a Service-like headquarters for special operations, its newly assigned forces were called upon for operations throughout the world. Early operations for the newly created command included the integration of SOF to support operations in the Persian Gulf and Panama. SOF support to Operation EARNEST WILL in the Persian Gulf and Operation JUST CAUSE in Panama provided unique capabilities needed by the combatant commanders. Successful operations by SOF supporting

⁹³ History, 5.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 5-6.

⁹⁵ Boykin, 38-45.

these operations during USSOCOM's infancy helped realize the efficacy of the legislation and acceptance of SOF. Operation DESERT SHIELD/DESERT STORM displayed the flexibility of SOF and their unique capability to capitalize on the human dimension of warfare, and to adapt to new challenges beyond their primary legislated tasks. Coalition Warfare was not a primary role for SOF, but training, reconstituting, and integrating coalition forces was vital to the overall campaign.⁹⁶ The language skills, cultural understanding, and knowledge of command and control required for SOF's primary tasks made them uniquely qualified to support coalition warfare.

As the reputation and demands on SOF continued to grow during the 1990s, so did the requirements for USSOCOM to provide sufficient resources to meet the increasing taskings. On 4 January 1998, the fifth USSOCOM Commander, General Peter J. Schoomaker, reorganized the headquarters away from the typical J-staff found in a combatant command, into functional centers in an attempt to better fulfill its Service-like obligations to organize, train, and equip SOF.⁹⁷ This organization still exists today with one addition. A new center for managing the Command's new war fighting role was added. The Center for Special Operations is, "Responsible to the Commander, USSOCOM for planning, directing, and executing special operations in the conduct of the War on Terrorism in order to disrupt, defeat, and destroy terrorist networks that threaten the United States, its citizens, and interests worldwide."⁹⁸

SPECIAL OPERATIONS IN THE FUTURE

The military is wrestling with "transformation" to meet future requirements brought about by the changes in the global environment after the fall of communism. This military change focused on military force's ability to handle low intensity conflicts. The concerns of the military leaders and legislators that pursued SOF reform in the '80s are the same issues SOF faces today. To

⁹⁶ History, 17-35.

⁹⁷ Ibid., 10.

⁹⁸ *SOF Posture Statement*, 107.

adequately analyze the future role for SOF requires an analysis of change and America's historical ability to meet future challenges.

CHAPTER THREE

ANALYSIS

TRANSFORMATION

The entire Department of Defense is currently involved in various stages of transformation. Change is nothing new to the military and the various Services are dealing with another period where change is required to meet future threats on the battlefield. Transformation is the title for the latest round of change within the Department of Defense. The Army launched its transformation under CSA General Eric K. Shinseki when he published the *Objective Force White Paper*.⁹⁹ The focus for the Army's effort was an Objective Force, with an Interim Force as a provisional measure, which is better suited to the emerging operational environment and support to Joint Force Commanders.¹⁰⁰ The Department of Defense published its *Transformation Planning Guidance* in April 2003 to unify transformation among the Services. In this guidance, the Secretary of Defense identified the critical elements of transformation, assigned roles and responsibilities, and described how the Department will organize to implement transformational capabilities.¹⁰¹ This guidance focuses each Service's independent efforts to transform into a more capable joint force consisting of mutually supporting components ready for the new challenges in an uncertain future. Each Service supports the overall transformation program in their cornerstone documents: the Army's *Objective Force White Paper*, The U.S. Air Force *Transformation Flight Plan*, and the *Naval Transformation Roadmap* (which also covers the Marine Corps). USSOCOM, as a service-like command, provides transformation guidance in its

⁹⁹ U.S. Department of the Army, *Objective Force White Paper*. [On-line], (U.S. Army Objective Task Force, n.d., accessed 15 March 2003). Available from http://www.monroe.army.mil/futurescenter/oftf/Key%20Docs/white_paper.htm; Internet.

¹⁰⁰ United States Army White Paper, *Concepts for the Objective Force*, with a foreword by GEN Eric K. Shinseki (n.p., n.d.), ii-5.

¹⁰¹ Department of Defense, *Transformation Planning Guidance*, with a foreword by Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld (Washington, D.C., April 2003), 1.

Posture Statement. Changing the military to better support and defend the United States is a major focus within the Department of Defense as a whole, each of the Services, and USSOCOM.

DYNAMICS OF MILITARY CHANGE

There are different categories of military change, influenced by many factors, producing varying degrees of success and results. At one end of the spectrum are major changes within the military. These come in the form of either a military revolution or a revolution of military affairs (RMA). A military revolution is, “[Changes] which are driven by vast social and political changes.”¹⁰² Examples include; the creation of the modern nation-state in the seventeenth century, the French Revolution of the late eighteenth century, the Industrial Revolution, and the advent of nuclear weapons. These changes occurred naturally with little control or predictability and their impact continued over a long period, affecting society, the state, and the military. A revolution in military affairs on the other hand is, “[Changes] which military institutions have directed, although usually with great difficulty and ambiguous results.”¹⁰³ Examples include, Napoleonic warfare, technological advances of telegraph for communications, railroads for transport, automatic weapons, and combined arms tactics. These changes often occur as a result of military revolutions, but the implementation time often revolves around the military’s willingness to embrace the change and are often difficult because of human factors.

Another category of change is innovation. Innovations incorporated by the Western military began as early as the fourteenth century and follow a cyclical path from then to the present. This category of change, innovation in military affairs (IMA), represents a potential to modernize warfare and the organizations that fight. Influencing IMAs are the rapid advancements in technology, the large sums of money spent on military research, and the military’s ability to evaluate performance and their weapons systems. One such period is outlined in the book by

¹⁰² MacGregor Knox and Williamson Murray, *The Dynamics of Military Revolution: 1300-2050* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), i, 6-7.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, i, 12-14.

Williamson Murray and Allan Millet, *Military Innovation in the Interwar Period*. During the interwar period between WWI and WWII, the military received little fiscal support or direction while faced with rapid advancement of technological and tactical innovations. This resulted in some successes and failures at the onset of WWII. Examples of IMAs during the interwar period include: armored warfare, amphibious warfare, strategic and tactical bombing, the introduction of the aircraft carrier, submarine warfare, and the advent of radar. This period of change showed the major Axis and Allied differences in their attempts to gain asymmetrical advantages over the other by incorporating new technology and weapons into their doctrine and organizations.¹⁰⁴ The difficulties of change during war are complicated, but changes during peacetime are historically more difficult because of a lack of foresight or sense of urgency. When the threat is unclear, the result is less funding and external backing.

The final category of change is an evolution of military affairs (EMA). This category of change is influenced by military revolutions, RMAs, and IMAs. The distinguishing characteristic of this type of change is the amount of time involved before actualization. An example of an EMA is the evolution of the third dimension of warfare and the resulting creation of the Air Force as a separate branch of Service. This evolution in military affairs was a byproduct of the industrial revolution, combined arms and joint warfare, strategic and tactical bombing, and the advent of nuclear weapons. Regardless of the category of military change, the system and the influences are the same.

MODEL FOR CHANGE

True change, beyond changing tactics or adapting a new weapon system, is complex. “All human institutions must inevitably deal with the tension between continuity and change, between preserving that which has met the needs of the past and adapting to the challenge of change in a confusing present and uncertain future. . . . this tension is particularly evident in military

¹⁰⁴ Williamson Murray and Allan R. Millet, eds., *Military Innovation in the Interwar Period*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), i-5.

institutions . . .”¹⁰⁵ To position the military to win future wars requires a top down approach that leverages the system to begin change at the strategic level. This approach requires determining an accurate picture of the nature of future war, formulating operational concepts likely to bring victory, and translating the operational concepts into doctrine. With the endemic uncertainty of the future strategic environment, it is critical to determine where the military is likely to fight, against whom, under what circumstances, and for what purpose.¹⁰⁶ Determining the threat is key to successful change. Figure 2, created by the author, depicts the impact of a threat on external influences and the military change process.

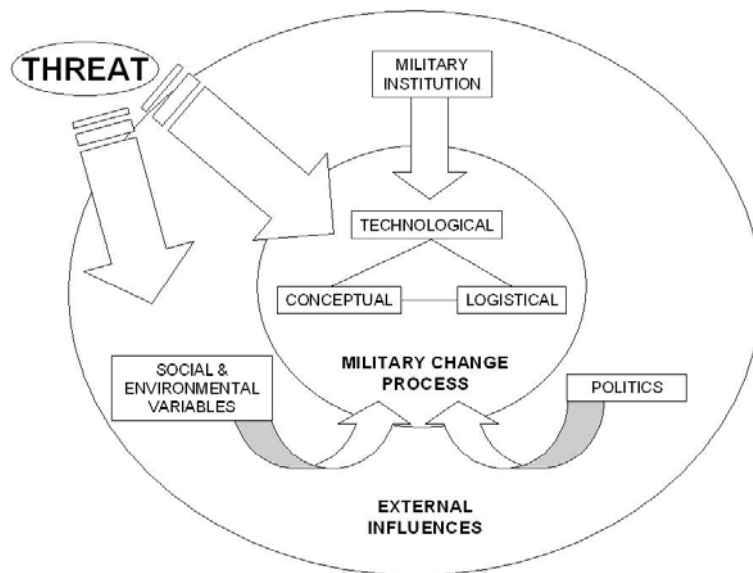


Figure 2. Change Model

Besides future threats, influencing or external factors to military change are the political structure (politics) within which the military exists, social and environmental factors that influence the military, and the institution itself. The political arm of change determines the strategic requirements, ensures resource availability, and unifies political institutions towards a common goal. The social and environmental factors include cultural and societal norms, the

¹⁰⁵ Harold R. Winton and David R. Mets, *The Challenge of Change: Military Institutions and New Realities, 1918-1941* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2000), xi.

¹⁰⁶ Murry and Knox, 175-194.

support of the populace, and the geography of the anticipated battlefield. The final influence is the military institution itself with its characteristics, values, and historical experiences.¹⁰⁷ Internally, military changes are based on a balance of three categories: conceptual (changing doctrine and tactics), technological (adaptation of advanced or emerging systems), and logistical (acquisition and fielding).¹⁰⁸ In a utopian environment, change starts at the strategic level by anticipating future requirements and providing direction and resources. The military then implements the change through its internal mechanism while enjoying the support of the institution and society. As seen in the interwar period between WWI and WWII, this is not always the case and the military can make changes based on its evaluation of the most likely threat and future requirements, thus leading the transformation process with little influence from external factors. Regardless of the source of determination or where the process begins, the key to success in military change is anticipating the strategic environment and threats to ensure the military is prepared for future conflicts.

THE CURRENT THREAT ENVIRONMENT – A PARADIGM SHIFT

The bipolar strategic environment and threat the United States faced for nearly 45 years emerged after WWII. The Soviet Union fought as an ally, while maintaining an eye on the spread of communism in Eastern Europe and to some degree countries in Asia and other parts of the world. The threat to the spread of communism was democracy, represented by the United States as a democratic superpower with nuclear weapons. The Soviet Union's response was to develop the same nuclear technology and achieve parity with the United States. This resulted in an arms race by both countries, chasing a strategy of deterrence through mutually assured destruction.

The U.S. realized the power of strategic bombing coupled with atomic weapons and its new role for the future, deterrence. To support the strategy, the National Security Act of 1947 created

¹⁰⁷ Winton and Mets, xi-xix.

¹⁰⁸ Scott Stephenson, *A Tentative Trinitarian Model of Military Adaptation*. (Draft paper, United States Army Command and General Staff College, n.d.)

an independent Air Force from the nearly autonomous Army Air Forces. The Air Force's number one priority was its long-range bombers and the use of air refueling to lengthen their reach. The Soviets continued with atomic research and detonated their first atomic bomb in 1949, while the U.S. sought advancements in ballistic missile technology. The Air Force would soon control two of the elements of the strategic "Triad," bombers and land-based missiles, with the Navy providing the third element using submarine-launched missiles.¹⁰⁹ The U.S. led the arms race until the '60s when the Russians achieved parity, resulting in a virtual stalemate. This turned both sides attention back to conventional warfare and the proxy wars that characterized the remainder of the Cold War.

The Berlin Wall opened on 9 November 1989, and a few days later the last slabs of the wall were lifted away, marking the end of the Cold War and the reunification of Germany. This single event serves as a symbolic point in history, marking the end of a communist system that was already coming apart in Poland, Yugoslavia, and Hungary. Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, and Romania followed suit shortly.¹¹⁰ The Soviet Union was last to reject communism, disintegrating in 1991, and removing any clear threat to the United States. The joyous occasions surrounding the fall of the Berlin wall, the collapse of Communism, and the fall of the Soviet Union also presented a new problem for the U.S. government and military that had focused on a single threat for over four decades. This marked the beginning of a new strategic environment – a paradigm shift from a bipolar world to a multi-polar world without a clear threat.

The rapid change in the strategic environment in the aftermath of the Cold War caught the United States by surprise, and it had no plan for the "Cold Peace." There was little chance of simply reverting to pre-WWII status quo. Scholarly debate searched for the new threat and theories or paradigms explaining the changes occurring and predicting the future strategic

¹⁰⁹ *16th Special Operations Wing Commando Heritage*

¹¹⁰ Andreas Ramos, *A Personal Account of The Fall of the Berlin Wall: The 11th and 12th of November, 1989*. [On-Line], (accessed 15 March 2003). Available from <http://www.andreas.com/berlin.html>; Internet.

environment proliferated. Potential paradigms ranged from a world of peace and harmony to a world in chaos. The end of the Cold War shifted global politics to a multi-civilizational and multi-polar paradigm. Previously suppressed cultural identities now shape the patterns of cohesion, disintegration, and conflict in the post-Cold War world.¹¹¹ Imposed on top of the clashes of culture and ideology is the issue of globalization brought on by rapid advances in technology and the fusion of world economic markets. The reality of the situation is that the future is complicated and the multi-polar strategic environment brought on by the end of the Cold War requires the United States to determine new threats to America and its interests, and create the measures necessary to protect them.

This change to the global strategic setting provides challenges to the national security planning community. It must determine where the military is likely to fight, against whom, under what circumstances, and for what purpose. A week-long conference brought the military and civilian policy communities together to address *The Roles and Missions of Special Operations Forces in the Aftermath of the Cold War* in mid-November 1994.¹¹²

USSOCOM hosted and planned the conference in association with the International Security Studies Program of the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, Tufts University, and the institute of Foreign Policy Analysis. The focus was on the sources and types of conflicts for the military and SOF. They found that the global political setting characterized by political fragmentation, proliferation of weapons of varying levels of destructiveness, and difficulty of identifying enemies along distinctive lines of battle was likely to present new and additional requirements for SOF. Issue areas included proliferation and counter-proliferation, ethnic conflict, low-intensity conflict, international criminal organizations, counter-terrorism operations, and the requirement

¹¹¹ Huntington, Samuel P, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1996), 20-35.

¹¹² Shultz & Pfaltzgraft, ix-x.

for power projection and forward presence in regional security settings of national importance.¹¹³

The results of the conference were published in 1995, *Roles and Missions of SOF in the Aftermath of the Cold War*.

Six years later, the terrorist attacks by Al Qaeda on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon were the crescendo of strikes against U.S. interests. They punctuated the change in the global environment and helped identify an immediate threat. Precursory attacks like the first attack on the World Trade Center in February 1993, the terrorist attack on the Khobar Towers in Riyadh, the embassy bombings in Nairobi, Kenya and Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, and the bombing of the USS *Cole* were an evolution in terrorist tactics. Kidnappings, hostage taking, and assassinations sponsored by rogue states evolved into suicide bombings and attacks focused on bending America's will by transnational actors.¹¹⁴

In the study by USSOCOM and the Fletcher School, two areas would resonate as prophetic. Dr. Richard H. Shultz wrote that, “. . . radical ethnonational and religious conflict has escalated dramatically and must be considered among the primary causes of post-Cold War regional and trans-regional instability.” Portions of the world, like the Middle East, struggle with various multiethnic regimes that are a by-product of colonialism or post-war modifications to a region. As a result, various movements choose violence to address local and international policy. Dr. Schultz emphasized that sub-state and transnational actors using terrorism are a serious threat to U.S. interests within our borders and abroad.¹¹⁵ General Wayne A. Downing, commander of USSOCOM during the study, stated in the preface that SOF's regional orientation, capability to meet unique missions in operations other than war, and strategic strike forces deployable on short notice can have a significant influence in the new strategic environment across the entire range of

¹¹³ Shultz & Pfaltzgraff, ix-x.

¹¹⁴ Evaluation based on chronology of terrorist attacks from David C. Martin and John Walcott, *Best Laid Plans: The Inside Story of America's War Against Terrorism* (New York: Harper and Row, 1988), xi-xxii; *Islamic and Arab Terrorist Attacks on Americans*. [On-Line], (accessed 17 March 2003). Available from <http://www.geocities.com/Colosseum/Stands/5008/victims.html>; Internet.

¹¹⁵ Shultz and Pfaltzgraff, 75 & 81.

military operations from peace to war.¹¹⁶ Currently America's focus is on GWOT and USSOCOM has the lead. The last time the U.S. faced a major shift in the strategic environment was at the end of the Second World War. The impact of this strategic shift resulted in the creation of the Air Force. This case study has merit in the issue of SOF as a separate Service, and warrants examination.

EVOLUTIONARY MODEL – THE AIR FORCE

Man's desire to fly is evident in mythology and in the works of the famed scientist and inventor Leonardo da Vinci. The impact of this third dimension on warfare in the United States was initially in the form of hot-air balloons used during the Civil War. Used for both reconnaissance and telegraphy, ballons were placed under the Signal Corps in the post-Civil War Army. Interest turned towards a heavier-than-air flying machine around the turn of the century. The War Department was considering an offer from Wilbur and Orville Wright, while the Signal Corps was working with Samuel P. Langley for an airplane. Initial failure at producing an airplane turned the focus to dirigible balloons of the Zeppelin type used by Germany, but the patent granted to the Wrights in 1906 and the interest of President Theodore Roosevelt resulted in the delivery of a Wright plane to the Army in 1909.¹¹⁷

The advancement of aviation was slow during the early days. The value of military aviation emerged during the First World War, though. The armies of Europe sought control of the air using balloons for artillery spotting, airplanes for reconnaissance over enemy territory, and both dirigible airships and airplanes for bombing. During this period, air warfare doctrine and theory began to evolve. Differences emerged between "strategic" air operations deep into enemy territory that targeted industry or the civilian's will, and "tactical" operations against military targets in support of ground forces. By the time America declared war against Germany on 6

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 5.

¹¹⁷ Air Force History Support Office, *Evolution of the Department of the Air Force*. [On-Line], (Washington, D.C., n.d., accessed 21 October 2003). Available from <http://www.airforcehistory.hq.af.mil/PopTopics/Evolution.htm>

April 1917, the military's Aeronautical Division of the Signal Corps consisted of 250 airplanes, 5 balloons, and 1,200 officers and men with little or no knowledge of the air war over Europe. This marginal section of the military plunged forward trying to fulfill the French request for the U.S. to provide a 4,500 airplane and a 50,000 man air force. The endeavor failed and the War Department moved aviation from the Signal Corps into an Air Service with both a civilian and military department to assist with the expansion. President Woodrow Wilson appointed an Assistant Secretary of War for aviation.¹¹⁸

By the Armistice on 11 November 1918, America had distinguished itself in action against the Germans, but the majority of the 740 U.S. aircraft at the front were European made. In 1918, Great Britain combined the separate air components of its Army and Navy into the independent Royal Air Force (RAF) under an Air Ministry. This had little influence on U.S. leaders who saw the airplane as another weapon system to support ground forces. Aviation during this period was another branch in the Army, like field artillery or the engineers, but commanded by officers who were not aviators. External examination of military aviation concurred with the military's perception and the only result was to change the name of Army aviation to the Air Corps.¹¹⁹

As theories continued to evolve on the role of strategic bombing, the argument continued for an independent air force like the RAF. Brigadier General William (Billy) Mitchell, who distinguished himself in WWI, was a revolutionary within the military arguing for such a change. He saw the need for an independent air Service as a primary force with the freedom to conduct strategic or long-range bombing to destroy an enemy's industry and war-making potential. He took his argument and radical methods to court-martial in an attempt to prove and publicize his position. His actions were viewed unfavorably by the War Department, however his actions

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

gained political support for the Air Corps' "strategic" bombing doctrine using heavily armed long-range aircraft to attack an adversary's war-making capacity and national will.¹²⁰

Aviation continued to advance and early reports during the initial stages of WWII in Europe demonstrated the significant role of independent aviation on the "modern" battlefield. Quasi-independence for U.S. military aviation emerged in the twilight of this new war. Major General Henry H. Arnold, chief of the Air Corps, assumed a new role as the Commanding General of Army Air Forces (AAF) on 20 June 1941. When the U.S. entered the war after the attack on Pearl Harbor on 7 June 1941, MG Arnold essentially became co-equal to the Chief of Staff of the Army – General George C. Marshall. Both Marshall and Arnold became advocates for autonomy of the AAF as an independent Service within the War Department, but agreed that it should wait until the end of the War. During the war, aviation experienced great support and became the world's most powerful air force. The Air Corps expanded from 2,400 planes and 20,000 men before the war to a wartime high of 80,000 aircraft and 2.4 million personnel. The air forces supported both the strategic campaign and the ground forces in the European and Asian theaters of the war. The atomic bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki demonstrated the full capability of air power to be decisive. These bombings helped shape the debates over armed forces unification and national strategy after the war. The debate over the organization of the military and the role of aviation ended with the National Security Act of 1947, creating an independent Service for air power which played a significant role in the new strategic environment and the Cold War.¹²¹

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ Ibid.

COMPARISON OF AIR FORCE AND SOF EVOLUTION

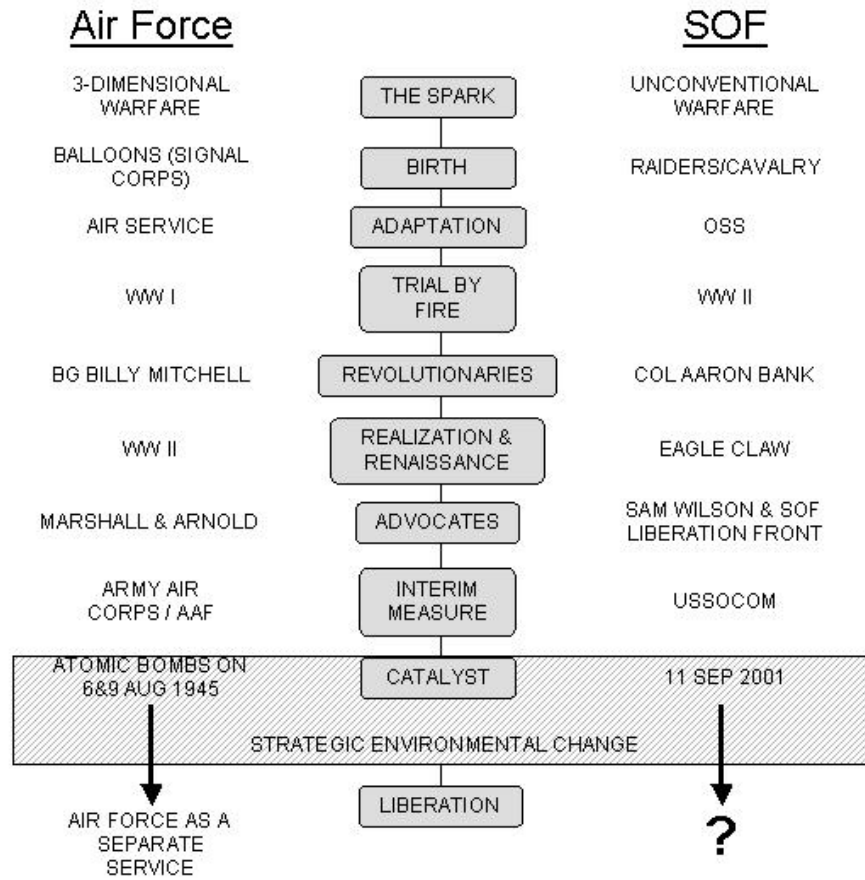


Figure 3. Comparison of Air Force and SOF Evolution

Figure 3 presents a diagram comparing the major similarities between the evolution of the Air Force and SOF. In both cases, the military adopted a new organization to better address the new strategic environment. Their trial by fire and post-war periods shaped individuals that saw a greater future for their respective organizations, while the military and administration were coping with a return to normalcy. These men helped shape the future of warfare in their areas that led to a liberating event and the realization of the significance of aviation and special operations' unique support to national strategy. The emergence of a catalyst in close proximity to a change in the strategic environment ultimately led to the creation of a new Service, the Air

Force, in 1947. This new organization, the independent Air Force, was a significant factor in the eventual U.S. victory in the Cold War.

September 11th was the catalyst in close proximity to the latest strategic environmental shift. The result is a new war and a new strategic environment, the Global War on Terrorism. Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) validated SOF's role in the new strategic environment. Just as the Army Air Corps achieved greater autonomy and its status in relation to the Army changed on the eve of WWII, USSOCOM's status changed from a supporting command to the supported command for this new war. And, like the end of the Second World War, the strategy changes to meet future requirements fell to an individual "Service," USSOCOM, while the remainder of the military adjusts to their new role and requirements. The Secretary of Defense memo cited earlier questions the military's ability to deal with the new 21st century security environment and raises the possible need for a new organization or institution as an alternative to fighting the war with the status quo.¹²²

SOF'S INTERIM MEASURE – USSOCOM, TITLE X, AND THE UNAAF¹²³

The Department of Defense has three Military Departments and five Services. The Army, Air Force, Navy, and Marine Corps make up the Department of the Army, Department of the Air Force, and Department of the Navy. The Coast Guard is the fifth Service and is a branch of the Armed Forces at all times. Established separately by law in the Department of Transportation, the Coast Guard operates as part of the Department of the Navy during war or when directed by the President. Each of the Services and USSOCOM fulfill the broad and enduring purpose which they were established for in law (their roles). The primary function of the Services and USSOCOM is to provide forces organized, trained, and equipped to perform their roles – to be employed by the combatant commander in the accomplishment of a mission.¹²⁴

¹²² *Defense Memo: A Grim Outlook*

¹²³ Joint Publication 0-2.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, I-6, I-9.

The President, through the Secretary Of Defense and with the advice and assistance of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, establishes combatant commands, geographic and functional, for the performance of military missions and prescribes the force structure of such commands. The President approves the Unified Command Plan (UCP) that establishes the missions, responsibilities, force structure, and general area of responsibility for the geographic combatant commanders, as well as the responsibilities for functional combatant commanders.¹²⁵

All forces (except as noted in Title 10 U.S. *Code*, Section 162) are assigned to combatant commands by the Secretary of Defense's "Forces for Unified Commands" memorandum. The majority of CONUS-based forces are assigned to Joint Forces Command (JFCOM), a functional command comprised of Service component commands providing forces to the geographic combatant commands as required. Combatant commanders have combatant command (COCOM) authority over assigned forces. This authority is not automatically transferred when forces are shifted from one combatant command to another. The authority must be specified based on permanence or duration of the transfer.¹²⁶ USSOCOM exercises COCOM authority over all special operations forces not assigned to a geographic combatant command.

Pacific Command, Southern Command, Central Command, and European Command are four of the five geographic combatant commands and each command has Service component commands and a subordinate unified command for special operations (SOC). The SOCs serve a similar role to the Service component commands. Theater SOCs normally exercise operational control (OPCON) of SOF forces assigned to a geographic combatant command. Command and control of SOF during operations is exercised by a joint force special operations component commander (JFSOCC) or by the commander of a joint special operations task force.¹²⁷ Northern

¹²⁵ Ibid., xvi, I-3, I-8.

¹²⁶ Ibid., x, II-14, III-3.

¹²⁷ Department of Defense, Joint Publication 3-05.1, Joint Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures for Joint Special Operations Task Force Operations (Washington D.C. 2001), III-1.

Command is the fifth and newest geographic command, with a unique mission and organization in response to the events of September 11th. It has no special operations forces assigned.

Special operations may be conducted as a single-Service operation, but routinely require joint support and coordination provided by a JFSOC or a JSOTF subordinate to a joint force commander (JFC) or joint task force (JTF).¹²⁸ The assignment of special operations forces from three Services into a JFSOC or JSOTF makes them inherently joint, but when subordinate to a JFC or JTF makes them “double jointed.” The baseline special operations warfighting organization is the JFSOC or JSOTF, charged with integrating SOF from three Services that are not stationed together and rarely have a habitual relationship with each other. When a JFSOC or JSOTF is subordinate to a JTF, it must also focus on integrating its joint force into the joint conventional structure. Other Services’ baseline organizations come to a JTF as divisions, wings, and Marine air-ground task forces which routinely train and operate together. SOF have to be “double jointed” in order to effectively fight as joint SOF, and also as the special operations component of the JTF’s joint team.

Examining the military’s current transformation through a historical lens with theoretical analysis finds the creation of the Air Force not just as a precedent for creating a separate Service, but shows that both experienced similar evolutions with regard to U.S. strategy. Meeting the challenges and opportunities of the new strategic environment requires new ways to organize, train, and equip SOF, and a new institution to focus on the 21st century security environment as outlined by Secretary Rumsfeld.¹²⁹

¹²⁸ Ibid., I-2.

¹²⁹ Defense Memo: A Grim Outlook.

CHAPTER FOUR

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

FULFILLING THE CHARTER: REACHING SOF'S POTENTIAL

After the fall of communism, the U.S. no longer faced the primary enemy it had focused on after WWII. The U.S. was the lone superpower at the end of the Cold War and it was unlikely that the Cold War military was the military force required for America's future. The military had to transform and analyzing change from a theoretical standpoint, the key is identifying the threat. While academia and the military wrestled with future requirements as a result of the shift in the global strategic environment, the events of 11 September provided the answer to the question of the threat. This event punctuated the growing threat to the U.S. as a result of the paradigm shift from a bi-polar world to a multi-polar world. The threat is not limited to Al-Qaeda, requiring a temporary solution, the threat is nations, groups, and transnational actors waging war in a way that the Cold War era military is not prepared for. Military change comes in different categories depending on perceived future threats and the best way to determine the required change is through historical analysis.

Waging war using guerilla tactics or through indirect means is not new. The U.S. military encountered this form of warfare from the time of America's westward expansion through Vietnam. Each time we encountered this form of warfare, the lessons and changes made were short lived and discarded to return to more conventional doctrine and organization. Forces organized for unconventional warfare and special operations were the victims of this return to a more traditional military during each period. To correct this cycle of creation and dismantling, legislation created a combatant command for special operations.

Historical analysis of the last major change in the strategic environment, the emergence of a bi-polar world during the Cold War, finds that America's response was the final step in the evolution of air power, a separate Air Force, to respond to the Soviet threat. Comparing the

evolution of the Air Force and its successful role in the Cold War with the current environmental shift, the Global War On Terrorism, the evolution of SOF is parallel and provides a solution to the new and evolving future threat.

USSOCOM, as a combatant command, is unique in its requirement to also perform certain functions of a military department, functions and roles of a Service as outlined in legislation and doctrine, as well as the missions of a combatant command and COCOM of its forces. This creates difficulties in identifying the true focus for USSOCOM because it must pay attention to everything. This problem is exacerbated by its new role as the supported command for the GWOT. There is little doubt that USSOCOM and SOF are uniquely suited to handle this global insurgency and the threat from low intensity conflicts in this new strategic environment. But, the current structure and organizational focus hinders effectiveness.

Stripping USSOCOM of its departmental and Service-like requirements so it can focus on the mission of a combatant command is to return to the period of competing military demands that plagued SOF for years. This is not an appropriate solution. Nor is redirecting the mission for GWOT and future threats to another organization so USSOCOM can better manage its roles and functions. USSOCOM is the only organization with the capability and experience to meet the requirements of the Global War On Terrorism and global insurgency. The solution is to complete SOF's evolution by creating the sixth independent Service Congressman Dan Daniel originally proposed for special operations forces. This solution allows the other Services to maintain their primary focus on conventional threats from countries like Korea and China without transforming to a force that must meet all threats in the contemporary and evolving operating environment. Creating a sixth Service also answers the question posed by the Secretary of Defense about the need for a new organization. The answer is not a new organization for the GWOT, but changing the best-suited organization, USSOCOM, into the sixth independent Service so it can better meet the challenges of the new security environment.

SECONDARY CONCLUSIONS

While the situation and requirements point towards creating a new Service, the answer is not clear where to put it within DOD. Three possibilities include creating a new department from the ASD SO/LIC, placing the new Service under an existing department, or keeping the Service separate without a department. The creation of a Service was the primary conclusion allowing for a separate command to fulfill missions and a Service with a Secretariat to manage the roles and functions.

Special operation's organizational culture is separate and distinct from the conventional military. Philip Selznick in *Leadership in Administration* describes the role of an organization's history and the importance of membership-selection criteria in defining and maintaining a distinct organizational culture. He says, "[It], is the result of a unique organizational history supported by selectivity in recruiting new organizational members and the use of training to inculcate organizational doctrine. The result is the emergence of special capabilities, or 'distinct competence,' and special limitations."¹³⁰ While USSOCOM has advanced SOF's organizational culture, the soldiers, sailors, and airmen identify themselves with their more dominant subculture as "Green Berets", Rangers, SEALs, and "Air Commandos" to mention a few. Combining SOF into a Service will help unify SOF's organizational culture without discarding their unique identities.

SOF doctrine resides generally in joint doctrine or within Services' doctrine. To date, only two doctrinal publications, USSOCOM Pub 1, *Special Operations in Peace and War* and USSOCOM Pub 3-11, *Multiservice Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures for Special Operations Forces in Nuclear, Biological, and Chemical Environments* were found during this research. SOF needs its own doctrine to better deal with the complexity of special operations. The current

¹³⁰ Marquis, 44-45.

system of joint publications and supporting Service doctrine does not provide the comprehensive, integrated body of knowledge necessary to deal with the new and evolving strategic environment.

ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS

USSOCOM Pub 1 should be updated to incorporate changes in the strategic environment, emerging threats, and the impact on SOF. Borrowing from Marine Corps Doctrinal Publication 1, *Warfighting*, the revision should capture the philosophy and essence of special operations warfare. This publication, put into the hands of all SOF warriors, will also aid in advancing SOF's organizational culture.

As SOF moves forward into this new environment, many of the doctrinal publications that deal with guerilla warfare and counterinsurgency are outdated or out of print. As an aid to SOF employment, a USSOCOM Pub for SOF in counterinsurgency ensures unity of action and unity of effort instead of separate Service doctrines.

The final recommendation is for a budget analysis and an analysis of the impact of realizing SOF's final evolutionary step of creating a separate Service with regards to SOF's enduring truths: humans are more important than hardware, quality is better than quantity, SOF cannot be mass-produced, and competent SOF cannot be created after emergencies occur.¹³¹

¹³¹ SOF *Posture Statement*, 30.

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