

Special Operations: Achieving Unified Direction in the Global War on Terrorism

**A Monograph
by
MAJ Michael E. James
U.S. Army**



**School of Advanced Military Studies
United States Army Command and General Staff College
Fort Leavenworth, Kansas**

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MAJ Michael E. James

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Approved by:

Michael S. Warburton, COL, SF

Monograph Director

Kevin C.M. Benson, COL, AR

Director,
School of Advanced
Military Studies

Robert F. Baumann, Ph.D.

Director,
Graduate Degree
Programs

Abstract

Special Operations: Achieving Unified Direction in the Global War on Terrorism by MAJ Michael E. James, U.S. Army, 52 pages.

The purpose of this monograph is to ascertain what organizational changes within SOF would enhance unified direction in the Global War on Terrorism?

In the wake of the 9/11 terrorist attacks, the United States Government began developing its national strategy to fight the Global War on Terrorism (GWOT). While the GWOT is a new direction for American policy it may well represent a paradigm shift for the Department of Defense (DoD)—a shift reflected in two important issues. First, was the realization that the GWOT was not a war fought with conventional forces but required forces uniquely qualified to operate against a terrorist foe. Second, the global focus for fighting terrorism would pose some challenges for the American military predominately organized along regional or geographic lines via the warfighting combatant commands.

DoD appeared to address both issues in 2004 when it revised the Unified Command Plan to designate the United States Special Operations Command (USSOCOM) as the lead for planning and synchronizing DoD operations for the GWOT. DoD had in USSOCOM a single point of entry responsible for GWOT military actions instead of four geographic commands conducting independent military operations. However, while DoD might have solved its unified direction issue, USSOCOM now had a significant challenge to overcome, how to carry out a global mission without owning any global terrain? Understandably, this has created some friction between USSOCOM and the geographic combatant commands and has made the process of achieving unified action more challenging.

As a functional combatant commander with limited authorities, USSOCOM will have to look internally for ways to mitigate the gap between planning and execution and still preserve unified direction. What changes are necessary for USSOCOM to achieve increased efficiency and greater responsiveness to both global and GCC requirements within the boundaries of its authorities as a functional combatant command?

This monograph analyzes USSOCOM's current organization and command and control for employment of forces in its role as both a supporting and supported combatant command within the framework of joint operations doctrine. The fundamentals of joint operations provide a common doctrinal framework for examining command structures and functions in the joint environment and, more importantly, it explains the joint environment in which SOF operates and to which it must adhere. This monograph concludes by providing three recommendations for organizational change within SOF to enhance USSOCOM's ability to achieve unified direction in the prosecution of the GWOT.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

In the wake of the 9/11 terrorist attacks, the United States Government began developing its national strategy to fight the Global War on Terrorism (GWOT). The National Strategy for Combating Terrorism characterizes the GWOT as a four dimensional strategy of Defeat, Deny, Diminish, and Defend,¹ that utilizes all the instruments of national power. It highlights the difficulty of finding and defeating an enemy in an era of increasing globalization. In the GWOT globalization has become both a benefit and bane as terrorist organizations exploit the same open borders, exchange of technology, and expansive media to plan and conduct the war of terror.

From a military perspective, the GWOT features an elusive enemy utilizing a range of asymmetric and unconventional tactics, operating on a global battlefield with noncontiguous areas of operations. While the GWOT is a new direction for American policy it may well represent a paradigm shift for the Department of Defense (DoD)—a shift reflected in two important issues. First, there was dawning realization as operations in Iraq and Afghanistan wore on that, the GWOT was not a war fought with conventional forces but required forces uniquely qualified to operate against a terrorist foe. The war required flexible and dynamic forces, special tactics, unconventional warfare, and the ability to operate in austere environments and the cultural awareness to operate in any country of the world. Second, the global focus for fighting terrorism would pose some challenges for the American military predominately organized along regional or geographic lines via the warfighting combatant commands. In the absence of any definable borders or boundaries, groups or individuals using terrorist tactics and networks have the entire globe at their disposal and can flow freely between countries and regions and coordinate across continents. Clearly, there would be problems coordinating operations for the GWOT across

¹ The White House, *National Strategy for Combating Terrorism* (Washington, D.C.: February 2003), 11-12.

geographic combatant commands unless DoD established some kind of unified direction to prosecute the GWOT.

DoD appeared to address both issues in 2004 when it revised the Unified Command Plan (UCP) to designate the United States Special Operations Command (USSOCOM) as the lead for planning and synchronizing DoD operations for the GWOT. USSOCOM is the unified command for special operations forces (SOF), which are the most suitable forces to lead the war against terrorists. SOF teams are small and highly skilled and can react quickly, independent of friendly forces. They are capable of direct and indirect action and the core missions of direct action (DA), unconventional warfare (UW), and foreign internal defense (FID) are the cornerstone of the GWOT military strategy. Additionally, now DoD had in USSOCOM a single point of entry responsible for GWOT military actions instead of five geographic commands conducting independent military operations. However, while DoD might have solved its unified direction issue, USSOCOM now had a significant challenge to overcome, how to carry out a global mission without owning any global terrain? As a functional combatant commander, USSOCOM traditionally has had a supporting relationship with the geographic combatant commands; that is USSOCOM provides special operations forces to the geographic combatant commanders (GCCs) to meet their mission requirements. Now with the additional role as a supported command, USSOCOM has new warfighting responsibilities, unusual for a functional combatant command. However, the UCP restricts USSOCOM's role as supported commander by limiting USSOCOM authorities to planning and synchronizing. The language of the UCP is key to understanding the limits: synchronize is more than coordination but less than execution. Unless specifically authorized by the Secretary of Defense (SecDef), USSOCOM does not have the authority to execute missions globally for the GWOT; that authority remains with the GCCs. Translated this means the USSOCOM can plan missions and allocate forces but can't tell the GCC how to do it. Understandably, this has created some friction between USSOCOM and the geographic combatant commands and has made the process of achieving unified action more challenging.

Unified action is the concept of synchronizing and integrating operations across military forces, non-military organizations, agencies and corporations. US Armed Forces contribute to unified action through unified direction by assigning a mission to a single commander and providing that commander with sufficient forces and authority for successful mission accomplishment.²

As a functional combatant commander with limited authorities, USSOCOM will have to look internally for ways to mitigate the gap between planning and execution and still preserve unified direction. What changes are necessary for USSOCOM to achieve increased efficiency and greater responsiveness to both global and GCC requirements within the boundaries of its authorities as a functional combatant command?

In simple terms, unified direction requires a mission, a force structure (organization) and authorities (command and control). USSOCOM's original organization and command and control (C2) were built to achieve unified direction in its traditional role as a supporting combatant command. Now, with the additional role as a supported combatant command, USSOCOM recognizes that current operational tempo and new mission demands require that USSOCOM change to adapt to the new environment. The purpose of this monograph is to analyze change in USSOCOM in the two remaining areas: organization and C2.

METHODOLOGY AND ORGANIZATION

The purpose of this monograph is to ascertain what organizational changes within SOF would enhance unified direction in the Global War on Terrorism. This monograph analyzes the organization and command and control of SOF within the framework of joint operations doctrine and evaluates options for USSOCOM to increase its regional and global support through changes in organizational structure and associated command relationships. The monograph contains five chapters.

² Department of Defense, Joint Publication 1, *Joint Warfare of the Armed Forces of the United States* (Washington, D.C.: 14 November 2000), V-8.

Chapter One is the introduction; it outlines the problem and its importance and relevance to the GWOT. It provides the method of analysis and limits the scope of the monograph as well as providing key definitions.

Chapter Two outlines a brief history of modern American SOF and those actions where organization and command and control were aligned for unified direction were the most effective. Chapter Two also highlights the significance of the Nunn-Cohen Amendment to the Goldwater-Nichols Department of Defense Reorganization Act of 1986 and importance to USSOCOM.

Chapter Three explains the joint framework in which USSOCOM operates and provides details on the left and right limits of USSOCOM actions as a functional combatant command. This already-established framework for analysis is the joint environment in which SOF currently operates and to which it must adhere. The framework will help to shape the analysis of USSOCOM and the recommendations for change. This monograph does not argue for a change in doctrine but for changes in organization and associated command relationship as allowed by doctrine.

Chapter Four analyzes USSOCOM's current organization and command and control for employment of forces in its role as both a supporting and supported combatant command using the framework established in Chapter Three.

Chapter Five details the recommendations for change in organization and command and control for different courses of action and pros and cons associated with each. Chapter Five concludes with a summary of the findings and a suggested way ahead.

SCOPE

This monograph addresses the employment of SOF as it relates to USSOCOM and four of the five the geographic combatant commands (the exception being USNORTHCOM). Because of current operations and the large employment of SOF to USCENTCOM in support of Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) and Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF), there is a wealth of

information and lessons learned that are invaluable for this analysis. In relation to Service components, this monograph does not refer to the Marine Special Operations Command (MARSOC) because of its relatively new creation. This monograph primarily focuses on Army SOF (ARSOF) because ARSOF headquarters have thus far provided the core element for the majority of JSOTFs in OIF and OEF. Additionally, the use of ARSOF organizations as JSOTFs is a specific impetus for change and its operational use clearly demonstrates the need for change in organization. The scope of this monograph is limited in several other key areas; it does not discuss two key elements of ARSOF—psychological operations (PSYOPS) or civil affairs (CA) forces because of their unique command and control arrangements for employment. Furthermore, it does not address integration within the interagency or multinational arena. Lastly, the special operations forces referred to are unclassified units.

KEY DEFINITIONS

Considerable confusion exists between definitions outlined in doctrine and their use in practice. Based on SOF now residing in all of the Services, this monograph will use the approved joint definitions contained in Joint Publication 1-02, *DOD Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms*, as amended through 17 December 2003.

CHAPTER TWO

HISTORY

Today, SOF are viewed as a necessary and vital part of the military—as acknowledged by naming USSOCOM as the supported command for GWOT. However, SOF’s role in US military operations has ebbed and flowed as military and civilian leaders alternately loved and hated the SOF capability. This chapter traces the organization and C2 of SOF from World War II and highlights instances where organization and C2 played a major role in the operations’ success or failure.

Throughout history, success by a small force against a strategic or operational objective usually has called for units with combinations of special equipment, training, people, or tactics that go beyond those found in conventional units. The need and opportunity to attack strategic or operational targets with small units drives the formation of special units with limited, but highly focused capabilities.³

Special Operations (SO) are characterized by the use of small units involved in direct and indirect military activities that are generally of an operational or strategic objective. These missions may be conducted in time of war or peace. Special operations are inherently joint and differ from conventional operations in degree of risk, operational techniques, modes of employment, independence from friendly support and dependence on detailed operational intelligence and indigenous assets.

In war, SOF conduct operational and strategic missions that directly or indirectly support the joint force commander’s campaign plan. Fully integrated into the joint campaign plan, SOF can help the joint force commander (JFC) seize the initiative, reduce risk, facilitate maneuver, and achieve decisive results by attacking operational and strategic targets.⁴

³ United States Special Operations Command, Publication 1, *Special Operations in Peace and War* (Tampa, FL: USSOCOM, 1996), 1; 3.

⁴ USSOCOM Pub 1, 2.

THE ORIGINS OF MODERN SPECIAL OPERATIONS FORCES

Modern SOF trace their origin to World War II. The creation of the Office of Strategic Services (OSS) in June 1942 marks the first high level recognition by the U.S. government of the need for an integrated special operations capability. William “Wild Bill” Donovan, Medal of Honor winner in World War I and close friend of President Roosevelt, argued that the United States should develop a capability like the British Special Operations Executive (SOE). Initially created by Roosevelt as the Office of the Coordinator of Information (OCOI) in July 1941, the OSS performed a range of functions from propaganda and intelligence analysis to espionage, sabotage, and guerrilla warfare. The OSS, as a new and inexperienced organization, worked closely with and leaned heavily on the expertise of the SOE. OSS special operations were conducted in theaters around the world, and included assisting French and Yugoslav resistance fighters against the Nazis, training and leading Kachin tribesmen in Burma, and fighting alongside legendary guerrilla leaders such as Mao Tse-Tung and Ho Chi Minh. While the OSS may be best known as the forerunner of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), it also propagated a range of special operations organizations. The wartime experience of the OSS provided, and still provides, much of the basis for special operations training and organization. The experience of the OSS established the build and decline cycle that would characterize special operations organizations over the next forty years.⁵

At the conclusion of World War II the OSS, along with virtually all other service SOF units, were disbanded leaving the U.S. military without significant special operations capability. Although the outbreak of the Korean War led to the reconstitution of some Ranger units, special operations as a whole played only a minor role. The covert special operations that did occur were conducted by the CIA, with support from military services. The Army provided officers and

⁵ Andrew L. Harris, *Presidents, Generals, and Green Berets: Explaining Cyclical Support of U.S. Special Operations Forces* (Ann Arbor, MI: UMI Dissertation Services, 1993), 50-51; Charles M. Simpson III, *Inside the Green Berets, The First Thirty Years: A History of the U.S. Army Special Forces* (Novato, CA: Presidio Press, 1983), 12.

enlisted men to the CIA to run the partisan guerrilla activities. However, the expanding number of cover operations led to command and control problems, and the military and CIA unconventional warfare operations never were synchronized completely during the war.⁶

As the Cold War developed, the Army came to recognize the potential utility of unconventional warfare to exploit popular disaffection behind the Iron Curtain as a way to contribute to the newly adopted U.S. strategy: containment of communist expansion. To provide this unconventional warfare capability, the U.S. Army organized its first Special Forces Group, the 10th Special Forces Group, in 1952 and forward deployed it to Germany. COL Aaron Bank, OSS operative in World War II, was the Group's first commander. In 1953, the 77th Special Forces Group was established and began conducting Mobile Training Team (MTT) missions into Southeast Asia. At the same time, the Army created the Psychological Warfare Center at Fort Bragg, North Carolina (known today as the John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School).⁷

Since the dissolution of the OSS in September 1945, U.S. special operations capabilities received little high level attention until the election of President John F. Kennedy in 1960. After the Bay of Pigs incident, the Kennedy administration revived interest in unconventional warfare and other special operations in the armed services. President Kennedy determined that the United States needed an ability to project flexible military force into situations that were short of war. He directed DoD to expand its unconventional warfare capabilities. Each service developed its own counterinsurgency capabilities, and special operations units proliferated, fueled by the nation's growing involvement in Vietnam, Laos, and communist-inspired insurgencies in Africa and Latin America.⁸

⁶ Susan L. Marquis, *Unconventional Warfare: Rebuilding U.S. Special Operations Forces* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institute Press, 1997), 11; USSOCOM Pub 1, 13.

⁷ Marquis, 11-12; USSOCOM Pub 1, 13.

⁸ Harris, 137; Marquis, 13; USSOCOM Pub 1, 15.

In Vietnam and Laos, U.S. Army Special Forces were key players in training and leading indigenous forces in unconventional warfare; conducting in-country and cross-border reconnaissance, border surveillance, target strikes, special air missions, prisoner recovery, and riverine and costal interdiction; and supporting many conventional operations. In addition to running their own programs, each Service's special operations forces worked with the CIA on various programs. One such program that originated and remained closely associated with the CIA was the Military Assistance Command Vietnam Studies and Observation Group (MACV-SOG). Activated in January 1964, MACV-SOG conducted the most covert, unconventional operations in Vietnam using Army Special Forces, Navy SEALs, Air Force special operators, and some Marines. This was what today would be called a joint special operations task force (JSOTF), whose missions included special reconnaissance (SR), direct action (DA), and personnel recovery (PR). In addition to operations in Southeast Asia, SOF were also active in many of the counterinsurgency operations that took place in Latin America during the 1960s.⁹

Vietnam saw the largest and most diverse use of special operations since World War II. Although each service for the first time developed its own special operations doctrine, the wartime experience of MACV-SOG highlighted the fact that the United States still had no joint SOF doctrine. After Vietnam, SOF once again went into rapid decline as the U.S. armed forces focused their attention on the Soviet threat in Europe. The Army reduced from seven active Special Forces Groups to three. The Navy reduced the number of SEALs to 50 percent of wartime levels. The Air Force scheduled all gunships for deactivation, programmed the long-range penetration aircraft for the reserves, and neglected deep-penetration helicopters. Special operations training suffered across the Services and opportunities for joint training were almost nonexistent.¹⁰

⁹ Marquis, 16; USSOCOM Pub 1, 15-17.

¹⁰ Marquis, 41; USSOCOM Pub 1, 17-18.

The debilitating effect of this reduction in forces was tragically demonstrated in the failed attempt by U.S. SOF to rescue the hostages held in Iran in April 1980—Operation RICE BOWL (renamed Operation EAGLE CLAW). The costly and embarrassing failure revealed serious shortcomings in the U.S. military's ability to plan and conduct a complex, high-risk special operation.¹¹

When the U.S. Embassy in Iran was taken over by radical students, President Carter ordered the formation of a Special Operations Task Force to attempt to rescue the American hostages being held in the embassy. A team of Army commandos, lead by U.S. Army Colonel Charlie Beckwith, were to be carried to a site near the embassy in Tehran by Navy helicopters, piloted by Marines. Once the hostages were rescued, these same helicopters were to be used to evacuate the rescued hostages and commandos after the assault on the embassy.¹²

On the night of the operation, eight helicopters left the deck of the USS Nimitz carrying the commandos. In route, the Task Force hit a dust storm. One helicopter was forced to land because of engine trouble. Another lost its ability to navigate because of equipment failure and had to turn back. The plan called for the helicopters to refuel at a site in the desert known as Desert One. During refueling operations one of the six remaining helicopters collided with a USAF C-130. Both the plane and helicopter burst into flames, killing eight task force members and severely burning another five. The Task Force was down to five helicopters, and at least six were needed to be able to effectively evacuate the commandos and hostages. The mission was aborted. The failed rescue attempt became widely referred to as Desert One.¹³

After Desert One, the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) established the Holloway Commission to examine the incident. Admiral Holloway and his commission identified several crucial causes of mission failure: the ad hoc nature of the organization, unclear command relationships, lack of

¹¹ USSOCOM Pub 1, 18.

¹² Marquis, 1-2.

¹³ Marquis, 1-2; Steven Emerson, *Secret Warriors: Inside the Covert Military Operations of the Reagan Era* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1988), 12-13.

dedicated forces specifically trained as a joint team, inadequate equipment (particularly tactical airlift) for the mission, and the possible over-concern with operational security (OPSEC).¹⁴

The commission recommended the creation of a special operations advisory panel to provide counsel on special operations related matters and the formation of a standing joint task force (JTF) for counterterrorism to report to the JCS. The commission believed that if a standing JTF was established, it could be manned with a core of highly trained individuals who would trust each other and work well together. This would facilitate the integration and synchronization of joint SOF and would allow detailed planning without OPSEC concerns. With a standing JTF, the seemingly competing values of OPSEC and coordination could both be preserved without the expense of the other. As a result of the commissions findings, a standing Joint Special Operations Task Force was established in 1980 reporting directly to the JCS.¹⁵

INSTITUTIONALIZING MODERN SPECIAL OPERATIONS

In the mid-eighties, some in Congress became concerned that DoD had not implemented much of the Holloway Commission report. In June 1983, the Senate Armed Services Committee (SASC), under the chairmanship of Senator Barry Goldwater (R-Arizona), began a two-year-long study of the Department of Defense which included SOF. The Goldwater-Nichols Department of Defense Reorganization Act of 1986 made sweeping changes in the DoD, but it did not address special operations deficiencies highlighted by Operation EAGLE CLAW, and concerns that the Department was not organized to meet the most likely threats of the present and future.¹⁶

There was a perception by some in Congress that absent Congressional involvement, conventional commanders and civilian leaders in DoD would never bring SOF up to the level it needed to be. A few visionaries on Capital Hill were determined to overhaul SOF. They

¹⁴ USSOCOM Pub 1, 18.

¹⁵ Marquis, 72-73.

¹⁶ United States Special Operations Command, *History: 15th Anniversary* (Tampa, FL: USSOCOM, 2002), 3; USSOCOM Pub 1, 20.

included Senators Sam Nunn (D-Georgia) and William S. Cohen (R-Maine), and Representative Dan Daniel (D-Virginia). Congressman Daniel had become convinced that SOF operational command and control was an endemic problem. Senator Nunn expressed growing frustration with the Services' practice of reallocating monies appropriated for SOF modernization to non-SOF programs. Senator Cohen agreed that the U.S. needed a clearer organizational focus and chain of command for special operations to deal with low-intensity conflicts. Some in Congress advocated the establishment of a sixth service, a new branch of the military. However, most believed a better plan was to put together a joint special operations command using the training and recruiting base of the branches of service already in being. Consequently, Senators Nunn and Cohen, supported by Representative Daniels among others, sponsored an amendment to the Goldwater-Nichols Act, which called for the creation of two new organizations. The first was the office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations and Low Intensity Conflict (ASD SO/LIC), with overall supervision of special operations and low intensity conflict activities of DoD. The second was the United States Special Operations Command (USSOCOM), charged with preparing SOF to carry out its assigned missions. Congress passed Public Law 99-611, known as the Nunn-Cohen Amendment, on November 14th, 1986, over the strong objections of DoD and lesser objections by the Reagan administration. The passage of the Nunn-Cohen Amendment was an unprecedented move by Congress. It was the first time the Congress had mandated the creation of a Unified Combatant Command—a responsibility previously left to the President. The U.S. Special Operations Command was now a reality.¹⁷

USSOCOM was formally established as a unified combatant command at MacDill Air Force Base, Florida, on 16 April 1987, commanded by a four-star flag or general officer with the title of Commander-in-Chief, U.S. Special Operations Command (USCINCSOC), known today

¹⁷ USSOCOM History, 3-4; USSOCOM Pub 1, 20; William G. Boykin, "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), 7-8.

as Commander, United States Special Operations Command (COMUSSOCOM). All SOF of the Army, Navy, and Air Force based in the United States were eventually placed under USSOCOM organized into three Service component commands: US Army Special Operations Command (USASOC); Naval Special Warfare Command (NAVSPECWARCOM); and Air Force Special Operations Command (AFSOC). Additionally, after much debate about whether the standing Joint Special Operations Task Force should become part of USSOCOM or continue to report to JCS without the hindrance of an interim layer of command, it was placed under USSOCOM as a subordinate unified command.¹⁸

The legislation that created USSOCOM called for a “warfighting” command but USSOCOM was neither a unified (regional) command nor a specified (single-service) command. In fact, it had many characteristics of a military service. USSOCOM’s responsibilities included: readiness of assigned forces and monitoring the readiness of overseas SOF; monitoring the professional development of all SOF personnel; developing joint SOF tactics, techniques and procedures; conducting specialized courses of instruction; training assigned forces; executing its own program and budget (its funding would come directly from Congress, and not from the services); and conducting research, development, and acquisition of special operations-peculiar items. These last two tasks give USSOCOM great flexibility in training and equipping its forces. However, because of the uniqueness of the command, SOF operational missions would be conducted under the command of the geographic combatant commanders. The only exception came when USSOCOM conducted limited special operations at the direction of the President or SecDef.¹⁹

The Nunn-Cohen Amendment also formalized, for the first time in law, the activities of special operations. During the early development of joint doctrine for special operations, these

¹⁸ Joint Special Operations University, *Special Operations Forces Reference Manual*. (Hurlburt Field, FL: JSOU Press, 2005), 2-1; Tom Clancy, Carl Steiner, and Tony Koltz, *Shadow Warriors: Inside the Special Forces* (New York: G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 2002), 217-219; USSOCOM Pub 1, 20.

¹⁹ Clancy, 218; JSOU, 2-1; Marquis, 149-150; USSOCOM Pub 1, 20.

activities were refined into the primary special operations missions: direct action (DA), special reconnaissance (SR), unconventional warfare (UW), foreign internal defense (FID), civil affairs (CA), psychological operations (PSYOPS), and counterterrorism (CT). Other legislated activities and missions specified by the President or SecDef were grouped under the heading of “collateral activities”: security assistance (SA); humanitarian assistance (HA); antiterrorism (AT); counterdrug (CD); personnel recovery (PR); and special activities. The ability to execute these collateral activities stems from SOF’s inherent capabilities to conduct the principle special operations missions.²⁰

THE MATURING OF MODERN SPECIAL OPERATIONS

The first two major operations following the creation of USSOCOM rapidly sped the maturing process of USSOCOM. In late 1989, SOF organized into a 4,400-man Joint Special Operations Task Force (JSOTF) and spearheaded Operation JUST CAUSE, the invasion of Panama. Operation JUST CAUSE validated the creation of joint SOF capabilities, and specifically demonstrated the value of high levels of training, clear command relationships, and effective interoperability procedures.²¹

Less than one year after Operation JUST CAUSE, special operations units were again deployed, this time to Saudi Arabia for Operation DESERT SHIELD. SOF involvement in Operation DESERT STORM eventually reached a joint operating strength of nearly 10,000 personnel. Following Operation DESERT STORM, SOF recognized that the complexity of special operations within a theater campaign warranted putting a flag or general officer in command of the Theater Special Operations Command (TSOC).²²

Throughout the nineties, SOF became the force of choice for geographic combatant commanders; for instance, during any given week in 1996, more than 4,600 SOF personnel were

²⁰ Clancy, 217-218; Marquis, 146; USSOCOM Pub 1, 30.

²¹ Clancy, 391; USSOCOM Pub 1, 21.

²² Clancy, 449; USSOCOM Pub 1, 22-24.

deployed in sixty-five countries. SOF forces have been involved in virtually every contingency operation, as well as thousands of joint training exchanges, peacetime engagement activities, and humanitarian relief operations. Major operations that involved significant SOF participation include: Operation PROVIDE COMFORT in Northern Iraq and Turkey; Operations PROVIDE RELIEF and RESTORE HOPE in Somalia; Operations SUPPORT and UPHOLD DEMOCRACY in Haiti; Operations JOINT ENDEAVOR/JOINT GUARD/JOINT FORGE in Bosnia-Herzegovina; Operation DESERT THUNDER in Kuwait; Operations ALLIED FORGE and JOINT GUARDIAN in Kosovo; as well as noncombatant evacuation operations (NEO) in Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Albania. Today, more than eighty-percent of SOF are committed to Operation ENDURING FREEDOM (OEF) in Afghanistan and Operation IRAQI FREEDOM (OIF) in Iraq. The future promises to be even more demanding.²³

²³ Clancy, 513-516, 521.

CHAPTER THREE

BASIS FOR ANALYSIS

Long term success in the Global War on Terrorism depends largely upon SOF's ability to rapidly employ a sustainable mix of capabilities with little warning—requiring agile, adaptive, and responsive command structures, but how does one determine how capable SOCOM is of meeting its expanding mission set? It is useful to analyze the employment of SOF in terms of the fundamentals of joint operations because it serves two purposes: 1) the fundamentals of joint operations provides a common doctrinal framework for examining command structures and functions in the joint environment and 2) it explains the joint environment in which SOF operates and to which it must adhere.

Although the fundamentals of joint operations found in joint doctrine are listed as distinct and independent from the others, the reality is that they are not mutually exclusive. A change in one will affect changes in the others, and not always in a consistent manner. While this interdependency provides much flexibility for commanders to tailor the force, it creates some complexity in analysis. This does not lessen the usefulness of the framework but it does highlight the intricacies of operating in the joint environment.

JOINT OPERATIONS

The term “unified action” describes the broad scope of activities taking place within joint commands for the purpose of achieving unity of effort. Military support of unified action is facilitated by joint operations under a single commander, in execution of a single plan, that encompass all assigned and supporting military and nonmilitary elements. The primary consideration for combatant command unified action is the primacy of the military objectives that directly relate to national security and military strategies.²⁴

²⁴ Joint Pub-1, V-7.

Unified action begins with unified direction. This is normally accomplished by assigning a mission or objective to a joint force commander (JFC), and providing that commander sufficient forces, resources, and authority to accomplish the assigned mission or objective. Within this general category of operations, subordinate commanders of assigned or attached forces conduct either single-Service or joint operations to support the overall mission. Unified action synchronizes and/or integrates these single-Service and joint operations to achieve unity of effort in the operational area.²⁵

ORGANIZATION

Joint forces are specifically designated, composed of significant elements (assigned or attached) of two or more Military Departments, and commanded by a JFC with a joint staff. Joint forces are established at three levels: unified commands, subordinate unified commands, and Joint Task Forces (JTFs).²⁶

A unified (combatant) command is a standing organization with a broad continuing mission necessitating strategic direction under a single commander established and so designated by the President through the SecDef. The UCP is the document approved by the President that sets forth basic guidance to all unified combatant commanders; establishes their missions, responsibilities, and force structure; delineates the general geographic area of responsibility (AOR) for geographic combatant commanders; and specifies functional responsibilities for functional combatant commanders. All forces (except those as noted in title 10, US Code (USC), section 162 to carry out functions of the Secretary of a Military Department) are assigned to combatant commands by the SecDef's "Forces for Unified Commands" memorandum.²⁷

²⁵ Department of Defense, Joint Publication 0-2, *Unified Action Armed Forces* (Washington, D.C.: 10 July 2001), I-5; Joint Pub-1, V-8.

²⁶ Department of Defense, Joint Publication 3-0, *Doctrine for Joint Operations* (Washington, D.C.: 10 September 2001), II-11 – II-12.

²⁷ Joint Pub 0-2, I-3, III-2.

Subordinate unified commands (also called sub-unified commands) are standing organizations established by commanders of unified commands, with authorization from SecDef, to conduct operations on a continuing basis and may be established on a geographical area or functional basis also.²⁸

A Joint Task Force (JTF) is an ad-hoc organization that is constituted and so designated by the SecDef, a combatant commander, a sub-unified commander, or an existing JTF commander for the purpose of achieving a specific mission or limited objective. A JTF is a joint force and may also be established on a geographical area or functional basis.²⁹

Establishing a joint force on a geographic basis is the most commonly used method to assign responsibility for continuing operations. A JFC assigned a geographic area is considered an area commander. Only commanders of geographic combatant commands are assigned areas of responsibility. Subordinate JFCs are normally assigned other operational areas. Sometimes a joint force based solely on military functions without respect to a specific geographic region is more suitable to fix responsibility for certain types of continuing operations. The commander of a joint force established on a functional basis is assigned a functional responsibility by the establishing authority.³⁰

JFCs have the authority to organize forces to best accomplish the assigned mission based on their concept of operations. The JFC will establish subordinate commands, assign responsibilities, establish or delegate appropriate command relationships, and establish coordinating instructions for their component commanders. Sound organization should provide for unity of effort, centralized planning and direction, and decentralized execution.³¹

All joint forces contain Service components because of Title 10 administrative and logistic requirements. Administrative and logistic support for joint forces are provided through

²⁸ Ibid., V-9.

²⁹ Ibid., V-10.

³⁰ Ibid., V-1 – V2.

³¹ Ibid.

Service component commands. The JFC also may conduct operations through the Service component commanders or, at lower echelons, through Service force commanders.³²

Functional components may be established by JFCs when forces of two or more Services must operate in the same dimension. Functional component commands can be appropriate when forces from two or more Services must operate in the same dimension or medium or there is a need to accomplish a distinct aspect of the assigned mission. Functional component commands do not constitute a joint force. Most often, joint forces are organized with a combination of Service and functional component commands with operational responsibilities (see figure 1).³³

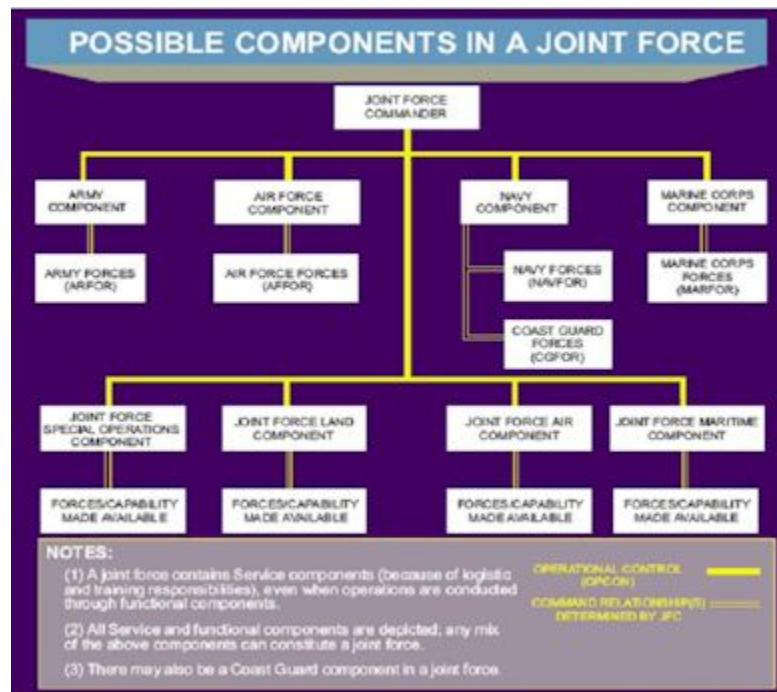


Figure 1. Possible Components in a Joint Force³⁴

COMMAND AND CONTROL

Command is central to all military action, and unity of command, a principle of war, is central to unity of effort, a fundamental of joint warfare. Command and control (C2) is the

³² Ibid., V-3.

³³ Ibid., V-4.

³⁴ Ibid., V-3.

exercise of authority and direction by a properly designated commander over assigned and attached forces. Command, the lawful authority of a commander, and control, the regulation of forces and functions to accomplish the mission in accordance with the commander's intent, is the most important function undertaken by a JFC. Command confers the authority to assign missions and to demand accountability for their attainment. C2 is the means by which a JFC synchronizes and/or integrates joint force activities in order to achieve unity of command and unity of effort. C2 ties together all the operational functions and tasks and applies to all levels of war and echelons of command across the range of military operations.³⁵

C2 of joint operations begins by establishing unity of command through the designation of a JFC with the requisite authority to accomplish assigned tasks using an uncomplicated chain of command. Unity of effort in joint operations is enhanced through the application of the flexible range of command relationships. Joint force command relationships are an array of options JFCs can use to adapt the organization of assigned forces to situational requirements and arrange component operations in time, space, and purpose. The relationships between and among force elements follow a set of principles to establish a chain of command, facilitate the best possible utilization of all available capabilities, and ensure unified action in mission accomplishment. The four command relationships are combatant command (command authority) (COCOM), that only combatant commanders can exercise; operational control (OPCON); tactical control (TACON); and support.³⁶

COCOM is the command authority over assigned forces vested only in the commanders of combatant commands by title 10, USC, section 164, or as directed by the President in the Unified Command Plan (UCP), and cannot be delegated or transferred. COCOM is the authority of a combatant commander to perform those functions of command over assigned forces involving organizing and employing commands and forces, assigning tasks, designating

³⁵ Joint Pub 0-2, III-13; Joint Pub 1, V-7.

³⁶ Joint Pub 0-2, III-14; Joint Pub 1, V-8; Joint Pub 3-0, II-6.

objectives, and giving authoritative direction over all aspects of military operations, joint training, (or, in the case of USSOCOM, training of assigned forces), and logistics necessary to accomplish the missions assigned to the command. COCOM should be exercised through the commanders of subordinate organizations. Normally, this authority is exercised through subordinate JFCs and Service and/or functional component commanders. COCOM provides full authority to organize and employ commands and forces as the combatant commander considers necessary to accomplish assigned missions.³⁷

OPCON is the command authority that may be exercised by commanders at any echelon at or below the level of combatant command and may be delegated within the command.

OPCON is inherent in COCOM and is the authority to perform those functions of command over subordinate forces involving organizing and employing commands and forces, assigning tasks, designating objectives, and giving authoritative direction necessary to accomplish the mission.

OPCON includes authoritative direction over all aspects of military operations and joint training necessary to accomplish assigned missions. OPCON should be exercised through the commanders of subordinate organizations; normally, this authority is exercised through subordinate JFCs and Service and/or functional component commanders. OPCON provides full authority to organize commands and forces and employ those forces as the commander considers necessary to accomplish assigned missions. OPCON in and of itself does not include authoritative direction for logistics or matters of administration, discipline, internal organization, or unit training. These elements of COCOM must be specifically delegated by the combatant commander. OPCON does include the authority to delineate functional responsibilities and operational area of subordinate JFCs.³⁸

TACON is the command authority over assigned or attached forces or commands or military capability made available for tasking, that is limited to the detailed direction and control

³⁷ Joint Pub 0-2, III-3 – III-6.

³⁸ Ibid., III-7 – III-8.

of movements or maneuvers within the operational area necessary to accomplish assigned tasks and missions or tasks. TACON is inherent in OPCON and may be delegated to and exercised by commanders at any echelon at or below the level of combatant command. TACON provides sufficient authority for controlling and directing the application of force or tactical use of combat support assets within the assigned mission or task. TACON does not provide organizational authority or authoritative direction for administration and logistic support; the commander of the parent unit continues to exercise these authorities unless otherwise specified in the establishing directive. TACON typically is exercised by functional component commanders over military capability made available to the functional component for tasking.³⁹

Support is also a command authority. A support relationship is established by a superior commander between subordinate commanders when one organization should aid, protect, complement, or sustain another force. Support may be exercised by commanders at any echelon at or below the level of combatant command. The Secretary of Defense establishes support relationships between the combatant commands for the planning and execution of joint operations. This ensures that the tasked combatant commander(s) receives the necessary support. JFCs may establish support relationships within the joint force to enhance unity of effort for given operational tasks, emphasize or clarify priorities, provide a subordinate with an additional capability, or combine the effects of similar assets. Several categories of support have been defined for use within a combatant command as appropriate to better characterize the support that should be given. Support relationships may be categorized as general, mutual, direct, and close.⁴⁰

The authority vested in a commander must be commensurate with the responsibility assigned. Levels of authority include the four types of command relationships: COCOM, OPCON, TACON, and support. In addition, there are another three authorities: administrative control (ADCON), coordinating authority, and direct liaison authorized (DIRLAUTH).

³⁹ Ibid., III-8.

⁴⁰ Ibid., III-9 – III-10.

ADCON is the direction or exercise of authority over subordinate or other organizations with respect to administration and support including organization of Service forces, control of resources and equipment, personnel management, unit logistics, individual and unit training, readiness, mobilization, demobilization, discipline, and other matters not included in the operational missions of the subordinate or other organizations. ADCON is synonymous with administration and support responsibilities identified in Title 10, USC. This is the authority necessary to fulfill Military Department statutory responsibilities for administration and support. ADCON may be delegated to and exercised by commanders of Service forces assigned to a combatant command at any echelon at or below the level of Service component command. ADCON is subject to the command authority of combatant commanders.⁴¹

Coordinating authority is the authority delegated to a commander or individual for coordinating specific functions and activities involving forces of two or more Military Departments, two or more joint force components, or two or more forces of the same Service. The commander or individual has the authority to require consultation between the agencies involved, but does not have the authority to compel agreement.⁴²

DIRLAUTH is that authority granted by a commander, at any level, to a subordinate to directly consult or coordinate an action with a command or agency within or outside of the granting command.⁴³

It is important to note that forces, not command relationships, are transferred between commands. A force assigned or attached to a combatant command may be transferred from that command only as directed by the Secretary of Defense. When forces are transferred between combatant commands, the command relationship the gaining commander will exercise over those forces, and the losing commander will relinquish, will be specified by the SecDef. Establishing

⁴¹ Ibid., III-11.

⁴² Ibid., III-11 – III-12.

⁴³ Ibid., III-12.

authorities for subordinate unified commands and JTFs may direct the assignment or attachment of their forces to those subordinate commands as appropriate. When the transfer of forces to a joint force will be permanent, or for an unknown but long period of time, forces should be reassigned. When the transfer of forces to a joint force is temporary, the forces are attached to the gaining command and JFCs will exercise OPCON or TACON, as appropriate, over the attached forces.⁴⁴

The primary emphasis in command relations should be to keep the chain of command short and simple so that it is clear who is in charge and of what. Unity of command is the guiding principle of war in the exercise of command. Continuity of command is essential for continuity of operations. The components of a joint force may be comprised of Service elements or functional elements such as special operations forces. JFCs may organize their forces as necessary to accomplish the command's mission. Nevertheless, subordinate units should be permitted to function within the parameters of their design and capabilities, mission and circumstances permitting. The role of component commanders in a joint force merits special attention. Component commanders are first expected to orchestrate the activity of their own forces, branches, and warfare communities. In addition, they must understand how their own capabilities best integrate into the overall design to most effectively satisfy the JFC's intent. Component commanders are also the primary sources of advice to the JFC and their fellow component commanders on their requirements for support from, and their capabilities for support to, other component commanders.⁴⁵

Supported and supporting relationships between commands facilitate unified action in planning and conducting operations. Support is a command authority established by a superior commander between subordinate commanders when an organization should aid, protect, complement, or sustain another force. It may be exercised by commanders at any echelon at or

⁴⁴ Ibid., III-2 – III-3.

⁴⁵ Joint Pub 1, V-8 – V-9.

below the level of combatant command. This includes the NCA designating a support relationship between combatant commanders as well as within a combatant command. Within a combatant command, JFCs may designate one of their components or subordinate joint forces as a supported activity for a certain purpose and time. In fulfilling that responsibility, the supported commanders must coordinate, synchronize, and integrate the activities of the supporting commands in conjunction with their own forces under the JFC's overall supervision and authority. More than one supported command may be designated simultaneously and components may simultaneously receive and provide support in different mission areas, functions, or operations.⁴⁶

The supported commander has authority to exercise general direction of the supporting effort, unless limited by a specific directive. This includes designating and establishing priorities for targets or objectives, timing and duration of the supporting action, effects of the action, and other instructions necessary for coordination and efficiency of the operation for which the support is provided.⁴⁷

The supporting commander is responsible for determining the forces, tactics, methods, procedures, and communications to employ in providing support. The supporting commander is also responsible for ascertaining the needs of the supported force and taking action to fulfill them within existing capabilities, consistent with priorities and requirements of other assigned tasks.⁴⁸

Centralized planning and direction, and decentralized execution facilitate integration of all elements of a joint force. That is, integration is accomplished through the development of command and theater strategies, campaign and operation plans, operation orders and other mission directives as well as forms of organization that achieve the greatest synergy and make the best use of the combined effects of all available capabilities. The joint force's organization for

⁴⁶ Ibid., V-9 – V-10.

⁴⁷ Ibid., V-10.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

combat should promote integration and may include Service and functional component commands. The combatant commander has Service component commands comprising the force elements assigned from the particular Service. Combatant commanders and subordinate subunified and joint task force commanders have the authority to centralize selected functions and establish functional component commands to perform those functions. The functional component commander is normally a Service component commander with the preponderance of forces and the capability for performing required command and control functions. Regardless of the particular form of organization, the principles of war and military operations other than war, and the fundamentals of joint warfare, apply to the operations of the joint force and its components, Service components, and functional components in order to assure unified action.⁴⁹

JOINT SPECIAL OPERATIONS

Unless otherwise directed by the SecDef, all SOF based in the continental United States are assigned to USSOCOM and are therefore under the COCOM of the Commander, USSOCOM (CDRUSSOCOM). SOF assigned to a geographic combatant command are under the COCOM of the respective geographic combatant commander. The geographic combatant commander normally exercises COCOM of all assigned and OPCON of all attached SOF through the TSOC commander.⁵⁰

ORGANIZATION

The United States Special Operations Command (USSOCOM), headquartered at MacDill Air Force Base, Florida, is the unified combatant command for SOF. The active duty SOF elements assigned to COMUSSOCOM are organized into four essential components: U.S. Army Special Operations command (USASOC) is headquartered at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, and

⁴⁹ Ibid., V-10 – V-11.

⁵⁰ Department of Defense, Joint Publication 3-05, *Doctrine for Joint Special Operations* (Washington, D.C.: 17 December 2003), III-2 – III-3.

consists primarily of the Special Forces Groups, 75th Ranger Regiment, Psychological Operations, a Special Operations Aviation Regiment, Civil Affairs Groups, signals and other support units; The Navy Special Warfare Command (NAVSPECWARCOM) is located at Coronado, California, providing Naval Special Warfare Groups composed of SEAL Teams, Special Boat Units and SEAL Delivery Vehicle Teams; The Air Force Special Operations Command (AFSOC) at Hurlburt Field, Florida, provides USSOCOM with air-support; and the fourth command, a sub-unified command, located at Pope Air Force Base, North Carolina, responsible for studying the special operations requirements and techniques of all services to ensure standardization (see figure 2).⁵¹



Figure 2. USSOCOM Organization⁵²

United States Army Special Operations Command (USASOC) is the Army Service Component of the USSOCOM. It provides trained and ready Special Forces, Rangers, Special Operations Aviation, Psychological Operations, and Civil Affairs forces to USSOCOM for

⁵¹ JSOU, 2-9; Terry White, *Swords of Lightning: Special Forces and the Changing Face of Warfare* (London: Brassey's, 1992), 11.

⁵² Graphic from JSOU briefing to U.S. Army CGSC SOF track students AY 04-05. Modified by author.

deployment around the world. As a major Army command, USASOC reports directly to the Department of the Army for service guidance. USASOC commands both the active Army and US Army Reserve Special Operations Forces based in CONUS. It also provides oversight of the Army National Guard Special Operations Force readiness, organization, training, and employment in coordination with the National Guard Bureau and State Adjutants General. USASOC is responsible for the development of unique ARSOF doctrine, TTP, and material.⁵³

The major subordinate commands of USASOC are the United States Army Special Forces Command (USASFC), the United States Army Civil Affairs and Psychological Operations Command (USACAPOC), the Special Operations Support Command (SOSCOM), the 75th Ranger Regiment, the 160th Army Special Operations Aviation Regiment (SOAR), and the United States Army John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School (see figure 3).⁵⁴

⁵³ Department of the Army, Field Manual 3-05.20, *Special Forces Operations* (Washington, D.C.: 10 July 2001), 4-1; JSOU, 3-1.

⁵⁴ FM 3-05.20, 4-1.

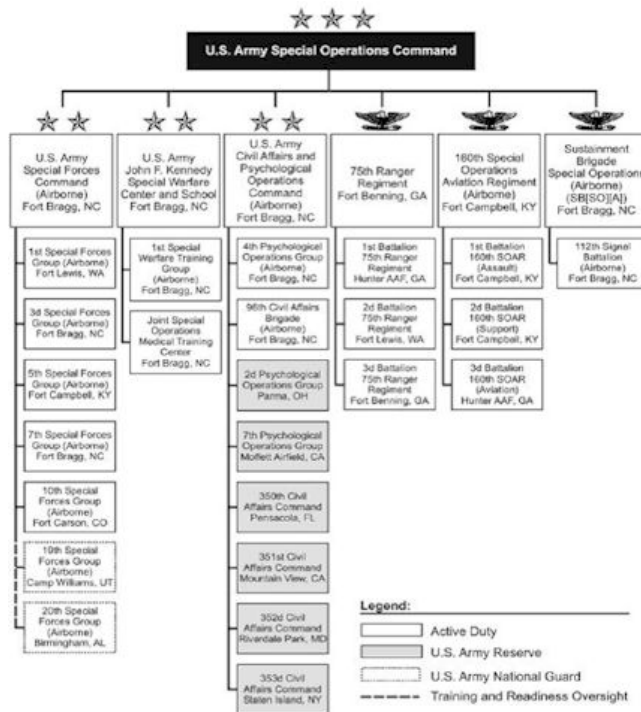


Figure 3. ARSOF Organization⁵⁵

United States Army Special Forces Command (USASFC) is a table of distribution and allowances (TDA), nondeploying major subordinate command (MSC) of USASOC. Its mission is to train, validate, and prepare Special Forces units to deploy and execute operational requirements for the geographic combatant commanders. USASFC exercises command authority consistent with assignment of OPCON over five active component groups. Additionally, it exercises training oversight of two Army National Guard groups. Each Special Forces Group is regionally oriented to support one of the geographic combatant commanders. Upon deployment of the designated units from CONUS, OPCON is relinquished by USASFC and gained by the geographic CINC or other appropriate authority.⁵⁶

The Special Forces Group constitutes the largest combat element of Army SOF. The SFG consists of a headquarters and headquarters company (HHC), a support company, and three

⁵⁵ Department of the Army, Field Manual 100-25, *Doctrine for Army Special Operations* (Washington D.C.: 1 August 1999), 3-2.

⁵⁶ FM 3-05.20, 4-2; JSOU, 3-8.

Special Forces Battalions. The SFG is an extremely flexible organization designed to have self-contained C2 and support elements for long duration missions. Because of this, the SFG has the capacity to form the nucleus of the Army special operations task force (ARSOTF). The SFG is also normally identified as the Army service force component of a JSOTF and exercises administrative control (ADCON) of ARSOF.⁵⁷

As stated earlier, SOF not assigned to USSOCOM but rather assigned to a geographic combatant command are under the COCOM of the respective geographic combatant commander. To provide the necessary unity of command, each geographic combatant commander (except for US Northern Command) has established a Theater Special Operations Command (TSOC) as a subunified command within the geographic combatant command. The geographic combatant commander normally exercises COCOM of all assigned and OPCON of all attached SOF through the TSOC commander. TSOCs offer several advantages to regional commanders. As peacetime elements, the TSOCs are the nucleus around which a Joint Special Operations Task Force (JSOTF) can be structured. They provide clear chain of command for in-theater SOF as well as the staff expertise to plan, conduct, and support joint SO in the theater's area of responsibility. These special operations may include General Purpose Forces (GPF) under operational control (OPCON) to a TSOC. The TSOCs normally exercise OPCON of SOF (except PSYOP and CA) within each regional combatant commander's area of responsibility. Additionally, the TSOCs ensure that SOF personnel fully participate in theater mission planning and that theater component commanders are thoroughly familiar with SOF operational and support requirements and capabilities. While USSOCOM provides funding and personnel for the TSOCs, each TSOC reports directly to the regional combatant commander.⁵⁸

The four TSOCs established by the geographic combatant commanders are Special Operations Command Central (SOCCENT), Special Operations Command Europe (SOCEUR),

⁵⁷ FM 3-05.20, 3-1 – 3-2.

⁵⁸ Joint Pub 3-05, III-3 – III-4; JSOU, 2-10.

Special Operations Command South (SOCSOUTH), and Special Operations Command Pacific (SOCPAC).⁵⁹

SOCCENT, headquartered at MacDill AFB, Florida, is a subordinate unified command of US Central Command (USCENTCOM). It is responsible for planning special operations throughout the USCENTCOM area of responsibility (AOR); planning and conducting peacetime joint/combined special operations training exercises; and orchestrating command and control of peacetime and wartime special operations as directed. SOCCENT exercises operational control of attached SOF, which deploy for the execution of training and for operational missions in the USCENTCOM AOR as directed by Commander, CENTCOM. When directed by Commander, CENTCOM, SOCCENT forms the nucleus of a JSOTF. SOCCENT has no permanently assigned forces.⁶⁰

SOCEUR is a subordinate unified command of US European Command (USEUCOM), headquartered at Vaihingen, Germany. Commander, SOCEUR (COMSOCEUR), functions as the director of the European Command Special Operations Directorate and is one of five commanders in the US European AOR who may be designated to establish or lead a European Joint Task Force (JTF). In either role COMSOCEUR reports directly to Commander, EUCOM. SOCEUR exercises OPCON of Army, Navy, and Air Force SOF, which deploy for the execution of training and operational missions in the US European Command (USEUCOM) AOR. During selected wartime and contingency operations, COMSOCEUR is routinely tasked by Commander, EUCOM, to establish a JSOTF and deploy to a forward location(s) to provide command, control, communications, and intelligence (C3I) for assigned US and allied SOF as required. SOCEUR exercises OPCON of the following theater based SOF: one Army Special Forces Battalion, one

⁵⁹ JSOU, 2-10.

⁶⁰ JSOU, 2-12.

Air Force Special Operations Group, three Air Force Special Operations Squadrons, one Air Force Special Tactics Squadron, and two Naval Special Warfare Units.⁶¹

SOCSOUTH is a subordinate unified command of US Southern Command (USSOUTHCOM), headquartered at Miami, Florida. SOCSOUTH exercises OPCON for Army, Navy, and Air Force SOF, which deploy forward for the execution of training and for operational missions in the USSOUTHCOM AOR. When directed, SOCSOUTH forms and deploys a JSOTF headquarters providing C3I connectivity during contingencies. SOCSOUTH exercises OPCON of the following assigned SOF: one Army Special Forces Company, one Army Special Operations Aviation Company, and one Naval Special Warfare Unit (NSWU).⁶²

SOC PAC is a US Pacific Command (USPACOM) subordinate unified command with headquarters collocated with USPACOM at Camp Smith, Hawaii. SOCPAC conducts theater special operations; exercises OPCON of in-theater and apportioned SOF; and is executive agent for all special operations (less CA/PSYOP). COMSOCPAC is the special advisor for special operations on the PACOM staff. SOCPAC is the lead element for PACOM's Pacific Situation Assessment Team (PSAT) and is PACOM's standing JTF-510. JTF-510 is a tailored, rapidly deployable TF designed to deploy with 6 hours of notification to conduct crisis response operations such as NEO, HA/DR, and support to CT. COMSOCPAC also has the mission of executing JSOTF operations. SOCPAC exercises OPCON of the following theater assigned SOF: one Army Special Forces Battalion, one Special Operations Aviation Regiment (SOAR) detachment, one Naval Special Warfare Unit, and one Air Force Special Operations Group which includes two Air Force Special Operations Squadrons and one Air Force Special Tactics Squadron.⁶³

⁶¹ Ibid., 2-13.

⁶² Ibid., 2-16.

⁶³ Ibid., 2-14 – 2-15.

COMMAND AND CONTROL

USSOCOM is a unique unified command in DoD in that it has the responsibilities of a functional combatant command, has Service-like responsibilities, and when established as a supported command, plans and conducts certain SO missions worldwide. CDRUSSOCOM exercises COCOM over assigned SOF through the commanders of its Service components or its subordinate unified command.⁶⁴

In its role as a functional combatant command, USSOCOM provides SOF on a temporary basis to other combatant commands for operational employment. When transferred, the forces are attached to the gaining combatant command with the geographic combatant commander normally exercising OPCON over them.⁶⁵

When directed, CDRUSSOCOM will plan and conduct SO missions as the supported commander. In certain situations, the President or Secretary of Defense, depending upon the specific mission requirements, could choose to exercise OPCON directly over SOF for a particular operation without any intervening levels of command.⁶⁶

Given the ability of SOF to operate unilaterally; independently as part of the overall campaign; or in support of a conventional commander; effective integration is dependent on a robust C2 structure. Special Operations (SO) require a responsive and unified C2 structure. Layering of headquarters within the SO chain of command decreases responsiveness, creates an opportunity for a security compromise, and is unnecessary. Successful execution of SO require centralized, responsive, and unambiguous C2 by an appropriate SOF C2 element. The limited window of opportunity normally associated with the majority of SOF missions, as well as the sensitive nature of many of these missions, requires a C2 structure that is above all, responsive to

⁶⁴ Joint Pub 3-05, III-2.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Ibid., III-2 – III-3.

the needs of the operational unit. Normally, C2 of SOF should be executed within the SOF chain of command and may be tailored for a specific mission or operation.⁶⁷

The TSOC is the primary theater SOF organization capable of performing broad continuous missions uniquely suited to SOF capabilities. The TSOC is also the primary mechanism by which a geographic combatant commander exercises C2 over SOF. The TSOC commander has three principle roles: Joint Force Commander; Theater Special Operations Advisor; Joint Force Special Operations Component Commander.⁶⁸

As the commander of a subunified command, the TSOC commander is a JFC. As such, he has the authority to plan and conduct joint operations as directed by the geographic combatant commander and exercises OPCON of assigned commands and forces and normally over attached forces as well. The TSOC commander may establish JTFs that report directly to him, such as a joint special operations task force (JSOTF), in order to plan and execute these missions.⁶⁹

As the theater SO Advisor, the TSOC commander advises the geographic combatant commander and the other component commanders on the proper employment of SOF. The TSOC commander may develop specific recommendations for the assignment of SOF in theater and opportunities for SOF to support the overall theater campaign plan. The role of theater SO advisor is best accomplished when the geographic combatant commander establishes the TSOC commander as a special staff officer on the theater staff (in addition to his duties as a commander—i.e., “dual hatted”). In this case, the TSOC commander may appoint a deputy as his representative to the theater staff for routine day-to-day staff matters.⁷⁰

When designated by the geographic combatant commander, the TSOC commander will function as a Joint Force Special Operations Component Commander (JFSOCC). This will normally be the case when the geographic combatant commander establishes functional

⁶⁷ Ibid., III-4.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

component commanders for operations, absent the establishment of a JTF. The TSOC commander can also be designated the JFSOCC within a JTF if the scope of the operations conducted by the JTF warrant it. When a joint force special operations component is established and combined with elements from one or more allied or coalition nations, it becomes a combined forces special operations component and its commander becomes a combined forces special operations component commander.⁷¹

For the conduct of special operations, a type of SOF JTF, known as a Joint Special Operations Task Force (JSOTF), may be formed to support a JFC in the command and control of assigned SOF. A JSOTF is a JTF composed of SO units from more than one Service, formed to carry out a specific SO or prosecute SO in support of a theater campaign or other operations. A JSOTF may have conventional non-special operations units assigned or attached to support the conduct of specific missions.⁷²

A JSOTF, like any JTF, is normally established by a JFC (e.g., a combatant commander, a subordinate unified commander such as a TSOC commander, or a JTF commander). For example, a geographic combatant commander could establish a JTF to conduct operations in a specific region of the theater. Then either the geographic combatant commander or the JTF commander could establish a JSOTF, subordinate to that JTF, to plan and execute SO. Likewise, a TSOC commander could establish a JSOTF to focus on a specific mission or region assigned by the geographic combatant commander. If geographically oriented, multiple JSOTFs will normally be assigned different operational areas. A JSOTF may also be established as a joint organization and deployed as an entity from outside of theater.⁷³

Within a JTF, if only one JSOTF is established, the CDRJSOTF will be dual-hatted as the JFSOCC. When a JSOTF is formed to directly support a combatant command headquarters, the

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Joint Pub 3-05, III-6; JSOU, 2-17; USSOCOM Pub 1, 57-58.

⁷³ Joint Pub 3-05, III-6.

TSOC commander normally acts as the CDRJSOTF. Regardless of who it is, a CDRJSOTF is a JFC and exercises the authority and responsibility assigned by the establishing authority. A JSOTF staff is normally drawn from the TSOC staff or an existing SOF component with augmentation from other SOF or conventional units and/or personnel as appropriate. When a JSOTF is established and combined with elements from one or more allied or coalition nations, it becomes a combined special operations task force and its commander becomes a combined special operations task force commander.⁷⁴

⁷⁴ Ibid.

CHAPTER FOUR

ANALYSIS

The USSOCOM mission is twofold: to plan, direct, and execute 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; and to organize, train, and equip SOF provided to Geographic Combatant Commanders, American Ambassadors, and their Country Teams. The following analysis of SOF employment conducted in terms of organization and command and control will examine USSOCOM's ability to accomplish these two missions simultaneously.⁷⁵

USSOCOM AS A SUPPORTING COMMAND

In its role as a functional combatant command, USSOCOM trains, organizes, equips, and deploys combat ready special operations forces on a temporary basis to geographic combatant commands for operational employment.⁷⁶

The process of mission tasking for SOF elements begins when the geographic combatant commander forwards his requirements through the JCS for validation, who it turn forwards it to USSOCOM. USSOCOM normally tasks its three Service components to provide the appropriate forces. However, in certain situations requiring the capabilities of a standing joint special operations task force, USSOCOM may task its subunified command to fulfill the requirement. When transferred, the forces are attached to the gaining combatant command with the geographic combatant commander normally exercising OPCON over them.⁷⁷

The GCC may exercise OPCON of SOF through a variety of commanders at all levels within a joint force. Specific command arrangements are determined by the nature of the mission

⁷⁵ JSOU, 2-1.

⁷⁶ Joint Pub 3-05, III-2.

⁷⁷ FM 3-05.20, 4-1 – 4-2; Joint Pub 3-05, III-2.

and the objectives to be accomplished. However, C2 of SOF should be executed within the SOF chain of command. Normally, the TSOC is the primary mechanism by which a geographic combatant commander exercises C2 over SOF.⁷⁸

Excluding the psychological operations and civil affairs units, SOF are commonly employed in four ways (see figure 4).

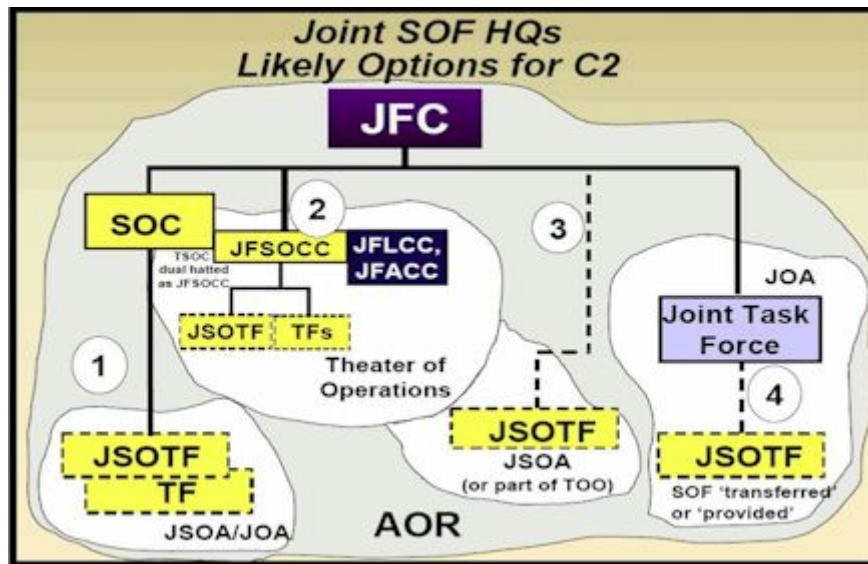


Figure 4. SOF C2 options at the Operational Level⁷⁹

The GCC might continue to command SOF through the TSOC. Many TSOCs in the past have taken the traditional approach of forming a fully separate joint SOF headquarters (JSOTF) from that of the TSOC using TSOC assets (Option 1 in figure). The SOC continued to execute its other subordinate unified command responsibilities while the JSOTF focused on the crisis for a specific period or in a specific operational area. This has proven to be difficult, especially in long duration or large-scale contingencies, based on current TSOC manning, organic C4I assets, and theater-strategic/theater-wide focus and activities. This option is best reserved for quick response, short-term, small-scale contingency operations. For long-term operations, it may be best for the TSOC commander to directly control subordinate TFs (rather than forming and

⁷⁸ Joint Pub 3-05, III-3 – III-4.

⁷⁹ Michael Findlay. "Joint Special Operations Insights" (SOCJFCOM, 2003), 3.

manning subordinate JSOTF(s)), or task another command to provide the operational commander and core staff for the JSOTF. Another may be the TSOC initially commanding subordinate TFs (not JSOTFs) for the crisis, and then at some point tasking another command to form a Service-centric, tailored JSOTF to continue C2, allowing the TSOC to resume full focus at the theater-strategic level.⁸⁰

The TSOC can also establish a JFSOCC (possibly colocated with the TSOC) to directly control SOF in a joint special operations functional component command role (option 2). This will normally be the case when the geographic combatant commander establishes functional component commanders for operations, absent the establishment of a JTF. The JFSOCC concept has less relevance to SOF (already a joint force) than it does to Service forces. The reason that a Service force commander is designated a functional component commander is to attain some of the jointness already inherent within the TSOC or JSOTF. The primary reason the TSOC commander may consider establishing a JFSOCC (and most likely being dual hatted as both the commander of the TSOC and the JFSOCC) is to mirror the other functional components (JFACC, JFLCC) and to better delineate specific C2 relationships with other commands within the 'crisis' area (JOA or Theater of Operations) vis-à-vis that of the AOR. This option was used in OIF 1 when the CENTCOM commander retained JFC authority and aligned the command into functional component for the prosecution of major combat operations. The TSOC commander, dual hatted as the JFSOCC, provided operational level C2 for multiple JSOTFs.⁸¹

In some cases, the GCC may chose to exercise direct control of a JSOTF (option 3). This situation usually occurs when the GCC wants to maintain direct control of highly sensitive or high risk operations or when the GCC requires a high degree of agility from the special operations force in response to rapidly evolving situations elsewhere in his AOR. This option is

⁸⁰ Ibid., 4.

⁸¹ Ibid.

primarily reserved for the employment of SOCOM's standing joint task force in support of the GCC.⁸²

When a JTF is established (option 4), the GCC, with the TSOC commander's recommendation, may either 'provide' forces under a supporting relationship to the JTF, or the GCC may actually 'transfer' (attach) forces. In a supporting command relationship, the TSOC retains control of the forces but ascertains and satisfies the needs of the JTF commander taking advantage of his SOF expertise and total forces available to provide the correct force application within GCC priorities to create the desired effect in support of the JTF while retaining AOR-wide responsiveness to the GCC. The GCC might also opt to transfer (attach) SOF in the form of an established JSOTF under the control of a subordinate JTF and delegate either an OPCON or TACON authority to the JTF commander. This transfer, while empowering the JTF commander, in effect strips forces and authority away from TSOC control and reduces the agility and capability of the TSOC commander to conduct special operations throughout the AOR. The TSOC must be cognizant of these advantages and disadvantages in forming, 'providing,' or 'transferring' subordinate JSOTFs in terms of manpower, joint competence, and layering implications. This option can be evidenced in Afghanistan today where CJSOTF-A is subordinate to CJTF-76.⁸³

Taking the above options for employment of SOF in a theater, the GCC might employ a progression of organizations as he addresses the full range of military operations. It might start with a peacetime organization with the TSOC and other components supporting theater security cooperation. In a crisis, the TSOC can quickly form a small, tailored JTF, normally SOF-centric to provide rapid crisis response. The TSOCs are inherently joint and are organized, equipped, and trained to the task of rapidly forming a JSOTF. The TSOC can also perform as a lead JTF (such as the JTF-510 model in Pacific Command) to develop the situation as the GCC is forming

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Ibid.

a larger, more robust JTF. At a later point, the SOF-centric JTF can be designated a JSOTF and subordinated to the larger JTF.⁸⁴

Although all of the above options are doctrinally correct and progression of SOF organizations a useful model, from an organizational perspective an important consideration for all of these employment options is that the employing joint headquarters has the special operations expertise and systems to support the planning, control, and operational support of SOF. However, this may not always be the case with respect to the formation of JSOTFs. In option 1, the JSOTF is formed around elements of the TSOC which is an existing joint headquarters. The same is true of option 3 when the JSOTF is formed around SOCOM's standing joint task force headquarters. In options 2 and 4, however, the JSOTF(s) is formed around Service-centric headquarters such as Army Special Forces Groups. The ad-hoc nature of these JSOTF(s) can be a point of enormous friction when it comes to training and manning.

By doctrine the SFG is a tactical level headquarters. Although the SFG is an extremely flexible organization designed to have self-contained C2 and support elements for long duration missions, it is only trained, manned, and resourced to function as an ARSOTF or the Army service force component to a JSOTF, not the JSOTF itself.⁸⁵ In recent operations where the SFG has provided the core of the JSOTF, the headquarters has doubled or even tripled in size relative to the core element. This additional manning has come through the use of JMDs with augmentees from active and reserve components. Even in preparation for real world operations, the late arrival of augmentees and filling of the JMD delay the time available for training. This further reinforces the ad hoc nature of these types of JSOTFs.⁸⁶

Possible solutions to this dilemma may be to form a standing joint force headquarters inside of the TSOC, a concept currently being developed by the U.S. Joint Forces Command for

⁸⁴ Mark Jones and Wes Rehorn, "Integrating SOF into Joint Warfighting" (*Military Review*, May-June 2003), 4.

⁸⁵ FM 3-05.20, 3-1 – 3-2.

⁸⁶ Findlay, 13.

application within combatant command headquarters. The Standing Joint Force Headquarters (SJFHQ) is designed to overcome the problems of an “ad hoc” JTF. Another possible solution may be to transform the SFG headquarters into a joint capable headquarters through organizational design.

USSOCOM AS A SUPPORTED COMMAND

In its new role as a supported combatant command, USSOCOM’s mission is to leads, plans, synchronizes, and as directed, executes global operations against terrorist networks. The concept of USSOCOM being a supported command is not new. Ever since USSOCOM was created in 1987, it has always had the “when directed” mission to plan and conduct special operations as a supported commander. However, it was understood that the intent behind the inclusion of the “when directed” mission referred to USSOCOM’s sub-unified command which would fulfill this role. Although not officially stated, it was commonly understood by all senior leaders within USSOCOM and the Department of Defense that USSOCOM’s role as primarily as a force provider. If USSOCOM was to be given the an operational mission, its sub-unified command would execute and more than likely, under the direct command and control of the JCS or the Secretary of Defense reverting back to its original command relationship. It’s only now, with the arrival of the global war on terrorism, that USSOCOM headquarters itself, is expected to transform into a warfighting command.

From an organizational perspective, very little has changed as of result of this new mission. SOF has essentially the same command structure it had prior to the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. USSCOM as a joint force is still organized into three Service components and one sub-unified command. This organizational command structure provides USSOCOM with only one JTF capable headquarters employ and command and control directly. Obviously this is not enough to prosecute a global campaign.

The quickest and least bureaucratic solution would be to increase the size of the existing sub-unified command giving it the ability to form and deploy additional JTFs. This, in fact, is currently happening with the SECDEF approved structural changes occurring within the sub-unified command raising it from a two-star to a three-star level command and adding additional general officers in order to have the capability to command and control three independent operations instead of two.

At some point though, it becomes inefficient to command and control multiple JTFs through one sub-unified command. A better option may be to create multiple direct reporting JTFs. The commander of USSOCOM, as a joint force commander, has the authority to organize his forces by establishing subordinate commands to best accomplish his assigned missions. These new subordinate commands could be created on either a geographic or functional basis.

If USSOCOM wanted to create its own geographically based standing JTFs from within existing force structure, the most logical choice would be the active duty Army Special Forces Groups which are regionally aligned with each of the geographic combatant commands. In fact, the Special Forces Groups have been serving as ad hoc JSOTFs rotating in and out of Afghanistan and Iraq since hostilities began. The key point here is that these JSOTFs are ad hoc in nature. The Special Forces Groups by design are a tactical level headquarters as previously discussed. To make them into standing JSOTFs would require, among other things, a general officer (GO) in command and a sizable increase in staffing.

Yet, GO level standing SOF headquarters aligned geographically already exist in the form of the theater special operations commands (TSOCs). Although considered a functional sub-unified command from the perspective of the geographic combatant commands, the TSOCs are geographically based from USSOCOM's perspective. Geographically based sub-unified commands within USSOCOM would give it the ability to truly command and control the prosecution of the war on terrorism globally. Since forces, not command relationships, are transferred between commands, the TSOCs would have to be reassigned to USSOCOM in order

for USSOCOM to exercise combatant command (command authority) over the TSOCs. By leaving the TSOCs in theater, they would in essence, become USSOCOM (Forward) in each of the geographic AORs. The resulting command relationship between the TSOCs and the geographic combatant commands would be either TACON or support. Reassigning the TSOCs would require a change to the Unified Command Plan (UCP) at a minimum, possibly even congressional legislation, and would most likely meet with significant resistance from the geographic combatant commanders.

As opposed to geographically based JTFs, USSOCOM might consider creating additional functional JTFs based on the two major approaches in which SOF accomplishes tasks, direct and indirect. One facilitates or actually brings force to bear directly against the enemy. The other approach works indirectly, by, with, and through other military forces or civilians to achieve U.S. objectives.⁸⁷ This categorization of SOF as direct or indirect is useful when discussing the general principles that apply to their employment.⁸⁸

Direct special operations are those in which SOF directly engage an adversary quickly in a single action, to attain a specific strategic or operational objective. Direct special operations include direct action (DA), special reconnaissance (SR), counterterrorism (CT), and counterproliferation (CP). A functionally based JTF focusing on the direct approach already exists with USSOCOM in the form of its one sub-unified command as discussed earlier.⁸⁹

Indirect special operations are those in which SOF are used over time, in many actions, to have a broad, general strategic or operational effect through training, advising, or assisting other military forces, other government agencies, friendly nations, or surrogate forces pursuing U.S.

⁸⁷ David Tucker and Christopher J. Lamb, "Restructuring Special Operations Forces for Emerging Threats." (*Strategic Forum*, January 2006), 1.

⁸⁸ USSOCOM, Pub 1, 5.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

interests. Indirect special operations usually include unconventional warfare (UW), foreign internal defense (FID), civil affairs (CA), and psychological operations (PSYOPS).⁹⁰

Currently, a functionally based JTF does not exist that focuses on the indirect approach. Some have argued that SOF's so-called indirect action activities—typically performed by Special Forces, psychological operations, and civil affairs when they work by, with, and through the forces and people of host countries, such as the Philippines, Afghanistan, or Iraq—are critical for reshaping the sociopolitical environment in which terrorists and insurgents thrive. And therefore, to make strategic contributions to defeating current and emerging threats, SOF indirect action capabilities should be organized into its own command.⁹¹

If USSOCOM wanted to create this indirect approach JTF from within existing force structure, the most logical choice would be to transform the United States Army Special Forces Command (USASFC) for several reasons. First, it already commands most of the active duty special operations forces focused on the indirect approach. Second, with the approved reassignment of USASOC's other major subordinate command (USACAPOC) to FORSCOM, USASFC will in essence become an unnecessary layer of command within USASOC which joint special operations doctrine specifically warns against. Additionally, the remaining lower echelon active duty indirect forces of civil affairs and PSYOPS left without a major headquarters within USASOC could be reassigned in effect creating a consolidated indirect approach JTF. Finally, this would satisfy a current USSOCOM initiative tasking USASOC to develop and provide a JTF capable headquarters (known conceptually as TF Spear) for worldwide deployment.

Together these two broad approaches are mutually supportive and having JTFs based on both would allow USSOCOM to maximize its efforts and produce an even greater effect as it prosecutes the global war on terrorism.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Tucker, 1.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

To achieve unified action in the Global War on Terrorism, DoD and USSOCOM must look for options to enhance unified direction in the war on terrorism. The optimal solution for USSOCOM to achieve unified action would be the implementation of all three recommendations giving it the ability to maximize the capabilities of its high demand-low density special operations forces throughout the globe. The following recommendations are provided to do just that and are listed in order of importance.

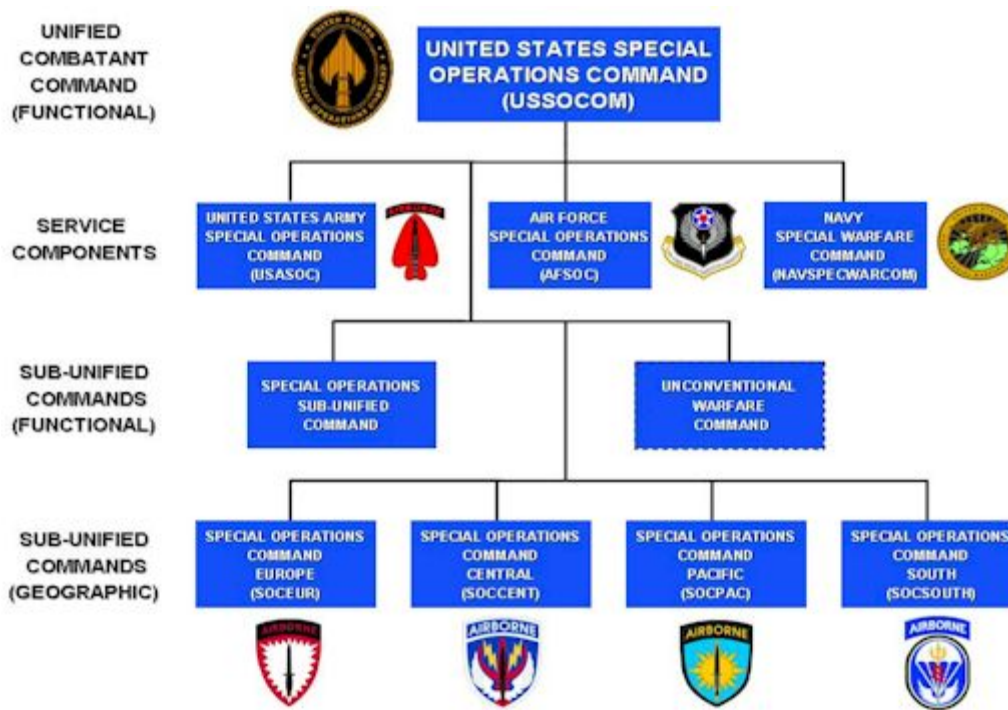


Figure 5. Recommended USSOCOM Organization for GWOT⁹²

REASSIGN TSOCs FROM GCCs TO USSOCOM

The first and foremost issue that faces USSOCOM today is how to command and control globally. By reassigning the TSOCs to USSOCOM but leaving them in theater, USSOCOM

⁹² Created by author as a graphic representation of recommendations only. Not official.

obtains the mechanism through which to command and control special operations globally. Since the USSOCOM would exercise COCOM over the TSOCs, no change of command relationships between combatant commanders would occur with the deployment of SOF. Theoretically, with a SecDef approved standing deployment order, USSOCOM could move forces throughout the world between its TSOCs without having to endure the normal forty-five day deployment order staffing process through the Pentagon. This would make SOF very flexible and extremely agile in the pursuit of terrorists. Obviously USSOCOM would still require an execute order from the SecDef to conduct operations but it would significantly shorten the bureaucratic process. Reassigning the TSOCs would in effect create global SOF network in which to combat the global terrorist network.

To implement this recommendation, the UCP would have to be revised and possibly Congressional legislation as well. Therefore, it's understandably the hardest to accomplish but would provide the biggest payoff.

TRANSFORM USASFC INTO “INDIRECT” SUB-UNIFIED COMMAND

Another important recommendation is to raise the importance and influence of indirect SOF within USSOCOM, the larger military, and the US government in general. If the indirect approach is closely tied to the success in the GWOT, the creation of an “indirect approach” sub-unified command would go a long way toward synchronizing that effort within DoD and the interagency. It would also provide USSOCOM with another deployable JTF headquarters in which to employ in the GWOT. To implement this recommendation would require SecDef approval but would not require a change to the UCP.

RESOURCE THE SPECIAL FORCES GROUPS AS JSOTFs

The last recommendation is to transform the Special Forces Group headquarters into JSOTF capable organizations through additional resourcing, manpower, training, and habitual

relationships with sister-service SOF. Although this monograph does not advocate turning the Special Forces Groups into standing JSOTFs, it does recognize that currently and in the near term the Special Forces Groups are being asked to do something they were not intended to or designed to do. Until such time as SOF can restructure its organization to provide more JSOTF capable headquarters, the Special Forces Groups should be provided the tools to the job correctly. This recommendation is easiest to implement because it does not require approval above the USSOCOM level and should be the priority in the near term.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this monograph was to answer the question: *What organizational changes within SOF would enhance unified direction in the Global War on Terrorism?* By examining the current organization and associated command relationships of SOF within the framework of joint operations doctrine, this study analyzed the employment of SOF and its ability to fulfill its regional and global requirements. Chapter One outlined the problem and its importance and relevance to the GWOT. Chapter Two outlined a brief history of modern American SOF and those actions where organization and command and control were aligned for unified direction were the most effective. Chapter Three explained the joint framework in which USSOCOM operates and provided details on the left and right limits of USSOCOM actions as a functional combatant command. Chapter Four analyzed USSOCOM's current organization and command and control for employment of forces in its role as both a supporting and supported combatant command using the framework established in Chapter Three. Finally, Chapter Five provided three recommendations for organizational change within SOF to enhance USSOCOM's ability to achieve unified direction in the prosecution of the GWOT.

Modern SOF have evolved in response to the need for specialized forces to conduct operations at the operational and strategic levels. Their organization, equipment, training,

personnel selection, and tactics have changed as the threats changed. In this period of global terrorism, SOF must again change to meet the challenges of the current operating environment.

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