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14. ABSTRACT Twenty years after the Nunn-Cohen Amendment, an operational seam has been identified in regards to the command and control of SOF and conventional forces when operating in shared battle space. In today's joint operational environment, this operational seam is adversely impacting both forces in achieving their tactical and operational objectives. At the tactical level, unity of command is required between forces to prevent diverging focus on the objectives, to minimize fratricide, and to leverage all capabilities to accomplish goals. Given the divergent focus on objectives between SOF and conventional forces, the supported / supporting command relationship may not adequately achieve sufficient level of unity of effort. However, the traditional unity of command relationship of OPCON / TACON can achieve required level of unity of effort between SOF and conventional forces in order for both forces to					
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OPERATIONAL SEAM: THE COMMAND AND CONTROL OF
CONVENTIONAL AND SPECIAL OPERATIONS FORCES

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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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INTRODUCTION

On 14 November 1986, in an attempt to rectify perceived problems associated with intra-service rivalries and the mismanagement of United States Military Special Operations, the Senate and House of Representatives passed Public Law 99-661, known as the Nunn-Cohen Amendment to the Goldwater-Nichols Act. This amendment created three distinct departments¹:

- 1) United States Special Operations Command (USSOCOM) and the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense, Special Operations and Low-Intensity Conflict (ASD/SOLIC).
- 2) Formalized the elements of special operations.²
- 3) Created a new Department of Defense major funding category, Major Force Program 11, authorizing a separate DOD funding line for special operations outside general service funding.

This legislation not only separated special operations forces from under the command and control of conventional forces, but placed them on the same unified command level with conventional forces. Additionally, it provided direction on the responsibilities of USSOCOM and ASD/SOLIC, on whom would control the fiscal and manpower resources, promotions, and grade requirements for the new Special Operations regional sub-unified commands.³ Twenty years after the passing of this amendment, we can collectively look back and agree that the Nunn-Cohen Amendment did in fact achieve its

¹ Marquis, Susan L. Unconventional Warfare: Rebuilding U.S. Special Operations Forces. (Brookings Institution Press) p. 145 - 146

² The elements of special operations are outside the confines of this paper. They are discussed in various articles covering the creation of USSOCOM and the Nunn-Cohen Amendment.

³ Marquis, Susan L. Unconventional Warfare: Rebuilding U.S. Special Operations Forces. (Brookings Institution Press) p. 146

purpose in addressing the earlier problems associated with the command, control and employment of special operations forces.

Today, USSOCOM and the joint forces under its command are unquestionably the world's premier special operations forces and thus have proven to be a major functional component command under the Department of Defense. The United States now has a major command focused and resourced to provide elite forces capable of achieving operational and strategic objectives. However, the Nunn-Cohen Amendment may have created what many believe is an operational seam between Special Operation Forces (SOF) and Conventional Forces. This operational seam is defined as the lack of integration and interoperability of SOF with conventional forces during execution of operations. The thesis of this paper is that the lack of unity of command between Special Operations Forces and conventional forces is the primary reason for this operational seam. The lack of unity of command between SOF and conventional forces is a recurring comment found in after action reviews on almost every major operation from Operation DESERT STORM of 1991 to the current operations ongoing in Iraq and Afghanistan.

The method of demonstrating that command and control is an operational seam between SOF and conventional forces, this paper will first provide examples of this operational seam and the detrimental effect it has on the execution of operations. Second, this paper will discuss factors to consider when establishing command and control relationships between SOF and conventional forces operating within common battle space, and how the current supported / supporting command relationship between SOF and conventional forces violates unity of command. Next, this paper provides an analysis on the SOF perspective of optimizing command and control, and the recent attempts of

USSOCOM and the Joint Staff to rectify this operational seam. Lastly, this paper provides two recommendations to consider that improves command and control between SOF and conventional forces to further close this seam.

Conventional Forces and SOF Operational Seam Example 1: Operation RED

WINGS I and II, Afghanistan, June – July 2005⁴

Operation RED WINGS I was a joint operation designed to destroy Anti-Coalition Militants (ACM) in the Korengal and Matin Valleys of Afghanistan. Additionally, a key leader of the ACM, a known High Payoff Target (HPT), was believed to be in the Area of Operations (AO). The 2nd Battalion, 3rd Marines (2/3) with attached Afghan National Army elements, was tasked to conduct operations within the AO to develop intelligence on the HPT in order to allow Naval Special Operations Forces (NAVSOF) to conduct a surgical strike to kill or capture the HPT during the operation. After the NAVSOF strike, 2/3 with attached Afghan forces would continue operations to destroy remaining ACMs in the AO. Though these two different U.S. forces, one conventional (2/3) and one SOF, were operating within the same battle space, there was no unity of command between the two forces. The commanding officer of 2/3 requested Operational Control⁵ (OPCON) of the NAVSOF force because he had a robust command and control (C2) architecture in place, he was the battle space manager, and he had the predominance of forces operating in the AO. However, “the [Joint Special Operations Task Force] JSOTF would not approve a command and control relationship placing a conventional force in command of

⁴ A full discussion of the events leading up and the execution of Operations RED WINGS I and II can be located in the December 2006, *Marine Corps Gazette*.

⁵ Joint Pub 1-02 defines Operational Control as 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.

any special operations unit.”⁶ Therefore, it was finally agreed upon that the deconfliction of operational fires between NAVSOF and 2/3 would be by space (separation of two forces by physical distance) during the NAVSOF strike on the HPT. After the NAVSOF strike, 2/3 would temporarily come under SOF tactical control during the relief in place when 2/3 would assume control of the NAVSOF Joint Special Operations Area (JSOA) and NAVSOF would return to their base of operations.

Operation RED WINGS I commenced on 27 June 2005 and ended one week later with the compromise of the NAVSOF elements and the downing of a coalition MH-47 helicopter with 16 personnel on board by the ACM. The loss of the MH-47 led to the rapid follow-on operation of RED WINGS II with the purpose of completing the objectives of RED WINGS I and to support the recovery of the downed MH-47.

Operation RED WINGS would end with partial success. The JSOA was cleared of ACM, the recovery of the MH-47 personnel and equipment was completed; however, no HPTs were captured.⁷

The after action report of Operation RED WINGS I and II identified a critical operational seam between NAVSOF and 2/3, which directly related to lack of unity of command between the two forces. Several factors contributed to this. In the planning phase for RED WINGS, little emphasis was placed on the development of the command and control architecture between SOF and conventional forces in terms of either unity of command or unity of effort. Conventional Forces and SOF executed their assigned missions, often simultaneously within each others battle space. This created command

⁶ MacMannis, Col Andrew R. & Scott, LtCol Robert B, “Operation RED WINGS, A joint failure in unity of command,” *Marine Corps Gazette*, Vol. 90 (December 2006), p. 16.

⁷ The operational summary of Operation RED WINGS was condensed from the December 2006 Marine Corps Gazette article Operation RED WINGS by Col MacMannis, USMC & LtCol Scott, USMC.

and control challenges resulting in ad-hoc methods of deconflicting fires, which were achieved “through mutual agreements and coordination of individual units.”⁸

Conventional Force and SOF Operational Seam Example 2: Haditha Triad, Operation IRAQI FREEDOM⁹.

From September 2006 to August 2007, LtCol James Donnellan, the Battalion Commander for 2nd Battalion, 3rd Marine Regiment (2/3), was assigned the area of responsibility for the Haditha Triad, Al Anbar Province, Iraq. This area of operations encompassed the towns of Haditha, Haqliniyah, Barwanah, and Bagdadi. LtCol Donnellan’s battalion command post was located at Forward Operating Base (FOB) Haditha. Additionally, located with-in close proximity to FOB Haditha was an Army SOF Operational Detachment-A (ODA)¹⁰ team with their command post located at Haditha Dam.¹¹ As with the previous Operation RED WINGS example, 2/3, the conventional force, and the Army SOF ODA shared common battle space in the execution of their assigned missions. Though LtCol Donnellan was the battle space manager and had the predominance of forces within the AO, 2/3 and the ODA operated under two distinctly separate chains of command. LtCol Donnellan describes the command and control relationship between 2/3 and the ODA as follows,

⁸ MacMannis, Col Andrew R. & Scott, LtCol Robert B, “Operation RED WINGS, A joint failure in unity of command,” *Marine Corps Gazette*, Vol. 90 (December 2006), p. 18

⁹ The author interviewed four different battalion commanders (3 USMC and 1 USA). All commanding officers interviewed had the same resounding issues in regards to the lack of C2 and unity of effort between their battalions / squadron and SOF during their respective tours in OIF. The example provided by LtCol James Donnellan, USMC, CO 2nd Battalion 3rd Marines is provided as one example. Other battalion commanders interviewed were: Col Patrick Looney, USMC, CO, 3rd Battalion 5th Marines; LtCol Stephen Neary, USMC, CO 3rd Battalion, 8th Marines, and Col Gregory Reilly, USA, CO 1st Squadron, 3d Armored Cavalry Regiment.

¹⁰ Author’s note: An ODA is typically a twelve man detachment and is the smallest of the tactical Army SOF command elements.

¹¹ Donnellan, LtCol James, USMC, Naval War College, interviewed 04 October 2007.

“There was no command and control relationship between 2/3 and the ODA. It was even worse than my previous relationship with the SOF in Afghanistan. When I questioned the ODA leadership on their mission, they replied they were in support of the AO. We resided on the same base and they had little to no interaction with us in regards to intelligence sharing and none in regards to joint operational planning unless they needed our support. Because they did not have to coordinate efforts with me, the ODA gravitated toward whatever interested them or whatever the JSOTF commander considered important for that week. There were tribal engagement issues and humanitarian assistance projects that we were executing with the tribal leaders that were nearly botched because of the ODA. The ODA had different priorities and were offering conflicting humanitarian assistance projects to the same tribal leaders.”¹²

This further illustrates the detrimental effects that non-sequenced and uncoordinated actions between SOF and conventional forces have on operations. This example illustrates that lack of unity of effort expands beyond kinetic operations yet still effects operational goals. When SOF operational objectives and the tactical actions used to achieve them are not in synch with the conventional battle space owner, the consequences may be and probably are detrimental to mission accomplishment of both elements.

Considerations for establishing command and control relationships between SOF and Conventional Forces operating in common battle space

“In regional crises, SOF will enable the geographical CINC to choose from a wide range of options to extend his strategic reach. SOF will serve as a force multiplier for conventional forces and country teams by providing a joint agile force able to rapidly integrate into other forces.”¹³

¹²Donnellan, LtCol James, USMC, Naval War College, interviewed 04 October 2007.

¹³ United States Special Operations Command, SOF Vision 2020, (McDill AFB: USSOCOM Special Operations Historical Office) 16. The author first identified this quote in Gustaitis, Peter J., II “Coalition Special Operations: An Operational-Level View.” Thesis Army War College 1998.

Doctrine for Joint Operations, Joint Publication 3-0, states, “The purpose of unity of command is to ensure unity of effort is achieved under one responsible commander for every objective.”¹⁴ Joint Publication 3-0 further states,

“Unity of command means that all forces operate under a single commander with the requisite authority to direct all forces employed in pursuit of a common purpose. Unity of effort, however, requires coordination and cooperation among all forces oriented toward a commonly recognized objective, although they are not necessarily subordinate to the same command structure.”¹⁵

The doctrinal definition of unity of command explains that unity of command is a command and control relationship established to achieve unity of effort. However, if unity of command between forces is not established, then coordination and cooperation between forces is required to achieve unity of effort. Therefore, following this line of reasoning, at a minimum, unity of effort is required between SOF and conventional forces when operating within the same battle space. However, as the earlier examples describe, unity of effort between SOF and conventional forces may not exist.

Achieving coordination and cooperation requires forces, not formerly operating within the same command, to orient on the same common mission, purpose and end state. This is problematic when Special Operations Forces view their operational purpose as effecting operational and strategic objectives. While, on the other hand, conventional forces view their operational purpose in the accomplishment of tactical objectives which support the attainment of operational and strategic objectives. Achieving unity of effort between forces that are focused on different tactical and operational objectives may be impossible, or at a minimum problematic, given our doctrinal definition.

¹⁴ The Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Doctrine for Joint Operations*, Joint Pub 3-0, (Washington, DC: US Govt Press, 17 September 2006), A-2.

¹⁵ The Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Doctrine for Joint Operations*, Joint Pub 3-0, (Washington, DC: US Govt Press, 17 September 2006), A-2.

To reinforce this idea, Figure 1 (pg 18) depicts a generic joint operation command and control diagram. This generic diagram is the basis for the command and control concept in both OIF and OEF-Afghanistan. The diagram illustrates that SOF operations are commanded by a JSOTF (one star rank) that is coordinating on a command level with the land component commander (three star rank). Within the conventional forces, the land component commander divides his area of operations under regional commanders, who are normally division level commands that operate between the tactical and operational level of war. Division-level commanders in turn subdivide their area of operations under brigade or regimental commands, who operate at the tactical level of war. This division of the area of operations continues down to the battalion and company level who operate at the small unit, tactical level of war. Within the SOF construct, the JSOTF perceives his mission requirements as accomplishing SOF operational objectives throughout the Joint Force Commander's (JFC) AO. Since the JSOTF does not have a long term or permanently assigned area of operations, JSOTF objectives inherently fall within the area of operations of conventional force commanders, normally at the regimental and battalion (tactical) level. Since conventional force battalion-level commands focus on tactical level objectives vice the JSOTF which is focused operational level objectives, mission, purpose and end state of objectives between SOF and conventional forces will probably differ. This absence of unity of effort causes inefficiency and lack of effectiveness in achieving objectives at the tactical and therefore the operational level.

SOF missions to achieve JSOTF operational objectives may be counter productive to the conventional force commander's tactical and operational goals. Furthermore, SOF operations that are conducted within the conventional force area of operations may have

unintended secondary and tertiary effects. The mitigation of these unintended effects by default is the responsibility of that conventional force commander to resolve after the pull-out of SOF elements from the area of operations. This further magnifies the operational disconnect between SOF and conventional forces. When SOF operations adversely impact conventional force tactical objectives, the combination of these negative actions adversely affects the conventional force in obtaining their operational objectives. An example of this is the complaint by Coalition British officers in Helmand Province, Afghanistan,

“Speaking on condition of anonymity, [British officers] criticized American Special Forces for causing most of the civilian deaths and injuries in their area. They also expressed concerns that the American’s [Special Forces] extensive use of air power was turning the people against the foreign presence as British forces were trying to solidify gains against the Taliban.”¹⁶

This example is just one perspective of many that demonstrate the negative consequences of combat operations that lack of unity of effort.

The level of coordination and cooperation to achieve unity of effort depends greatly on the willingness of the respective forces to work together. Coordination and cooperation requires a professional willingness by both conventional and SOF leaders to share information, intelligence and operational plans to achieve unity of effort. Avoiding breeches to unity of effort means that coordination between forces is not conducted minutes prior to commencement of operations unless operational necessity dictates. Proper coordination should be consistent and also takes into account all phases of the operation from planning to consequence management. Cooperation requires the full sharing of information and intelligence between SOF and conventional forces.

¹⁶ Gall, Carlotta, “British Criticize U.S. Air Attacks in Afghan Region”, *New York Times*, 9 August 2007.

Cooperation entails the willingness of forces to understand the effects of their operations and how they impact positively or negatively on the operation of friendly forces within the area of operations.

To further complicate the command and control aspect of SOF and conventional forces operating in the same battle space is the functional command relationship of supported and supporting commands. The Doctrine for Command and Control for Joint Land Operations, Joint Publication 3-31 states,

“The JFC may also establish support relationships among components. The JFC determines not only how to organize the joint force into components, but also how each component relates to the others. Support relationships afford an effective means to ensure unity of effort of various operations, each component typically receiving and providing support at the same time.”¹⁷

Utilizing Operation IRAQI FREEDOM as an example, the main effort in achieving the strategic objective is the conventional ground force under the command of the Joint Force Land Component Commander. However, in the conduct of SOF operations, conventional force commands are placed in a supporting role to the supported SOF command. This command relationship is supported by Major General Huck, Commanding General, 2d Marine Division (Rein) in OIF from February 2005 to February 2006. Major General Huck was responsible for ground combat operations within Multi National Force – West (MNF-W) area of operations. He stated that Multi National Corps – Iraq, his higher headquarters, assigned him the supporting effort to SOF operations conducted within MNF-W area of operations and that the assigned supported

¹⁷ The Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Doctrine for Command and Control for Joint Land Operations*, Joint Pub 3-31, (Washington, DC: US Govt Press, 23 March 2004), p III-2

command was the JSOTF.¹⁸ As outlined in Joint Publication 3-31, for specific operations, this supported / supporting command relationship is in line with joint doctrine. A good example of this supported / supporting relationship is when conventional forces are in support of SOF in the conduct of a direct action raid on a fleeting known high value target and time for detailed planning is limited. However, this type of supported / supporting command relationship should be based on mission requirements and not a standing order covering all missions.

Command and Control from the Special Operations Viewpoint.

Special Operations Forces have concerns regarding command relationships that have SOF under the command and control of conventional forces. Some of these concerns are SOF service centric and others are based off of SOF operational employment considerations. The first concern raised by SOF being placed under the operational or tactical control of conventional forces is the perception that conventional force commanders do not know how to properly employ SOF.¹⁹ During the period prior to the Nunn-Cohen Amendment, this argument may have been relevant.²⁰ However, in the conduct of current operations, twenty years post Goldwater-Nichols, one could counter argue that conventional ground tactical commanders at the battalion, regiment/brigade, and division level are more than qualified to command and control SOF elements.

On the current battlefields, battalion and regimental commanders routinely have multi-national and joint commands consisting of armored, infantry, reconnaissance, and, on

¹⁸ Huck, MajGen Richard, USMC, Assistant Deputy Commandant for Plans, Policies and Operations, HQMC, interviewed 09 October 2007.

¹⁹ Author's note: This issue has been addressed on numerous occasions to the author during my tour at Special Operations Command, Europe. Additionally, this issue again was raised in my interview and discussions with various SOF individuals.

²⁰ Author's note: Chapters 5 & 6 of Marquis, Susan L. Unconventional Warfare: Rebuilding U.S. Special Operations Forces, (Brookings Institution Press), provides an example of this problem via Operation URGENT FURY and discusses SOF concerns under the control of conventional force commands.

occasion, aviation assets. In the employment of these various assets, conventional force commanders are advised of the unique capabilities of these units and / or assets. During the planning phase of operations, commanders receive recommendations for employment by their staffs and subordinate commanders prior to execution. Conventional force commanders at the battalion and regimental level are further reinforced with staffs supported by robust communication assets that are capable of receiving and disseminating information and intelligence in short order. Additionally, in today's joint and operational environment, these commands are routinely comprised of attached elements, with forces coming from the different services, such as Army, Navy and Marine Corps, operating together. At the level of command from battalion and up, this joint command is now common operating practice and not the exception. Furthermore, education and knowledge of SOF employment by conventional forces through doctrinal publications, professional military education, exercises and real world operational experience has increased the conventional force commanders' ability to employ SOF.

The second SOF concern is that "special operations forces, under the C2 of conventional forces, may lose much of their capability to shape the operational environment when assigned to limited geographic boundaries."²¹ When SOF forces are in the execution of operational and strategic objectives, this viewpoint is valid. However, in the execution of long duration counter-insurgency operations that are currently being executed in OIF and OEF-Afghanistan, SOF forces, SF ODAs and similar size NAVSOF units, are routinely assigned operational areas that correspond with conventional force battalion and regimental battle space. These SOF forces conduct daily operations that are

²¹ Center for Army Lessons Learned, "CF / SOF Integration and Interoperability," *Handbook* No. 07-8 February 2007. p 7

at the tactical level and are not directly in pursuit of operational / strategic objectives.²² It is these independent SOF operations at the tactical level that should be nested with the conventional force.

An additional SOF perspective is that “supporting / supported C2 relationships provide the best framework for integrated conventional force / SOF operations. This relationship allows the supported commander to set requirements and gives him the flexibility to determine methods and tactics”²³ to achieve objectives. Though this statement may be doctrinally correct, given the divergent focus on objectives between SOF and conventional forces, as stated earlier, the supported / supporting command relationship at the tactical level may not adequately achieve unity of effort. Perhaps a more formal command and control relationship is required. Therefore, the above statement re-written, *unity of command relationship provides the best framework for integrated conventional force / SOF operations at the tactical level. This relationship allows the single commander to set requirements and gives him the flexibility to determine methods and tactics to achieve objectives.* This statement is also doctrinally correct and may provide the command and control relationship required to better attain unity of effort at the tactical level.

Doctrine for Command and Control for Joint Special Operations Task Force Operations, Joint Publication 3-05.1, states “Conventional forces integrated with SOF create unique capabilities for the JFC to achieve objectives that might otherwise be

²² Author’s note: This is the authors’ perception. The author was cognizant of SOF operations while a contingency operation planner for SOCEUR. Second, the author had operational knowledge of SOF operations in OIF while deployed as Deputy G-3, 2d Marine Division in Ramadi, Iraq, 2005 and as Battalion Commander of 2d Reconnaissance Battalion in Fallujah, Iraq, 2006.

²³ Center for Army Lessons Learned, “CF / SOF Integration and Interoperability,” *Handbook* No. 07-8 February 2007. p 7

unattainable. Flexible C2, specific mission generation process, clear mission approval levels, and tactical interdependence can improve SOF and conventional forces integration.”²⁴ Two important points need to be further clarified in the above Joint Pub quote: flexible C2 and tactical interdependence. Flexible C2 is the command and control best suited for the mission / objective to be accomplished. This flexible C2 allows commanders the full gamut of C2 relationships and should not restrain the conventional force from receiving Operational Control (OPCON) / Tactical Control (TACON)²⁵ of SOF, and vice versa, when the mission and forces involved are best suited for this command type relationship. The second point is tactical interdependence of SOF and conventional forces. Tactical interdependence is when the success of tactical actions by one force is mutually dependent on the tactical success of one or more forces. If one or more tactical failures occur, the tactical failure by all forces involved in the mission is greatly increased. In order to best ensure that tactical interdependence is achieved, units should operate under the command and control architecture to achieve success. Again, this command and control architecture should be mission dependent and not service / component dependent.

Steps toward improvement.

Due to lessons learned from both OIF and OEF, the Joint Staff and USSOCOM have recognized the requirement to address the challenges regarding SOF and conventional forces in the areas of command and control, maneuver, and fire support coordination.

USSOCOM initial publication of *Conventional Forces and Special Operations Forces*

²⁴ The Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Doctrine for Command and Control for Joint Special Operations Task Force Operations*, Joint Pub 3-05.1, (Washington, DC: US Govt Press, 26 April 2007), p III-7

²⁵ Joint Pub 1-02 defines Tactical Control as command authority over assigned or attached forces that is limited to the detailed direction and control of movements or maneuvers within the operational area necessary to accomplish missions or assigned tasks. P. 531.

Integration and Interoperability Handbook and Checklist, Version 2, in September 2006 and the follow-on *CF / SOF Integration and Interoperability; Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures* handbook published by the Center for Army Lessons Learned was to “enhance CF and SOF integration and interoperability resulting in more timely actions, increased opportunities, and a reduced potential for fratricide.”²⁶ Additionally, the 26 April 2007 version of Joint Publication 3-05.1, *Doctrine for Joint Special Operation* adds ten pages discussing SOF and conventional force integration and interoperability. Though these are important steps toward fixing this operational seam, all three of the above documents are generic in nature, and more importantly, skirt the issue in regards to unity of command.

Conclusion / Recommendations

“Effective C2 is a force multiplier that allows commanders to best employ their forces toward a common effort.”²⁷ As the two previous operational examples in Iraq and Afghanistan articulate, the current ‘effective’ command and control relationship utilized between SOF and conventional forces is the supported / supporting command relationship. However, as this paper has argued, the supported / supporting command relationship between SOF and conventional forces may not adequately achieve the level of unity of effort required especially at the tactical level of war. As stated earlier, the purpose of unity of command is to ensure that the highest degree of unity of effort is achieved between forces when they are placed under the command and control of a single commander. At the tactical level, unity of command is required between forces to

²⁶ Mulbury, LTC John J., Chief, Joint/Army Integration Division, USAJFKSWCS interviewed on 10 October 2007.

²⁷ Center for Army Lessons Learned, “CF / SOF Integration and Interoperability,” *Handbook* No. 07-8 February 2007. p 7

prevent diverging focus on the objective, to minimize fratricide, and to leverage all capabilities to accomplish goals.²⁸ Currently in OIF and OEF-Afghanistan, it is the lack of unity of command between SOF and conventional forces, especially at the tactical level, that is the principle cause of this operational seam between these two forces. Provided below, in order of priority, are two recommendations to further close the operational seam between SOF and conventional forces.

Recommendation #1. When possible, unity of command, especially at the tactical level of war, should be the goal in order to achieve the most efficient unity of effort. This relationship allows the single commander to set requirements and gives him the flexibility to determine methods and tactics to achieve objectives. Therefore, when time and planning are available, clear command lines of operational control / tactical control should be developed to ensure the ultimate level of unity of effort is achieved.

Recommendation #2. The development and employment of joint special operations command elements to provide the command and control of all SOF elements operating within a conventional force commanders' area of operations. These special operations command elements should be located under the operational control of conventional force commanders with a functional line back to the JSOTF. In addition to the functional responsibilities, the JSOTF could support both the joint special operations command element and the conventional force commander with operational tasks if concerns did materialize. This would provide unity of command at the tactical level and allow the JSOTF to remain focused at the appropriate operational level.

²⁸ Reilly, COL Gregory D., Naval War College, interviewed 04 October 2007

Summary:

The Nunn-Cohen Amendment was a watershed event in uniting the various armed forces special operations elements into a joint force. This endeavor was undertaken by the civilian leaders to address and resolve problems associated with special operations employment due to inter and intra service employment challenges. Twenty years after this amendment, a new operational seam has been identified in regards to the command and control of SOF and conventional forces when operating in shared battle space. This operational seam is adversely affecting the attainment of tactical and operational level objectives. The Joint Staff, USSOCOM, and the Center for Army Lessons Learned have identified this operational seam and through publications and handbooks have taken strides to close this seam. At the tactical level, unity of command is required between forces to prevent diverging focus on the objectives, to minimize fratricide, and to leverage all capabilities to accomplish goals. At the tactical level, given the divergent focus on objectives between SOF and conventional forces, the supported / supporting command relationship may not adequately achieve unity of effort. In today's joint operational environment, conventional and special operations forces must place aside the pre-Goldwater-Nichols service centric egos and address the problems facing the command and control of forces. The traditional unity of command relationships of OPCON / TACON achieves the ultimate unity of effort between forces. The supported / supporting command relationship to achieve unity of effort is best left at the functional and regional combatant commands to address relationships between the services and components.

Joint Force Command and Control Diagram²⁹

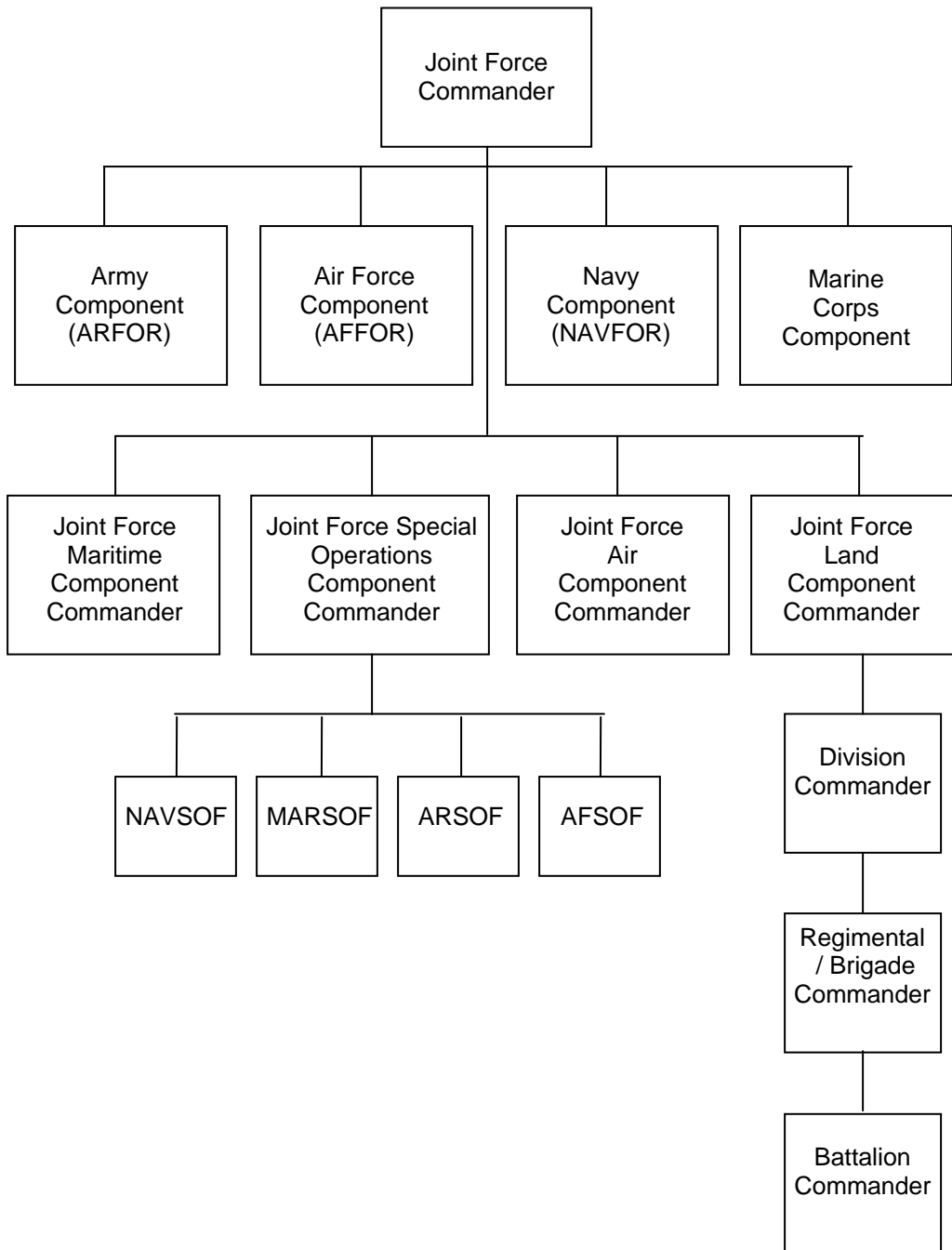


Figure 1

²⁹ This chart is derived from The Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Doctrine for Command and Control for Joint Land Operations*, Joint Pub 3-31, (Washington, DC: US Govt Press, 23 March 2004), p II-4

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