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**TO INTEGRATE OR TO DECONFLICT, THAT IS THE QUESTION:
AN EXAMINATION OF CONTEMPORARY CHALLENGES IN CONVENTIONAL
AND SPECIAL OPERATIONS FORCES COMMAND AND CONTROL**

by

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A paper submitted to the Faculty of the Naval War College in partial satisfaction of the requirements of the Department of Joint Military Operations.

The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the Naval War College or the Department of the Navy.

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Abstract

Evidence from recent operations suggests that current joint and USSOCOM doctrine are producing command and control (C2) arrangements between conventional forces (CF) and special operations forces (SOF) that are dysfunctional at the tactical level and counter-productive in achieving operational objectives. Operations *Restore Hope*, *Enduring Freedom*, and *Iraqi Freedom* each reveal the dangers of attempting to integrate C2 between SOF and CF at the operational level, but failing to do so at the tactical level. To address current threats effectively, the U.S. military would be wise to reverse this approach. In the global campaign against ideological extremist insurgency, SOF best leverage their counter-terrorism, foreign internal defense, special reconnaissance, and unconventional warfare skills by focusing on Phase 0 shaping operations in the arc of instability. In counterinsurgency environments such as Afghanistan and Iraq, priority of mission should go to CF efforts, and joint force commanders should integrate SOF with CF at the tactical level to prevent compromising this effort. The Joint Staff and USSOCOM can facilitate this by modifying joint doctrine to permit SOF and CF C2 integration at the tactical level and revising joint education curricula and training opportunities to include exercising this integration. Until USSOCOM does so, it will exacerbate rather than resolve one of the primary problems that led to its creation: parochial interests compromising unity of effort while in the pursuit of national security objectives.

Table of Contents

Introduction	1
Background	2
Operational Analyses	5
<i>Operation Restore Hope</i>	5
<i>Operation Enduring Freedom</i>	6
<i>Operation Iraqi Freedom</i>	11
Recommendations	14
Conclusion	17
Endnotes	19
Bibliography	22

INTRODUCTION

The Joint Revolution initiated by the Goldwater-Nichols Defense Reorganization Act of 1986 integrates Service efforts to a degree few could have envisioned a generation ago. Today's professional military officers widely recognize that anything beyond the smallest of military actions requires a joint effort, as individual Services lack the capacity to achieve national objectives alone. Accordingly, joint operations have moved beyond simple deconfliction and towards a more holistic integration and interdependency, with one notable exception. An addendum to the Goldwater-Nichols Act, known as the Nunn-Cohen Act of 1987, created the U.S. Special Operations Command (USSOCOM) to remedy the Services' neglect of special and unconventional missions, and to address inter-service rivalries between special operations units.¹ Evidence from recent operations, however, suggests that while USSOCOM has made progress in addressing these ills, it has also inadvertently exacerbated the division between conventional forces (CF) and special operations forces (SOF).

The cause of the problem lies in joint and USSOCOM doctrine and operational philosophy regarding command and control (C2) relationships. Historic SOF distrust of CF knowledge and leadership regarding SOF employment has rendered USSOCOM unwilling to assign control of its forces to CF under all but the most exceptional circumstances. In lieu of integrating CF and SOF C2 down to the tactical level, current doctrine seeks to deconflict CF and SOF operations through a system of liaison officers at the Division level and higher. In mature theaters where CF and SOF operate in a shared battlespace over extended duration, this approach constitutes a disheartening disregard for the principle of unity of command and has had an adverse impact on the nation's ability to achieve its objectives. Moreover, in counterinsurgencies this approach is counter-productive. In these types of missions,

deconfliction must give way to integration, and CF and SOF can best accomplish this by ensuring unity of command through appropriate C2 relationships. To ensure the most effective application of the military instrument of power to achieve theater-strategic and operational objectives, joint doctrine and policy must permit, and often encourage, SOF and CF C2 integration at the tactical levels below the Joint Task Force (JTF).

BACKGROUND

Throughout history, both military theorists and expert practitioners of the operational art have emphasized the importance of unity of command to the pursuit of military objectives. Napoleon emphasized unity of command as “the first necessity in war,” and once threatened to resign his post when the French Directory proposed dividing his command in the Italian theater.² “‘Better one bad general than two good ones’ was the theme of his reply to Paris.”³ Joint Publication (JP) 3-0, *Joint Operations*, recognizes unity of command as both an historic principle of war and as a valid principle for current joint operations.⁴ JP 3-0 also lists C2 as one of six functions necessary for integrating, synchronizing, and directing joint operations. JP 3-0 defines C2 as “the exercise of authority and direction by a commander over assigned and attached forces in the accomplishment of the mission.”⁵ Formal command relationships include combatant command, operational control, and tactical control (TACON). Table 1 depicts the authorities associated with those relationships.

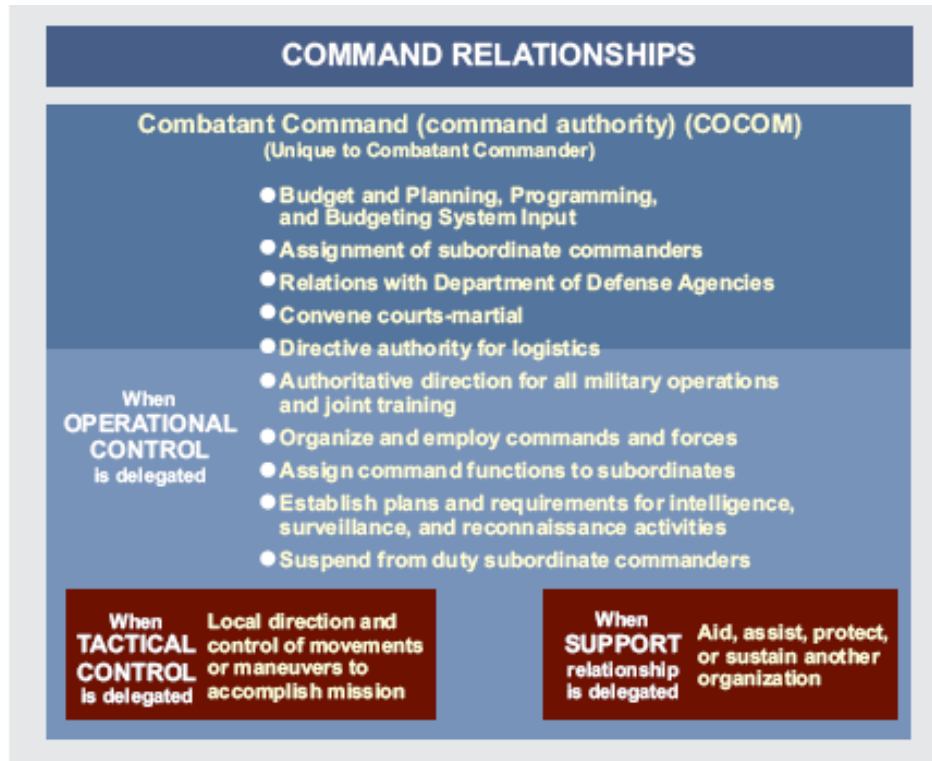


Table 1: Command Relationships⁶

JP 3-05, *Doctrine for Special Operations*, provides direction for C2 architectures while employing SOF. It states that “SOF are most effective when SO [special operations] are fully integrated into the overall plan,” but adds that successful “execution of SO requires clear, responsive C2 by an appropriate SOF C2 element.”⁷ JP 3-05 calls for a Joint Force Special Operations Component Commander (JFSOCC) or a Joint Special Operations Task Force (JSOTF) to command and control all SOF within a given theater.⁸ Thus, current joint doctrine retains SOF under SOF C2 at all levels below the overall joint force commander (JFC), a construct that impedes unity of command at the tactical level.

Joint doctrine allows SOF to support CF at the tactical level in order to achieve operational objectives. To facilitate such support, JP 3-05 calls for the employment of Special Operations Command and Control Elements (SOCCE).⁹ Although not specified in current doctrine, the JFSOCC/JSOTF normally places the SOCCE at the CF Division level of

command. The SOCCE constitutes the lowest level of SOF C2 collocated with CF. JP 3-05 also prescribes the use of a Special Operations Coordination Element (SOCOORD) at the Army Corps/Marine Expeditionary Force (MEF) level and of a Special Operations Liaison Element (SOLE) with the Joint Force Air Component Commander.¹⁰ These organizations, however, serve as liaison elements, without C2 authority. JP 3-05 acknowledges, “SOF must maintain effective liaison with all components of the joint force to ensure that unity of effort is maintained and risk of fratricide is minimized.”¹¹ Although JP 3-05 suggests using SOF liaisons to assist in this task at levels below the SOCCE, the reality is that creating liaison officers takes personnel away from SOF operating units.¹² Even with the limited liaison SOF is currently providing, SOF commands are removing trained specialists from operational duties in order to perform deconfliction tasks in CF Corps/MEF and Division staffs.¹³ Moreover, like the SOCOORD and SOLE, SOF liaisons have no C2 authority.

Current joint doctrine thus establishes mechanisms for integrating CF and SOF operations through unity of command at the highest operational level only. At the tactical level, it relies on deconflicting CF and SOF operations through liaison, primarily at the CF Division level and above. Unfortunately, recent operations have revealed shortcomings to this C2 approach. Liaison at the Corps and Division levels has proven inadequate, and liaison efforts down to the platoon and squad level (the focus of decentralized counterinsurgency operations) are unrealistic. A review of three recent operations that included CF and SOF operating in a shared battlespace against asymmetric enemies over a sustained period demonstrates that tactical deconfliction is not enough to achieve operational objectives. Instead, these types of operations require integrated C2 at the tactical level.

OPERATIONAL ANALYSES

Operation Restore Hope (ORH). Among the most high profile incidents where the division between CF and SOF C2 contributed to operational failure was during ORH in Somalia. Beginning as *Operation Provide Relief* in August 1992, American involvement in Somalia evolved over time from a U.S.-centric humanitarian effort to a UN peace enforcement mission, which included targeting clan leaders such as Habr Gidr warlord Mohamed Farrah Aideed for detention. U.S. involvement culminated with a loss of domestic support for the operation following a SOF (Task Force Ranger) raid in early October 1993, during which Somali clan members paraded the corpses of U.S. soldiers through the streets of Mogadishu. In March 1994, U.S. forces withdrew entirely from Somalia. A convoluted chain of command contributed significantly to the series of events that led to this point.

Marine General Anthony Zinni, a prominent participant in operations in Somalia who later became the Commander in Chief, U.S. Central Command (CINCUSCENTCOM), summed up the C2 problem in a 1999 interview with *PBS Frontline*:

... we had [Turkish General Cevik] Bir in charge of the UN forces. The U.S. forces were really under his deputy, [Army Major General Thomas] Montgomery, but then General Montgomery [did not have] operational command authority. The CINC ... never relinquished command.... You had the special operation forces ... that had another kind of direct chain of command that really weren't under Montgomery. It became very confusing.... There is a principle of war that says unity of command is desirable ... it certainly was not there ... even within the U.S. structure.¹⁴

This chaotic arrangement essentially caused the SOF commander to plan the Task Force (TF) Ranger raid in a vacuum. Lacking organic resources for a robust, armored quick reaction force (QRF), TF Ranger depended on the UN CF to extract them in the event of a heavy engagement. Unfortunately, TF Ranger did not identify, integrate, and rehearse the QRF response with the CF. This failure caused a significant delay in the QRF's response and

to confusion following its commitment. The delay, in turn, created a seam that the Habr Gidr exploited to inflict further damage on TF Ranger and to attack American domestic support for U.S. involvement in the African nation by parading mangled American bodies before the international press.

Recoil in the U.S. Congress precipitated a rapid end to U.S. involvement in Somalia, and served as a catalyst for the failure of the UN mission at large. In analyzing TF Ranger's raid, an officer studying ORH concluded, "TF Ranger ... [was] not accustomed to integrated operations with GPF [General Purpose Force] units. ... There were many reasons for the lack of integration but parochialism was one major factor."¹⁵ Even though TF Ranger succeeded in its tactical mission of capturing high value targets, the lack of integrated SOF and CF C2 at the tactical level in Somalia resulted in strategic defeat.

Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF). OEF began in October 2001 as a military response to the 11 September terrorist attacks on the United States. As in Somalia, the unwillingness to integrate CF and SOF tactical C2 has complicated OEF operations and produced highly visible failures. Nevertheless, it would be unfair not to acknowledge that CF-SOF relationships in Afghanistan have been closer than ever before. SOF performed unconventional warfare tasks with great skill throughout the initial stages of OEF, overthrowing the Taliban and facilitating the introduction of CF. SOF Operational Detachments have also provided intelligence, linguistic, and host nation liaison support to several CF operations. In return, CF have provided security and sustainment for SOF bases, and cordon and QRF support during SOF missions.¹⁶ Recognizing that certain tasks require both CF and SOF capabilities, operational level staffs have therefore occasionally arranged for limited tactical CF and SOF integration, but they have stopped short of integrating

tactical C2 through formal relationships.¹⁷

With the introduction of large-scale CF to conduct counterinsurgency (COIN) operations in Afghanistan, the JFC has failed to find suitable alternatives, short of integrating tactical C2, for deconflicting SOF and CF operations so that they mutually contribute to achieving national objectives. Since integrating CF and SOF C2 below the JTF level is not consistent with joint doctrine, the JFC has experimented with measures designed to deconflict CF and SOF missions by time or space. These experiments have failed. In 2004-2005, for example, the JFC created a semi-permanent Joint Special Operations Area (JSOA) that ran along Afghanistan's border with Pakistan and assigned the Combined JSOTF responsibility for raising and training an Afghan Border Police. Unfortunately, without a fully-fielded border police force, the Combined JSOTF did not have the personnel needed to prevent the JSOA from becoming a relative safe-haven for insurgents infiltrating from Pakistan. The division of battlespace became a seam that the insurgents recognized and exploited.¹⁸

Too small to train the Afghan National Army and facilitate large-scale civil affairs activities, SOF have gradually turned these tasks over to CF and gravitated to their direct action (DA) and counter-terrorism (CT) roles. Since DA and CT missions require a significant degree of operational security (OPSEC), SOF units have been hesitant to coordinate and exchange intelligence with CF units when conducting these missions in CF assigned areas of operation (AO). As a result, CF commanders have complained routinely of SOF missions in their AOs producing results that conflict with CF COIN efforts. Specifically, SOF raids have produced collateral damage in communities where CF have been working to build supportive relationships with indigenous populations. Targets netted

or killed during these raids are often people with whom CF have worked for a period of weeks or months. If SOF needed to interrogate these people, CF units could have simply arranged for a meeting. Instead, CF are put in a position of managing the aftermath of raids with an angry local population. SOF raids damage CF credibility with the population and destroy relationships that are essential to fighting a successful counterinsurgency.

The failure to integrate CF and SOF C2 at the tactical level often has had adverse impact at the operational level in OEF. Operations *Anaconda* and *Red Wings* serve as cases in point. Army Major General Franklin Hagenback served as the JTF Commander for *Anaconda*, which took place in March 2002. His mission was to eliminate an estimated 200 Taliban and al Qaeda fighters and kill or capture key al Qaeda leaders, potentially including Osama bin Laden, in the Shahi-Kot valley.¹⁹ As in ORH, SOF units did not have a direct command relationship with General Hagenback. Instead, they answered directly to the USCENTCOM. Hagenback attempted to deconflict CF and SOF roles by tasking CF to establish blocking positions while indigenous Afghan forces under SOF control swept through the objectives. Although the operation succeeded in eliminating a significant number of Taliban, many more escaped and the attempt to kill or capture the high value targets failed outright.²⁰ Failures in integrated planning and intelligence sharing produced highly publicized fratricide incidents and situations such as that on “Roberts’ Ridge” where a Ranger QRF inserted into a known enemy kill zone.

During a June 2007 *Dateline NBC* report on *Anaconda* that included an interview with Major General Hagenback, correspondent Stone Phillips noted:

Hagenback acknowledges that ... commanders violated ... unity of command, the principal that one leader commands and controls all forces on the battlefield. ... The decision to keep Special Ops forces ... under a separate command was made by U.S. Central Command As a result,

Hagenbeck wasn't always aware of what the Special Ops side ... was doing. In the end, one of the military's most comprehensive reviews of the battle ... concluded that "the command and control organizations had faltered in small ways that added up to significant, collective mistakes."²¹

Despite after action reviews, studies, and Department of Defense conferences regarding the C2 failures during *Anaconda*, the problems remained unresolved in Afghanistan over three years later. In March 2005, 3d Battalion, 3d Marines, the battalion responsible for Laghman, Kunar, and Nangarhar Provinces in northeastern Afghanistan, coordinated with SOF units to prepare a combined and joint operation later designated *Operation Red Wings*. The operation would consist of targeted SOF DA detention operations, complemented by CF and indigenous forces conducting security, information, and humanitarian operations over an extended period, to mollify the local population.

Previously unable to prohibit counter-productive SOF missions in his assigned AO through the CF chain of command, the Marine battalion commander had learned to engage SOF at the tactical level and offer QRF and cordon support to their DA missions in exchange for the opportunity to share intelligence and to plan immediate mitigation efforts.²² The opportunity to compare intelligence also served to limit the number of SOF DA targets because CF had the opportunity to invalidate much of the SOF intelligence based on information gathered during CF's continuous presence in the AO. This integrated planning approach eventually led to an informal C2 relationship in which the SOF units effectively became TACON to the CF battalion commander during execution. This arrangement proved successful earlier when 3d Battalion, 3d Marines had worked with other SOF units to conduct Operations *Spurs* and *Mavericks* between December and March 2005.²³

During the confirmation briefing to the JFC for *Red Wings*, however, the JSOTF noted the proposed C2 arrangement to which both the Marine battalion and the SOF units

involved had agreed, and convinced the newly arrived JFC to disapprove the arrangement based on joint doctrine.²⁴ Instead, the JFC directed that SOF operations be deconflicted from CF actions by time and by temporary division of the battlespace. The JSOTF collocated a liaison team with the Marine battalion command post in Jalal Abad “to justify and work around the failure to adhere to unity of command.”²⁵ *Red Wings* began on 27 June 2005, and a week into the operation, insurgents downed an MH-47 aircraft with rocket propelled grenade fire. The aircraft was carrying a SOF recovery element responding to a call from a compromised SOF surveillance-reconnaissance team for emergency extraction. Because neither the recovery element nor the aircraft viewed the JSOTF liaison cell as a C2 authority, neither contacted the liaison cell. This left the Marine battalion commander, who had the best situational awareness and support postured to assist, unaware of the problem.²⁶

Theater SOF authorities representing USCENTCOM further compartmentalized rescue operations when they later arrived and drew a JSOA around the crash site and recovery area. CENTCOM neither delegated C2 to any single unit involved in the recovery nor exercised C2 themselves during subsequent recovery operations. Even a week into the operation, of the four units collocated at the crash site, three reported to a different higher headquarters. As a result, deconfliction of fires with maneuver forces both on the ground and in the air was ad hoc, slow, and cumbersome.²⁷

CF-SOF tactical C2 shortcomings continue in Afghanistan, and the problem has extended to U.S. relationships with allied forces. A 9 August 2007 *New York Times* article noted that a “senior British commander in southern Afghanistan said in recent weeks that he had asked that American Special Forces leave his area of operations because the high level of civilian casualties they had caused was making it difficult to win over local people” in the

Helmund Province. The article went on to highlight SOF's reliance on air strikes to compensate for their lack of combat power on the ground and noted that this reliance frequently leads to civilian casualties that are counter-productive to CF efforts to win indigenous support.²⁸ Reports like these, coupled with the results of operations like *Anaconda* and *Red Wings*, suggest that deconfliction through liaison mechanisms is not working. To address the deficiencies and ensure that CF and SOF are pursuing operational objectives in a coherent, mutually supporting fashion, the JFC must be able to integrate their C2 by establishing clear TACON relationships at the tactical level.

Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF). As with OEF, OIF has demanded a greater degree of CF-SOF integration, and limited progress in this regard has contributed to a few notable successes. Operations that led to the killing of Saddam Hussein's sons in Mosul on 22 July 2003, and to his own capture on 13 December 2003, entailed the short-term tactical integration of CF and SOF units.²⁹ Despite these highly publicized successes and what should have been lessons learned from operations like *Restore Hope*, *Anaconda*, and *Red Wings*, however, CF-SOF C2 integration problems continue to jeopardize success in Iraq.

Asked whether CF and SOF actions in OIF were integrated to the degree needed to accomplish operational objectives, both Army and Marine battalion and brigade/regimental commanders responded with a resounding "no." Comments from seven survey respondents with a combined nine years of experience in multiple regions of Iraq between 2003 and 2007 reveal the same disturbing fissure between CF and SOF evident in OEF.³⁰ A Marine battalion commander operating in southern al Anbar Province from March to October 2006, described the confusing C2 relationship between SOF and CF and its effects as follows:

... there were never any established lines of C2, we did not know the operating unit, frequencies, or call signs. There were numerous occasions in

which we found out the following morning SOF operations were conducted in our assigned battlespace. We rarely ... received feedback / after action of their operations even when requested. ... There was no unity of effort. There were occasions within specific areas where we were implementing positive [information operations] measures, SOF would conduct hard hit raids. ... Their operations destroyed homes, killed individuals, and removed persons of interest. When we would re-enter these areas, the local populace expected us to answer the why and where in regards to detained individuals. We could not provide answers. The best example ... was when SOF conducted a hit on a house we had firmed up in for the previous three days. The after action report we received stated the house was a terrorist site, the van my men [were] in was a VBIED and the personnel killed and captured were reported terrorists. ... The aftermath of this hit was our [battalion] was targeted by the locals (not terrorists) as they were convinced we were responsible for this raid.³¹

The comments of an Army Cavalry Squadron Commander who served twenty-three months between two tours in Iraq are virtually identical despite having a different AO and working with different SOF units:

SF elements pick and choose ... their priorities, regardless of the conventional force commander's. This leads to inherent problems associated with poor communications, coordination, and mission effectiveness. Additionally, operational-level SOF Teams come into and out of areas to conduct raids, strikes, and reconnaissance, often with only hours of pre-notification to the tactical commander. Often, there are engagements, collateral damage and detentions of individuals ... without the conventional force commander ever knowing until after the operation is completed. [The SOF] units egress ... without having to manage the consequences of their actions. This has a disruptive, even destabilizing effect on the area. Additionally, problems arise when the SF team's opinions differ from the conventional force commander regarding decisions on who to detain, where to allocate funds for support projects and how to interpret events occurring within an AO.³²

A third CF battalion commander operating in Ramadi from March to October 2006, grew so frustrated with the SOF units operating in his assigned AO conducting short-notice DA missions with minimal coordination that he offered to provide *them* with a liaison officer. He felt this would prevent much of the unnecessary collateral damage that compromised his COIN efforts. Additionally, he felt it would help to prevent SOF from travelling down routes that were not properly cleared, which had previously resulted in SOF

units suffering needless casualties and his unit having to conduct recovery and reaction force operations in support. Yet the SOF units declined to take the CF liaison officer for fear of security leaks.³³ Unilateral, counter-productive raids based on poor and incomplete intelligence and the suffering of unnecessary friendly casualties continued.

An officer who served 20 months in Iraq as a Division G-3 and Regimental Combat Team Commander described his frustration with the lack of intelligence sharing between SOF and CF that results from a lack of integrated C2 relationships below the Division level. He stated, “Wish I’d seen more of their [SOF] intelligence; sometimes they had great targets, sometimes we knew they were going after small potatoes and tried to dissuade them, sometimes we had no idea who in the hell the target was, but assumed they had some great insider’s gouge.”³⁴ From the feedback of the commanders questioned, this last assumption appears to have been wrong. Cumulatively, these survey respondent comments indicate that poorly coordinated SOF DA and CT operations based on questionable intelligence routinely compromise COIN operations in OIF just as they do in OEF. Each time a SOF DA or CT action results in the death, injury, or intimidation of anyone other than a terrorist or insurgent leader, it undermines CF COIN efforts and generates indigenous sympathy for the insurgent.

In sum, an analysis of recent CF and SOF operations in a shared battlespace indicates that the U.S. military is repeatedly receiving lessons without learning from them.³⁵ These operations indicate that SOF liaison at the Division level and above is not an adequate substitute for unity of command between CF and SOF at the tactical level. Experiences in OEF and OIF further suggest that a JFC must integrate CF and SOF actions in COIN environments at the tactical level vice simply deconflicting these actions. The lack of intelligence sharing and control to date has alienated local populations, compromised

operational and tactical objectives and produced incidents resulting in avoidable friendly casualties. Simply put, current SOF and CF doctrinal C2 arrangements are creating an operational seam that our enemies are routinely exploiting.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Joint policy should encourage and empower JFCs to design C2 architectures with a view toward creating the arrangement that achieves the operational objectives in the most efficient and effective manner without consideration to parochial, institutional interests. In some situations, coordination to facilitate deconfliction between SOF and CF is sufficient; many strategic level DA and CT missions lend themselves to this arrangement. The doctrinal, JSOTF –based C2 arrangement is normally appropriate when SOF capabilities are the primary, most appropriate means for obtaining national objectives. The JSOTF’s primary function – to exercise C2 among the component SOF units involved – takes precedence in these types of missions.³⁶

However, when SOF is operating in AOs where CF are engaged in COIN operations over an extended period, current doctrinal arrangements become counter-productive. In these circumstances, deconfliction at the tactical level is simply not enough, and the JFC must integrate SOF CT activities with the long-term CF COIN effort. The JFC can achieve this most effectively through integrated C2 arrangements that ensure tactical unity of command. As counterterrorism authority David Kilcullen states, “the War on Terrorism is actually a campaign against a globalized Islamist insurgency. Therefore, counterinsurgency approaches are more relevant to the present conflict than traditional terrorism theory.”³⁷ Accordingly, in theaters like Afghanistan and Iraq, COIN operations should take precedence over CT approaches, and JFCs should place SOF under the tactical control of CF.

By integrating C2 in this fashion, the JFC will ensure all units in a given battlespace pursue their objectives in a mutually supportive fashion. Well-intentioned attempts to achieve unity of effort are no substitute for unity of command in this regard. Should the need arise for the JSOTF to conduct a short-term DA/CT mission, the JFC could always temporarily reassign the appropriate units under JSOTF tactical control. With appropriate attention to OPSEC, the JSOTF should also coordinate with the CF unit responsible for the target area prior to the creation of a temporary JSOA. In this case, the JFC may assign appropriate CF units to be under JSOTF's TACON for the duration of the mission to provide a security cordon or QRF or to perform similar supporting tasks.

The irony is that C2 relationships in Afghanistan and Iraq seek to *integrate* CF and SOF operations at the strategic-operational level and to *deconflict* them at the lower operational and tactical levels. This is the opposite of what joint C2 arrangements need to do in the current operational environment. Rather than consolidate over 80 percent of SOF assets in Afghanistan and Iraq, where they frequently pursue objectives similar to those of the CF but by different, often conflicting means, SOF would be better employed engaging weaker state governments throughout the "arc of instability" to shape a global counter-terrorism network and build friendly government security capacity through foreign internal defense.³⁸ The Commander of USSOCOM alludes to this in his 2006 posture statement where he points out that SOF

... are in Afghanistan and Iraq defending our Nation against terrorism on a daily basis. However, it is Special Operations' unique, but less visible, ability to help establish the conditions to counter and defeat terrorism through Unconventional Warfare, Psychological Operations, Foreign Internal Defense, Special Reconnaissance, and Civil Affairs that will become increasingly vital to our long-term success in the Global War on Terrorism.³⁹

On the other hand, when SOF and CF are conducting operations in a common battlespace,

the JFC should integrate their C2 at the tactical level to prevent their different, CT and COIN efforts from becoming counter-productive.

The answer to the problems outlined does not lie, as some SOF officers have argued, in increasing the size of SOF to afford a more robust liaison capability.⁴⁰ USSOCOM should do everything it can to preserve the elite nature of its forces, and dramatically increasing their size to compensate for a failure to properly integrate with CF will do little but diminish SOF quality. Nor does the answer lie, as others have suggested, in levying liaison responsibilities on CF.⁴¹ As demonstrated earlier, liaison at the tactical level is insufficient regardless of who provides it. Liaison facilitates coordination and deconfliction, but only unity of command at the tactical level can produce the integration required to win counterinsurgencies.

In short, the Combatant Commanders should seek to *deconflict* CF and SOF operations at the theater level by focusing SOF in a Phase 0 shaping role in those countries that comprise the arc of instability, where there is no large CF effort. Deconfliction in this manner makes the most effective use of SOF's expertise in strategic reconnaissance, unconventional warfare, foreign internal defense and counter-terrorism. Conversely, the JFC should *integrate* CF and SOF operations at the tactical level through formal TACON relationships that adequately leverage unity of command.

Unfortunately, USSOCOM's consistent press to keep SOF exclusively under SOF C2, and their ability to have it codified in current doctrine, have repeatedly placed the Regional Combatant Commanders and subordinate JFCs in a difficult and often politically untenable position.⁴² Current doctrine institutionalizes the separation between CF and SOF and discounts the routine or long-term integration of CF and SOF tactical C2 below the JTF level as a valid operational approach.⁴³ Accordingly, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of

Staff and the Commander, USSOCOM should change Joint and SOF doctrine to address existing realities and to allow for CF and SOF integration to at least the same degree that Marine and Army Forces currently integrate in Iraq and Afghanistan.

To facilitate SOF overcoming their institutional reluctance to serve under CF control, CF must understand and address the reasoning behind that reluctance. SOF personnel have valid reasons, for example, for being concerned about OPSEC given the risk involved in many SOF missions. Conversely, both SOF and CF must recognize the need to share information to prevent fratricide. Better integrating SOF and CF training and education will go along way toward generating a shared understanding of where to draw the line between OPSEC and information sharing and similar issues that some use as reasoning against integrating CF and SOF C2. Joint and Service Professional Military Education (PME) institutions must educate all officers on the capabilities and limitations of both SOF and CF beginning at the primary education level. At the intermediate and senior level, PME institutions should incorporate periods of instruction that analyze different operations and the best C2 arrangements for each. Capstone level PME courses to prepare joint force functional component commanders should do the same. Finally, joint training experiences should reinforce this education, with SOF and CF integrated during exercises such as those conducted at the Army's National Training Center, the Marine Air Ground Task Force Training Center, and the Joint Readiness Training Center.⁴⁴

CONCLUSION

Evidence from recent operations suggests that current joint doctrine and policy are producing C2 arrangements that are dysfunctional and counter-productive in achieving operational objectives. Operations *Restore Hope*, *Enduring Freedom*, and *Iraqi Freedom*

each reveal the dangers of attempting to integrate C2 between SOF and CF at the operational level, while relying on deconfliction through liaison at the tactical level. To address current threats effectively, the U.S. military would be wise to reverse this approach. In the global campaign against ideological extremist insurgency, the nation can best leverage SOF's foreign internal defense, special reconnaissance, counter-terrorism, and unconventional warfare skills by focusing SOF on shaping operations in the arc of instability. In mature theaters of operation such as Afghanistan and Iraq, priority of mission should go to CF COIN efforts, and JFCs should integrate SOF operations at the tactical level to prevent compromising this effort. The Joint Staff and USSOCOM can facilitate this by modifying joint doctrine to encourage CF and SOF C2 integration at the tactical level and revising joint education curricula and training opportunities to include exercising this integration. Until USSOCOM does so, it will exacerbate rather than resolve one of the primary problems that led to its creation: parochial interests compromising unity of effort while in the pursuit of national security objectives.

NOTES

¹ The primary impetus for Congress' creation of USSOCOM was a perceived failure by the Services to achieve unity of command between and among CF and SOF units. The two operations that brought this to the forefront of Congress' attention were *Operation Eagle Claw*, the 1979 attempt to rescue American hostages in Iran, and *Operation Urgent Fury*, the 1983 invasion of Grenada. The Halloway Commission and Congressional investigative hearings into *Operation Eagle Claw's* failure revealed an extensive and counter-productive level of compartmentalization created in the name of operational security. Similarly, during *Operation Urgent Fury*, all of the SOF missions were compromised and the SOF involved had to await assistance to facilitate their extraction because they were not well integrated in CF planning. Integrated C2 facilitating unity of command would likely have prevented these break downs in information sharing and planning. For additional insight into the causes of failure during Operations Eagle Claw and Urgent Fury, see Captain (P) Harry S. Brown, U.S. Army, "The Command and Control of Special Operations Forces" (masters thesis, Monterey, CA: Naval Postgraduate School, December 1996). For further information on the founding of USSOCOM, see U.S. Special Operations Command, *United States Special Operations Command History, 1987-2007*, (MacDill Air Force Base, FL: Headquarters, U.S. Special Operations Command, 2007), 1-5.

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⁶ *Ibid*, III-4.

⁷ Chairman, U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Doctrine for Joint Special Operations*, Joint Publication (JP) 3-05 (Washington, DC: CJCS, 17 December 2003), III-1.

⁸ *Ibid*, III-4 to III-6.

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¹⁸ This observation is based on the author's personal experience as a battalion commander in OEF during the 2004-2005 timeframe.

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³⁶ Part of USSOCOM's reluctance to integrate CF and SOF below the JSOTF level results from the difficulty they continue to experience in integrating SOF among themselves. USSOCOM relies on the JSOTF to overcome internal parochial interests between Army, Air Force and Naval SOF units.

³⁷ David J. Kilcullen, "Countering Global Insurgency," *The Journal of Strategic Studies* 28, no. 4 (August 2005), 597. An Australian Army officer, Kilcullen currently serves as the Senior Counterterrorism Advisor to General David Patraeus, the Commanding General, Multi-National Forces Iraq.

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³⁹ U.S. Special Operations Command, *United States Special Operations Forces: Posture Statement 2006: Right Place, Right Time, Right Adversary*, (MacDill Air Force Base, FL: 2006), 3-4.

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⁴⁴ Christie, 16 and Carty, 14.

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