

IMPROVING THE NORTH ATLANTIC TREATY ORGANIZATION  
INTEROPERABILITY OF THE MOLDOVAN SPECIAL FORCES  
THROUGH DOCTRINE, ORGANIZATION, AND TRAINING

A thesis presented to the Faculty of the U.S. Army  
Command and General Staff College in partial  
fulfillment of the requirements for the  
degree

MASTER OF MILITARY ART AND SCIENCE  
Strategic Studies

by

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REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE				Form Approved O.M.B. No. 0704-0188	
Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing this collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden to Department of Defense, Washington Headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports (0704-0188), 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington, VA 22202-4302. Respondents should be aware that notwithstanding any other provision of law, no person shall be subject to any penalty for failing to comply with a collection of information if it does not display a currently valid O.M.B. control number. <b>PLEASE DO NOT RETURN YOUR FORM TO THE ABOVE ADDRESS.</b>					
1. REPORT DATE (DD-MM-YYYY) 18-06-2021		2. REPORT TYPE Master's Thesis		3. DATES COVERED (From - To) SEP 2020 – JUN 2021	
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE Improving the North Atlantic Treaty Organization Interoperability of the Moldovan Special Forces through Doctrine, Organization, and Training				5a. CONTRACT NUMBER	
				5b. GRANT NUMBER	
				5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER	
6. AUTHOR(S)  MAJ Ruslan Varivanov				5d. PROJECT NUMBER	
				5e. TASK NUMBER	
				5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER	
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(E.S.) U.S. Army Command and General Staff College ATTN: ATZL-SWD-GD Fort Leavenworth, KS 66027-2301				8. PERFORMING ORG REPORT NUMBER	
9. SPONSORING / MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(E.S.)				10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S)	
				11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S)	
12. DISTRIBUTION / AVAILABILITY STATEMENT Approved for Public Release; Distribution is Unlimited					
13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES					
14. ABSTRACT One of the primary desires of the Moldovan leadership is to support the prescription in all strategic documents and to increase cooperation with the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. Developing close cooperation and interoperability with NATO became a top priority for the Moldovan Defense sector. Based on this, Moldova has committed itself to complete modernization of the Moldovan Armed Forces in general and the Special Operations Forces in particular per the requirements of the NATO standards. This research focuses on the needed steps for the Moldovan Special Operations Forces to improve its overall status to increase interoperability with NATO partners and future participation in NATO-led operations. The study used qualitative methods to conduct the research and analysis of the National Strategic documents and SOF doctrines and manuals. At the same time, the author examines the current state of the Special Operations Forces Battalion of the National Army applying DOTMLPF-P analysis methodology. The research provides solutions for the existing Special Operations Forces Battalion capabilities with additional Combat Support and Combat Service Support companies to facilitate interoperability with strategic partners. Based on the presented recommendation, the Special Operations Forces Battalion would be more efficient in accomplishing its core missions as directed by the existing strategic documents. The Development of the Special Operations Force's capabilities plays a significant role in the National Army of Moldova transformation to meet the challenges of the 21st century to satisfy national strategic objectives and a new opportunity for interoperability between NATO countries and partners.					
15. SUBJECT TERMS Special Operations Forces Battalion, North Atlantic Treaty Organization, Special Operations Task Group, Special Operations Task Unit, Interoperability, Capabilities, DOTMLPF-P					
16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF:			17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT	18. NUMBER OF PAGES	19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON
a. REPORT (U)	b. ABSTRACT (U)	c. THIS PAGE (U)			19b. PHONE NUMBER (include area code)
			(U)	85	

Standard Form 298 (Rev. 8-98)  
Prescribed by ANSI Std. Z39.18

MASTER OF MILITARY ART AND SCIENCE

THESIS APPROVAL PAGE

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The opinions and conclusions expressed herein are those of the student author and do not necessarily represent the views of the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College or any other governmental agency. (References to this study should include the foregoing statement.)

## ABSTRACT

Improving the North Atlantic Treaty Organization Interoperability of the Moldovan Special Forces through Doctrine, Organization, and Training, by Major Ruslan Varivanov, 85 pages.

One of the primary desires of the Moldovan leadership is to support the prescription in all strategic documents and to increase cooperation with the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. Developing close cooperation and interoperability with NATO became a top priority for the Moldovan Defense sector. Based on this, Moldova has committed itself to complete modernization of the Moldovan Armed Forces in general and the Special Operations Forces in particular per the requirements of the NATO standards. This research focuses on the needed steps for the Moldovan Special Operations Forces to improve its overall status to increase interoperability with NATO partners and future participation in NATO-led operations. The study used qualitative methods to conduct the research and analysis of the National Strategic documents and SOF doctrines and manuals. At the same time, the author examines the current state of the Special Operations Forces Battalion of the National Army applying DOTMLPF-P analysis methodology. The research provides solutions for the existing Special Operations Forces Battalion capabilities with additional Combat Support and Combat Service Support companies to facilitate interoperability with strategic partners. Based on the presented recommendation, the Special Operations Forces Battalion would be more efficient in accomplishing its core missions as directed by the existing strategic documents. The Development of the Special Operations Force's capabilities plays a significant role in the National Army of Moldova transformation to meet the challenges of the 21st century to satisfy national strategic objectives and a new opportunity for interoperability between NATO countries and partners.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First of all, regardless of the pandemic situation that affected everyone during the years 2020 and until now, I would like to sincerely thank all those who willingly agreed to support me in conducting research and completing the Master of Military Art and Science program in this restricted environment. In this particular section, I would like to mention the gratitude to the MMAS committee, to the people who could find the time to guide in the research project.

At first, my deep respect and appreciation went to the chair of my MMAS committee, Mr. Gregory Cook, who gave me direction, motivation, and support at every step. His patience, strength, and wisdom guided me in the right direction of research and he constantly offered me professional advice.

My committee members, Dr. Kenneth Long, Mr. Stephen Harvey, and Mr. David Collins, were able to find time in the Covid-restricted operating environment to analyze my research and provide feedback for this paper.

In particular, Mr. David Collins supported me during the decision-making about continuing the research. As my Staff Group Advisor throughout my studies at CGSC, Mr. Collins had massive input into my education as a field grade officer.

At the end of this section, I want to mention enormous support from my family – my wife Oxana, my son Max, my daughter Beatrice and the newcomer in our family, son Damir, who were far from me going through pandemic difficulties without my presence. I want to thank you from the bottom of my heart for your patience and the support you have given me during the execution of this project. I love you all, and I miss you so much.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ABSTRACT.....	iv
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS .....	v
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	vi
ACRONYMS.....	viii
ILLUSTRATIONS .....	xi
TABLES .....	xii
CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION .....	1
Background and Overview of the Special Operations Forces of the National Army of the Republic of Moldova .....	3
Problem Statement.....	6
The Purpose Statement and Research Question .....	8
Assumptions.....	9
Definition of Key Terms.....	11
Limitations.....	13
Delimitations.....	13
Significance of the Study.....	14
CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW .....	15
Introduction.....	15
National Strategic Documents .....	16
Special Operations Forces .....	21
Summary.....	25
CHAPTER 3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY .....	27
Purpose of the Research.....	27
General Information.....	28
Research Methodology .....	29
CHAPTER 4 ANALYSIS .....	33
Introduction.....	33
Initial Personal Recommendations (R1) .....	33
What are the NATO established standards for SOF entities?.....	38
Doctrine .....	42

Organization.....	43
Training.....	43
NATO Special Operations Forces Requirements .....	44
What are the capability gaps that Moldovan Special Operations Forces Battalion needs to fill to reach interoperability? .....	48
Doctrine .....	48
Organization.....	50
Training.....	51
What are the venues that Moldovan Special Operations Forces Battalion can use to accelerate the modernization process?.....	53
International Partnership Programs .....	54
Moldova under UN/NATO/OSCE Missions .....	56
R2 Updated Personal Recommendation .....	58
Chapter Summary .....	61
 CHAPTER 5 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS .....	62
Stakeholders Engagement Considerations.....	62
Recommendations for the Chief of the General Staff of the National Army and Minister of Defense of Republic of Moldova.....	65
Recommendations for Further Study.....	67
Personal Learning Reflections .....	68
 BIBLIOGRAPHY .....	71

## ACRONYMS

AJP	Allied Joint Publication
CBA	Capability Based Assessment
CBRN	Chemical, Biological, Radiological, and Nuclear Specialists
CFSP	Common Foreign and Security Policy
CS	Combat Support
CSDP	Common Security and Defense Policy
CSS	Combat Service Support
CT	Combatting Terrorism
DA	Direct Actions
DIME	Diplomatic Information Military Economic
DOSI	Defending Objectives of Strategic Importance
DOTMLPF-I	Doctrine, Organization, Training, Materiel, Leadership, Personnel,
DOTMLPF-P	Doctrine, Organization, Training, Materiel, Leadership, Personnel,
EOD	Explosive Ordnance Disposal
EU	European Union
EUMAM	EU Military Advisory Mission
FAA	Functional Area Analysis
FDU	Force Design Update
FMF	Foreign Military Financing
FN	Framework Nation
FNA	Functional Needs Analysis
FSA	Functional Solutions Analysis
HQ	Headquarters



IMET	International Military Education and Training
ISAF	International Security Force Assistance
JCET	Joint Combined Exchange Training
JFSOCC	Combined Joint Force Special Operations Component Command
JMRC	Joint Multinational Readiness Center
KFOR	Kosovo Force
MA	Military Assistance
MOS	Military Occupied Specialties
MTT	Mobile Training Teams
NA5CRO	Non-Article 5 Crisis Respond Operations
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NDS	National Defense Strategy
NSC	National Security Concept
NSHQ	NATO Special Operations Headquarters
NSS	National Security Strategy
NSTI	NATO SOF Transformation Initiative
OCC E&F	Operational Capability Concept Evaluation and Feedback Program
ODA	Operational Detachments Alfa
OGRF	Operational Group of Russian Forces
OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-Operation in Europe
PfP	Partnership for Peace
R1	Initial Personal Recommendation
R2	Informed Position
R3	Recommended Solution
RJECT	Regional Joint Combined Exchange Training

ROMO	Range of Military Operations
ROU SOF	Romanian Special Operations Forces
SACEUR	Supreme Allied Command Europe
SART	Search and Rescue Dog Team
SFOR	Peacekeeping Operation in Bosnia and Herzegovina
SOCC	Special Operational Component Command
SOF	Special Operations Forces
SOFEVAL	Special Operations Forces Evaluation
SOP	Standard Operating Procedure
SOTG	Special Operations Task Group
SOTU	Special Operations Task Unit
SR	Special Reconnaissance
SR&E	Search-Rescue and Evacuation
STANAG	Standardization Agreements
TCT	Tactical Collection Team
TTP	Tactics Techniques and Procedures
UAV	Unmanned Aerial Vehicle
ULT	Unit Level Training
UNMIK	United Nations Mission in Kosovo
UNMIL	UN-led Mission in Liberia
UNMIS	UN-led Peacekeeping Mission in Sudan

## ILLUSTRATIONS

	Page
Figure 1. Map of the Republic of Moldova.....	4
Figure 2. Transnistria Separatist Region .....	5
Figure 3. SOF BN C2 Structure .....	7
Figure 4. List of Objectives from National Defense Strategy.....	20
Figure 5. Author’s Approach to the Research.....	29
Figure 6. Combat Service Support .....	35
Figure 7. Combat Support .....	35
Figure 8. Initial Personal Recommendation.....	37
Figure 9. Initial Personal Recommendation.....	38
Figure 10. Notional Special Operations Component Command.....	40
Figure 11. SOTG Capabilities Requirement .....	46
Figure 12. SOTU Capabilities Requirement .....	47
Figure 13. John P. Kotter Eight-Stage Change Model .....	64

## TABLES

	Page
Table 1. Budget Allocations for the Ministry of Defense, 2016-2020 .....	10
Table 2. Moldova vs. United States Comparison of Military GDP Expenditures .....	26
Table 3. Action Plan for R3 Implementation of Short Term .....	65

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

The Special Operations Forces (SOF) Battalion plays a strategic role in the national security of the Republic of Moldova. While constitutionally neutral, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) is an important partner for both the Republic of Moldova, and the SOF Battalion. This paper analyzes how the Moldovan SOF Battalion can improve NATO interoperability through changes in doctrine, organization, and training.

The thesis is composed of five chapters: Introduction, Literature Review, Methodology, Analysis, and Conclusion and Recommendations. Each of the chapters has several sub-chapters with the purpose to make the study easier to read and comprehend.

Chapter 1, “Introduction,” has several sub-chapters, which offer a broad overview of the Moldovan SOF Battalion and background. Also, this chapter includes the thesis statement, the primary, secondary, and tertiary research questions, assumptions, limitations, delimitations, and the significance of the study.

Chapter 2, “Literature Review,” focuses on the identification of information related to the chosen subject. The chapter is broken down into three sub-chapters. The first one is related to the national strategic documents beginning with the Constitution, National Security Strategy (NSS), Military Strategy, and Doctrine. The second sub-chapter focuses on SOF analyzing NATO and US SOF doctrines and publications. The third sub-chapter is a summary of chapter 2.

Chapter 3, “Methodology,” describes the method used to complete the research and analysis. It emphasizes the qualitative research method, and describes how this paper

applies the Force Development Process and the Doctrine, Organization, Training, Materiel, Leadership, Personnel, Facilities, Policy (DOTMLPF-P) analysis.

Chapter 4, “Analysis,” describes the Initial Personal Recommendation (R1), analyzing NATO SOF requirements and the ways to speed up the process of modernization of the Moldovan SOF to reach a level of interoperability with NATO partners. In the end of the chapter the author provides Updated Personal Recommendation (R2) which drives the next chapter of the thesis.

In Chapter 5, “Conclusions and Recommendations” the author proposes an Action Plan for Implementation (R3) describing a proposed solution to fill the gaps in Doctrine, Organization, and Training. This proposal can serve as document for development the SOF Battalion abilities to reach the level of interoperability with NATO. The final chapter also emphasizes recommendations for decision-makers and stakeholders with conclusions for further research.

This chapter introduces the reader to the context and background and strategically describes the environment, starting with a brief historical description of the SOF Battalion of the National Army of the Republic of Moldova and further discussing the current situation and problems. The description of the research question statement will acquaint the reader with the issue addressed in this thesis. The main research question that emerges from identifying the problem refers and identification of secondary and tertiary questions, answering the fundamental question and clarifying the study. This chapter will introduce and identify key terminology used in this paper, with all the boundaries and limitations. Also, the author will show the importance of studying and structuring this thesis.

In the conclusion of the introduction, the importance of the research and the direction of the research in this field are finalized by structuring the thesis in each paragraph.

### Background and Overview of the Special Operations Forces of the National Army of the Republic of Moldova

This thesis studies the future development of the SOF Battalion of the Republic of Moldova in the pursuit of becoming an interoperable and integrated force to be able to support NATO-led international operations. The Republic of Moldova is a small country (see figure 1), and its Constitution mandates that it remain a neutral state. On August 27, 1991, the Republic of Moldova gained independence from the Soviet Union, and within six days of independence, the National Army was created on September 3 of that year. From March 2 until July 1992, Moldova had an armed conflict for territorial integrity and sovereignty with the separatists in the east of the Dniester River<sup>1</sup> shown in figure 2.

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<sup>1</sup> Madalin Necsutu, “Dniester War Commemorations Highlight Moldova’s Division,” *Balkan Insight*, March 2, 2020, <https://balkaninsight.com/2020/03/02/dniester-war-commemorations-highlight-moldovas-divisions/>.



Figure 1. Map of the Republic of Moldova

Source: Central Intelligence Agency, "The World Factbook: Europe: Moldova," accessed April 28, 2021, <https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/static/bbf06772b67356c7301b45f69d12e912/85d05/MD-map.jpg>.



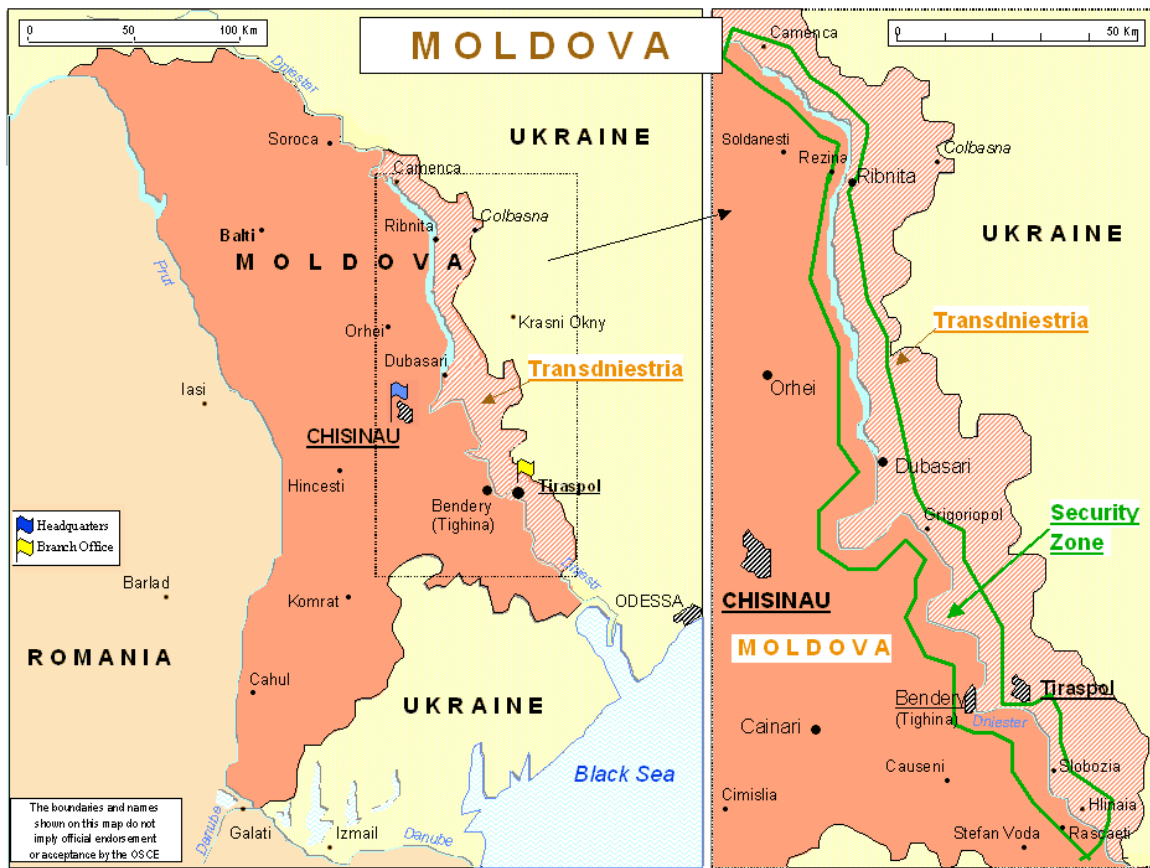


Figure 2. Transnistria Separatist Region

*Source:* Federation of American Scientists, “Russian Military Districts,” accessed April 28, 2021, <http://fas.org/nuke/guide/russia/agency/mo-md.htm>.

After only being in existence for six months, the National Army was already involved in restoring the newly independent Republic of Moldova integrity with the so-called Transnistrian Moldovan Republic. Moldova has not been able to reunify with the separatist eastern state because of Russia’s political interference. Despite repeated demands from the Republic of Moldova for its withdrawal, Russia still maintains a contingent of troops that shields Transnistria from reunification with Moldova. The armed conflict lasted no more than five months and demonstrated that the Republic of Moldova needed a small, mobile, and strong Army, which needs to protect the state’s

sovereignty, the Republic's interests and reject any aggression. November 1, 1992, the SOF Battalion was created as a specialized structure within the National Army, capable of rapid, discreet, and timely intervention in maximum risk areas, peacetime and crisis, and war situations. From the perspective of strengthening national security and European Union (EU) integration, the National Army's transformation aims to achieve a viable, modern, and small force structure compatible with the North Atlantic Alliance's structures and modern European armies.

The SOF Battalion's fundamental objective is to prepare for and, if necessary, to execute a wide range of operations, independently or in cooperation with the Army's conventional forces. Under national command authority, operations are conducted in any area, on the national territory or outside it, to defend the Republic of Moldova's fundamental interests. Joining the Partnership-for-Peace Program (PfP) Republic of Moldova to the democratic western countries within NATO's and within some coalitions was the beginning of the assertion of a new category of forces among those existing in the National Army.

### Problem Statement

Currently, the Moldovan SOF Battalion performs a wide range of missions specific to it and plays an essential role in cooperation with conventional forces. Since its formation, the SOF Battalion has undergone many reforms and adaptations to carry out missions supporting national interests. The development and transformation of the SOF Battalion (see figure 3) were based on US SOF and NATO SOF. The threat that Russia represents from the eastern part of separatist Moldova presents a much different problem set. This research analyzes the Moldovan SOF Battalion's problems in the new political,

social, and military environment resulting from the war situation waged by the Russian threat. The development of SOF Battalion capabilities, driving forces, and some critical factors will be presented. Additionally, analyzing other countries close to the development of SOF will identify possible new challenges and examples that can be addressed to the development of the SOF Battalion of the Republic of Moldova. In this way, this research will present a recommendation not only for development but also for future problems and challenges.

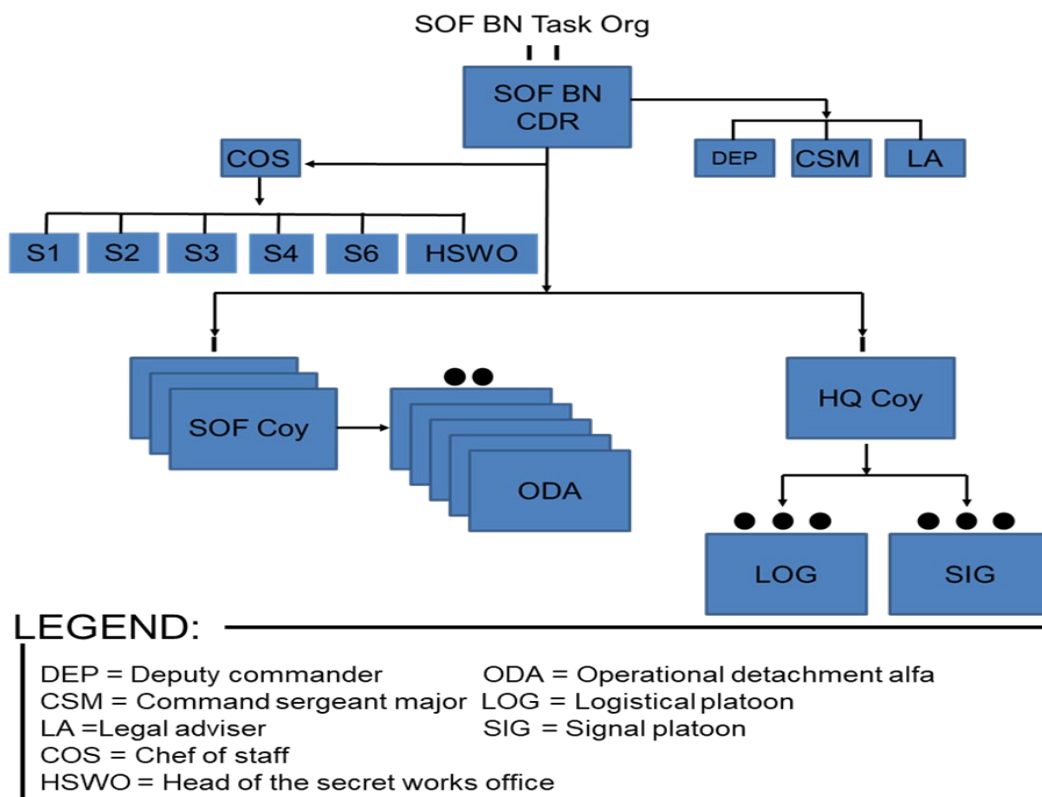


Figure 3. SOF BN C2 Structure

*Source:* Created by the author using Headquarters, Department of the Army, Army Doctrine Reference Publication 1-02, *Terms and Military Symbols*, Change 1 (Washington, DC: Army Publishing Directorate, November 16, 2016).

### The Purpose Statement and Research Question

The purpose of this thesis is to research the Moldovan SOF Battalion's ability to gain the required level of interoperability with the NATO as a part of the Euro-Atlantic integration process, which is being conducted to improve the SOF Battalion capabilities for increasing the level of stability and peace in Europe. To achieve the thesis's aim with the focus on present challenges, the primary research question was identified as: How can the Moldovan SOF Battalion improve its overall status to increase the level of interoperability with NATO?

The first challenge on the road to the SOF Battalion transformation is the doctrinal component focusing on the NATO Standardization mechanism. The interoperability of multinational forces, doctrines, and procedures requires common terminology in addition to the ability to integrate command and control systems, military equipment. To achieve this task, NATO has developed standardization agreements. As the nation determines the unit's capabilities, the NATO standardization mechanism, presented by the NATO Standardization Agreements (STANAGs), measures the unit's fitness and interoperability potential and then using SOFEVAL (Special Operations Forces Evaluation) to evaluate required capabilities.

To research the Moldovan SOF Battalion current state with NATO integration and to analyze the issues and challenges for the Moldovan SOF Battalion readiness to become a contributor to NATO-led forces, the following secondary research questions.

1. What are the NATO established standards for SOF entities?

Tertiary questions are:

- a. Doctrine
- b. Organization
- c. Training
- d. NATO SOF Requirements

2. What are the capability gaps that the Moldovan SOF Battalion needs to fill to reach interoperability?

Tertiary questions are:

- a. Doctrine
- b. Organization
- c. Training

3. What are the venues that the Moldovan SOF Battalion can use to accelerate the modernization process?

Tertiary questions are:

- a. International Partnership Programs
- b. NATO/US missions

### Assumptions

This thesis will assume that the SOF Battalion in Moldova continues its current transformation process transforming our doctrine, adding new companies to the organization, and changing the way it trains to provide a streamlined and effective force capable of accomplishing national defense's principal mission and gain interoperability as a trusted NATO ally.

The first assumption is that the Moldovan National Army will continue development to meet NATO standardization. This assumption is based on the support of NATO in the modernization of the National Army of Moldova to meet the necessary NATO requirements.

The second assumption is The Republic of Moldova will increase the budget allocation for the future modernization of the National Army's capabilities. The allocation of the budget for the National Army in recent years has not progressed (see table 1), which slows down the possibility of developing and equipping with the modern equipment necessary for SOF Battalion.

Table 1. Budget Allocations for the Ministry of Defense, 2016-2020

The National Army of the Republic of Moldova Budget Allocations					
Year	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
% of GDP	0.4	0.3	0.3	0.4	-
MDA lei	538276.6	553875.2	628300.0	772200.0	-

*Source:* Created by author using Republic of Moldova, Ministry of Defense, "Distribution of the budget of the National Army of Moldova (2016 to 2020)," accessed April 28, 2021, <https://databank.worldbank.org/source/world-development-indicators>.

The third assumption is that Russia poses a threat to the Republic of Moldova's territorial sovereignty, and this danger will remain in effect for the next ten years.

Another assumption about Russia's current activities in all post-Soviet countries with territorial integration problems is Georgia (Ossetia and Abkhazia) and Ukraine (Crimea and Donbas). The questions of the Transnistrian region and Russian troops' withdrawal

remain an unresolved issue and pose a danger of an easy outbreak of a new-armed conflict.<sup>2</sup> As long as there is a “frozen conflict”<sup>3</sup> on the territory of Moldova, it will be an obstacle to joining the EU. That implies that there will be no relying on support from NATO or the United States since Moldova is not part of NATO and there is no relation to non-Article five on protection against possible aggression.

### Definition of Key Terms

For the reader’s convenience, here are some definitions of the key terms used throughout the thesis.

Neutrality Concept – The quality or state of being neutral, primarily refusal to take part in a war between other powers.<sup>4</sup> The Republic of Moldova proclaimed its permanent neutrality in the Constitution, Article 11, according to which the Republic of Moldova does not accept foreign forces stationed on its territory.

Hybrid Threat – The diverse and dynamic combination of regular forces, irregular forces, and/or criminal elements is unified to achieve mutually benefiting effects.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Madalin Necsutu, “Russia Pulls Transnistria Strings, with Eye on Ukraine,” *Balkan Insight*, September 26, 2019, <https://balkaninsight.com/2019/09/26/russia-pulls-transnistria-strings-with-eye-on-ukraine/>.

<sup>3</sup> William Hill, “More than a Frozen Conflict: Russian Foreign Policy toward Moldova,” (The Atlantic Council, Washington, DC, August 2018), <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/in-depth-research-reports/report/more-than-a-frozen-conflict-russian-foreign-policy-toward-moldova-2/>.

<sup>4</sup> Merriam-Webster, “Neutrality,” accessed October 11, 2020, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/neutrality>.

<sup>5</sup> Headquarters, Department of the Army, Training Circular 7-100, *Hybrid Threat* Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, November 26, 2010).

Interoperability – refers to the ability of various military organizations to conduct joint operations. These organizations can be of different nationalities or various armed services (ground, naval, and air forces), or both.<sup>6</sup>

Special Operations Forces (SOF) – Active and reserve component forces of the Army that are specifically organized, trained, and equipped to conduct special operations, called SOF<sup>7</sup>

Special Operational Task Group (SOTG) – The national grouping of the land, sea, and air SOF, employed to conduct Special Operations as Commanding element and planning cell, Combined Joint Force Special Operations Component Command (JFSOCC) they can be joint or combined if necessary.<sup>8</sup>

Special Operational Task Unit (SOTU) – Tactical level combat element of SOF employed by land, sea, or air and capable of conducting a full range of special operations.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> North Atlantic Treaty Organization, “Backgrounder: Interoperability for Joint Operations,” July 2006, [https://www.nato.int/nato\\_static\\_fl2014/assets/pdf/pdf\\_publications/20120116\\_interoperability-en.pdf](https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/pdf_publications/20120116_interoperability-en.pdf).

<sup>7</sup> John Alvarez, Robert Nalepa, Anna-Marie Wyant, and Fred Zimmerman, *Special Operations Forces Reference Manual*, 4th ed: (Fort Belvoir, VA: Defense Technical Information Center), <https://doi.org/10.21236/ADA625223>.

<sup>8</sup> NATO Special Operations Headquarters (NSHQ), *Special Operations Task Group Manual (SOTG)*, ver. 1.0 (SHAPE, Belgium: NATO, February 6, 2015), 1-6.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid. 1-7.



NATO Standardization – Is the development and implementation of concepts, doctrines, and procedures to achieve and maintain the required levels of compatibility, interchangeability, or commonality needed to achieve interoperability.<sup>10</sup>

### Limitations

This research does not use any sensitive or classified documents. Due to the sensitivity and classification of the information regarding SOF, this thesis's research is based on collecting information from open sources, books, and military publications.

Finally, this research will use the US Army Force Management Model as an example to describe transformation processes that need to be used to develop Special Operations Forces Battalion to meet all requirements for modernization and interoperability among SOF from partner countries.

### Delimitations

This paper will focus on doctrine, theories, and published materials in both Romanian and English. It focuses on open sources avoiding any classified documents or materials. The study will address the identification and reorganization of modernization needs which can help develop SOF Battalion for current and future challenges.

Comparing Moldova SOF Battalion and US SOF/NATO SOF will not show any solution to the problem, but it will help define some problems which can be used to suggest improvements.

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<sup>10</sup> North Atlantic Treaty Organization, "Standardization," last updated January 23, 2017, [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/topics\\_69269.htm#:~:text=NATO%20standardization%20is%20the%20development,procedural%2C%20material%20and%20administrative%20fields](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/topics_69269.htm#:~:text=NATO%20standardization%20is%20the%20development,procedural%2C%20material%20and%20administrative%20fields).

The thesis will not focus on all other elements of the DOTMLPF-P model except the Doctrine, Organization, and Training model due to the time limitation to address for a more in-depth investigation of the relationships between all DOTMLPF-P elements.

Another delimitation is the unrestrained finance environment that the National Army of Moldova does not have enough to apply towards the necessary resources to develop SOF Battalion.

### Significance of the Study

This study's significance is to identify the Moldovan National Army's problems and how an approach can be found to develop SOFs' potential to meet national's strategic objectives. The National Army of Moldova can use it to address some of the problems regarding the critical capabilities and force structure designated to reach interoperability with NATO partners for future participation in international operations. Specifically, it determines what kind of capabilities the SOF Battalion must have in order to fulfill its national commitments. Additionally, what should be the composition of the forces dedicated to international operations based on the NATO requirement capabilities?

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### Introduction

The armed forces are subordinated exclusively to the people's will to guarantee the sovereignty, independence, unity, and territorial integrity of the country and constitutional democracy.<sup>11</sup> For achieving the goal, a series of missions are established for the Armed Forces, which derive both from the country's Constitution and national legislation in force, as well as from the NSS, the National Defense Strategy (NDS), and the international treaties to which the Republic of Moldova is a party. In the chapter, the study aims primarily to identify the development capabilities needed for SOF Battalion to contribute strongly and capabilities to interoperability with SOF and NATO missions. The second purpose is to identify missions that need to be addressed to fill the gap based on supporting international partners. The third purpose is to determine organizational deficiencies to better respond to interoperability with NATO.

In general, the study examines how SOF Battalion of the National Army of Moldova can contribute to the country's national team's interests by participating in international missions under NATO, providing and promoting peace in the region and worldwide. This thesis will focus more on the doctrinal approach used by the United States, NATO, and Moldovan SOF to succeed in conducting a qualitative analysis. This chapter will examine the legal and strategic national security documents focusing on

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<sup>11</sup> Parliament, Republic of Moldova, Moldova (Republic of)'s Constitution of 1994 with Amendments through 2006, July 29, 1994, [https://www.constituteproject.org/constitution/Moldova\\_2006.pdf](https://www.constituteproject.org/constitution/Moldova_2006.pdf).

those that address the development of capacity and interoperability with US/NATO forces. It will only address open-source articles and doctrinal publications to limit reliance on classified information.

### National Strategic Documents

The Constitution of the Republic of Moldova, approved on July 29, 1994, is the first legal act of reference for the elaboration and implementation of the security and defense policy of the Republic of Moldova. The Constitution proclaims supreme national values and principles: sovereignty and independence, unitary and indivisible character, the rule of law; inalienability of the territory; respect for human rights and freedoms. A specific constitutional norm that determines the distinct character of the Republic of Moldova's security and defense policy is the status of permanent neutrality and the declaration that "The Republic of Moldova does not allow the deployment of military troops of other states on its territory."<sup>12</sup> The Constitution does not provide further details on the obligations, rights, or other criteria arising from permanent neutrality status. Because following Article 57 of the Constitution, the Republic of Moldova's Armed Forces is responsible for the national defense, border security, and law enforcement within the existing legal framework.

The National Security Concept is the first document related exclusively to the definition of the Republic of Moldova's security and defense policy:

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<sup>12</sup> Parliament, Moldova (Republic of)'s Constitution of 1994, Article 11.

The National Security Concept of the Republic of Moldova is a document that outlines the medium term national security priorities of the state. It will serve as a basis for conducting the national security policy, improvement of the national security system, delineation of the competencies and responsibilities of the state authorities in order to prepare and assure proper means and forces to maintain the security of the nation and lasting development of the state.<sup>13</sup>

On July 15, 2011, the Parliament of the Republic of Moldova approved the NSS, which is the first document of its kind in the Republic of Moldova. According to the definitions in the preamble, the strategy “sets out the national security system’s objectives and identifies ways and means of ensuring national security.”<sup>14</sup> The NSS is a long-term political and legal act that allows for the adaptation of the national security policy depending on internal and external evolutions of threats. The NSS also identifies specific national security segments that need reform and implementation of a realistic reform plan. The NSS takes an approach identical to that of the European Security Strategy, according to which “the national security of a European state can no longer be seen in isolation”<sup>15</sup> and “takes into account comprehensive approach to national security, its multidimensional and interdependent character, determined both by the state of affairs in the political, military and public order in the country and by the situation in the

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<sup>13</sup> *National Security Concept of the Republic of Moldova*, July 15, 2011. accessed April 28, 2021, <https://www.mfa.gov.md/img/docs/national-security-concept-of-the-RM.doc>

<sup>14</sup> Parliament, Republic of Moldova, *National Security Strategy of the Republic of Moldova* (NSS), in *Official Gazette*, no. 170-175 (14 October 2011): article no. 499, <http://lex.justice.md/md/340510/>.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

economic, social, ecological, energy, etc.”<sup>16</sup> The NSS determines national interests; the main threats, risks, and vulnerabilities to national security; the prominent landmarks of foreign policy and defense policy related to ensuring national security; ways to ensure national security; guidelines for national security sector reform.

A separate chapter of the NSS is dedicated to the vision and actions to strengthen national security through foreign and defense policy.<sup>17</sup> The Strategy recognizes that “a special place in the context of security belongs to the participation of the Republic of Moldova in global, regional and sub-regional efforts to promote international stability and security through cooperation within the United Nations (UN), the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), NATO and other relevant international organizations into EU Common Security and Defense Policy (CSDP) missions.”<sup>18</sup> The Strategy states that “the national security of the Republic of Moldova cannot be conceived outside the context of European security”<sup>19</sup> and that “within the integration efforts, special attention will be paid to intensifying cooperation with the EU on Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and Common Security and Defense Policy (CSDP), aimed at strengthening national and regional security. The Republic of Moldova will cooperate with the EU in the fields of conflict prevention and resolution, crisis

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<sup>16</sup> Parliament, NSS.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., ch. 3.

<sup>18</sup> Ministry of Defence (MOD) of the Republic of Moldova, *National Defense Strategy* (NDS) (Chisinau, Moldova: Ministry of Defence, May 2, 2018), <https://www.army.md/img/userfiles/doconline/sna.pdf>, 10.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

management, non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.”<sup>20</sup> Finally, the NSS guides the NDS.

The NDS is a policy document that provides the basis for national defense planning and provides necessary guidance for various state institutions to provide their input to the national defense. The President of the Republic of Moldova signed the NDS on May 2, 2018, coordinating with the Ministry of Defense. The NDS is the policy document that describes the security environment, military threats to the Republic of Moldova, and its risks. The NDS defines the Armed Forces’ missions established in current national legislation and identifies the necessary military capabilities. At the same time, NDS establishes the requirements for financing and implementation of strategic military objectives. Proper identification of military threats and risks is essential for national defense, as it helps to avoid adverse consequences for the Republic of Moldova.<sup>21</sup>

All changes outlined in the NDS need to be supported by the government to modernize existing national security and defense systems. Moreover, NDS identifies the threats and factors that create risks to national security, such as the military and paramilitary forces of the regime on the left bank of the Dniester; the presence of the Operational Group of Russian Forces (OGRF); and the possibility of extending the conflict in Ukraine to the border of the Republic of Moldova. All national objectives are

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<sup>20</sup> MOD, NDS, 10.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 11.

expected to be achieved through a concentration of national efforts in the following directions.

1. Development of military capabilities;
2. Development of an efficient mobilization mechanism;
3. Parliamentary control;
4. Adequate legal framework;
5. Strategic communication;
6. Consolidation of the national defense capabilities towards an eventual hybrid threat;
7. Improvement of the crisis response capabilities;
8. Providing security to the existing critical infrastructure;
9. Effective border control;
10. Standard implementation for the cyber defense capabilities;
11. R.M. credibility consolidation towards its external partners;
12. Military education improvement;
13. Development of a cooperative relationship with intergovernmental or regional organizations.

Figure 4. List of Objectives from National Defense Strategy

*Sources:* Ministry of Defence of the Republic of Moldova, *National Defense Strategy* (Chisinau, Moldova: Ministry of Defense, May 2, 2018), <https://www.army.md/img/userfiles/doonline/sna.pdf>.

Besides, all national efforts supporting the defense domain will be orienting to exploit all available resources, especially the human, financial, and material ones.<sup>22</sup>

The Military Doctrine of the Republic of Moldova is the last important document related to the country's security concept and was update in 2018. The doctrine mainly focuses on the Republic of Moldova's Armed Force's ability to defend its sovereignty and territorial integrity. The considerations of the country's neutrality, defense capabilities are the main form of combat for which the Armed Forces should be trained

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<sup>22</sup> MOD, NDS.



and prepared. The Military Doctrine also considers international military cooperation as the primary political and military tool needed to overcome all existing regional threats. It is important to reiterate that the Military Doctrine was amended in 2018, and its providers match the current environment and ambitions of the Government of the Republic of Moldova for future development.

### Special Operations Forces

Addressing international authors, we can find much information that refers to the policies and the trends adopted by the international organizations, such as NATO, relevant to this study. It have to be mentioned that the keywords in the sources, which promote regional stability, collective security, and international cooperation. To be well suited by SOF Battalion to the above trends, it is necessary to review the SOF missions overall because changes in geopolitical and geostrategic environments affect the forces for special operations, their role, missions, and utilization. According to the *NATO Special Operations Doctrine*, SOF are specially designed, organized, trained, equipped, and operated by specially selected personnel who plan and execute special operations (military activities) using unconventional tactics, techniques, and engagement methods.<sup>23</sup> These special operations may be carried out on the full spectrum of military action, independently or in conjunction with conventional forces, to achieve the desired End State, at strategic or operational levels, or maybe carried out when there are significant

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<sup>23</sup> North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), *Allied Joint Publication (AJP) 3.5, Allied Joint Doctrine for Special Operations*, ed. A, ver. 1 (Brussels, Belgium: NATO Standardization Agency, December 2013).

political risks. At some point, politico-military interests may require the execution of covert or clandestine actions, with the acceptance of risks not associated with operations performed by conventional military forces.<sup>24</sup>

Practically all doctrines of SOF have some standard missions as Direct Actions (DA), Special Reconnaissance (SR), Combatting Terrorism (CT), Search-Rescue and Evacuation (SR&E), and Defending Objectives of Strategic Importance (DOSI).<sup>25</sup> Where Moldovan SOF Battalion can perform those missions as a part of defending the country's integrity or if it will be deployed abroad. Allied Joint Publication (AJP)-3.5, *Allied Joint Doctrine* describes how NATO Special Operations may be conducted across the Range of Military Operations (ROMO) as part of Article 5 collective defense operations or non-Article Crisis Response Operations 5 (NA5CRO) for the fulfillment of NATO's three essential tasks (collective defense, crisis management, and cooperative security). "Special operations take place not only as part of NATO's crisis response system, but also as part of NATO's crisis response system, but also for peacetime engagement, enhancing cooperation."<sup>26</sup>

For NATO needs, the SOF in the armies of the member countries, by their nature, have the potential to affect the right counterinsurgency environment due to their unique capabilities to carry out precise counter-violence actions with a low impact on third

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<sup>24</sup> NATO, AJP 3.5.

<sup>25</sup> Ministerul al Apararii al Republicii Moldova, Marele Stat Major, *Manualul pentru Lupta al Batalionului Forte Speciale* (provizoriu) (Chisinau, Moldova: Ministerul al Apararii al Republicii Moldova, 2007), 21-24.

<sup>26</sup> NATO, AJP-3.5.

parties' integrity. SOF also has the ability to integrate other military and police forces to achieve unity of action. SOF also has ability to build capabilities through Security Force Assistance. SOF also has the ability to interact with the population at a higher level because SOF operators are required, at all stages of their training, starting with the selection to understand different individual and social human cultures and typologies.

The lessons learned from the involvement of NATO SOF in conflicts such as Iraq and Afghanistan validate the capabilities listed above. In the book, *Not a Good Day to Die*, Sean Naylor describes the combined SOF operations by Task Force K-Bar in Afghanistan under Operation Enduring Freedom and the importance of SOF interoperability.<sup>27</sup> The NATO Special Operations Headquarters (NSHQ) is the centerpiece of the NATO SOF Transformation Initiative (NSTI). It provides focused Special Operations advice to the Supreme Allied Command Europe (SACEUR) and the NATO Chain of Command and provides a collaborative, inter-dependent platform to enhance the Alliance SOF network. Through the NSHQ, NATO is transforming the current NATO SOF capability, leader education and development, doctrine, training and planning, information systems, and infrastructure.<sup>28</sup> Individually, some SOF in allied and partner countries have full command and control capabilities, liaison, integration into joint structures and capacities to act, tested in interventions under national or international authority. Based upon how well developed the country and the possibility

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<sup>27</sup> Sean Naylor, *Not a Good Day to Die: The Untold Story of Operation Anaconda* (New York: Berkley Books, 2005).

<sup>28</sup> NATO Special Operations Headquarters, accessed June 10, 2021, <https://www.nshq.nato.int/nshq/>.

might have its own Special Operational Component Command (SOCC) with all integrated staff positions. Others, at the beginning of formation (especially in the case of new members), have developed partial capacities, mainly for action. They are still on the way to the development of their SOCC and at the moment can provide just a small element as SOTU's for the tactical level relying upon the lead Nation sustainment. Moreover, although the SOF principles are mainly universal, differences are generated by the interests, visions, available resources, and security cultures specific to each state.

All this highlighted the need for NATO to create a system that would allow the efficient use of SOF in achieving the alliance's objectives. This system can be detailed in the following components like Legal framework (Policies, Doctrines), C2 structures, Action structures, Training system.<sup>29</sup> Reality required the development of an appropriate military response capability to counter the specific threats to the modern security environment, which can fully integrate into national power instruments (Diplomatic Information Military Economic or DIME). In implementing the SOF system of the alliance, the most crucial decision was to launch, during the summit meetings, the NSTI. The adaptation of our forces must continue as NATO has designed a set of initiatives to increase the capacity to respond to contemporary threats and challenges.<sup>30</sup> Allied states have created over time, and states created SOF as strategic capabilities depending on the

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<sup>29</sup> NSHQ, SOTG.

<sup>30</sup> Daniel P. Fata, "Prepared Statement of Daniel P. Fata, Deputy Assistant Secretary, European and NATO Affairs, U.S. Department of Defense," in U.S. Congress, House, *The United States and NATO: Transformation and the Riga Summit: Hearing before the Subcommittee on Europe and Emerging Threats, Committee on International Relations, 109th Cong., 2nd sess.* 4, no. 21-26 (May 3, 2006): 12-27 (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2006).

interests, visions, available resources, security cultures, and the particularities of the geopolitical environments specific to each state. Placing them under the NATO umbrella in combined operations shows that interoperability is increasing. The limited literature specifically dedicated to special operations interoperability resides in military journals, articles, NATO, and US publications. All manuals and books give a theoretical overview integration while emphasizing that SOF should primarily structure its forces to meet national objectives. This section aims to focus only on SOF military forces that we can document from open sources.

### Summary

This chapter is focused on acquiring the necessary information to establish the most suitable process of development for the SOF Battalion of the National Army of Moldova. NATO and the United States can serve as examples of successfully developing their SOF units; however, one must keep in mind the economic and financial wellness of each of those states which have the possibility. Even if the author uses the NATO and US SOF as a baseline or a starting point to the research, the focus remains on the factors that forced the change. It is impossible to make a continuous comparison of Moldova and NATO because the strategic documents look at environments where Moldova might not be looking at the same environment. While Moldova and US budgets are not a good comparison based upon economic development and Army budget allocation, that comparison is provide in table 2. The Republic of Moldova can use these examples to develop the necessary transition plan to properly allocate an increased budget to develop a SOF Battalion fully capable and prepared for 21st Century warfare.

Comparison of Military expenditure in (% of GDP and current USD)						
<b>Moldova</b>	<b>Year</b>	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
	<b>% of GDP</b>	0.4	0.3	0.3	0.4	-
	<b>Dollars \$</b>	27,431,006.1	30,926,160.5	37,404,689.5	44,466,198.3	-
<b>USA</b>	<b>% of GDP</b>	3.4	3.3	3.3	3.4	-
	<b>Dollars \$</b>	639,856,443,000	646,752,927,000	682,491,400,000	731,751,400,000	-

Table 2. Moldova vs. United States Comparison of Military GDP Expenditures

*Source:* Created by author using The World Bank, “Comparison of Military Expenditure in (% of GDP and Current USD), accessed April 28, 2021, <https://databank.worldbank.org/source/world-development-indicators>.

## CHAPTER 3

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

#### Purpose of the Research

The purpose of this study is to assist the leadership and other decision-makers of the National Army of the Republic of Moldova regarding the development and modernization of the existing structure of the SOF Battalion. The study also provides a necessary assessment of the requirements set out in disconnects between policy documents and disconnects national security strategies. The SOF Battalion must have the capabilities necessary to respond to threats. It is essential to provide a solution that will be suitable, feasible, and acceptable to decision-makers and reduce the current capability gap. Current points of concern for leadership and decision-makers include an inadequate organizational structure with limited supporting elements, not aligned manuals, and clear operational guidance for SOF Battalion employment. The Moldovan military doctrine has not been revised for a long time, which misaligns the appropriate use of the SOF Battalion from the NDS.

In order to apply the findings of this research, the process of transformation and modernization of the SOF Battalion must be carried out correctly. The process must cover all the areas of the DOTMLPF-P concept though this paper will concentrate on organization, personnel, and training. The process must be continuously supported and approved by the Republic of Moldova's Government. All military echelons and personnel involved must align policy, resources, and activities to change doctrine, structure, and training of the SOF Battalion.

### General Information

The author of this paper will use a qualitative research method for this study. In line with Sharan B. Merriam and Elizabeth J. Tisdell's *A Guide to Design and Implementation*, the author will focus on qualitative research. In addition to simple qualitative research, the author will additionally apply an analysis of Dr. Long's professional case study.<sup>31</sup> Applying Dr. Long's methodology consists of the following phase: R1 - Initial personal recommendation; R2 - Updated personal recommendation; R3 - Proposed solution (concept). It will ultimately provide the criteria suitable, feasible, and acceptable solution to the initially identified problem statement. Therefore, there is a need for a detailed approach to the problem that can provide a workable solution by applying existing resources.

In chapter 4, after applying the Force Development Process and the DOTMLPF-P analysis, the author will begin with the R1 based on his knowledge, experience, and preferences. However, this initial recommendation cannot be proposed to the chief decision-maker as a final product. The next step will be followed by the R2. Finally, in chapter 5, the author will apply the Kotter Model. The R3 will be provided for the chief decision-maker, as illustrated in figure 5.

The first step of the study is the analysis of national strategic documents and the National Army's existing doctrine. Then, research is focused on available sources of NATO and US doctrines for the proposed development of necessary capabilities and interoperability of the SOF Battalion. Finally, the research analyzes the existing

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<sup>31</sup> Dr. Kenneth E. Long "Dr. Long's Methodology," (Lecture, US Army Command and General Staff College, Ft. Leavenworth, KS, October 18, 2020).



capabilities of the SOF Battalion using the DOTMLPF-P concept relative to the necessary capabilities.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

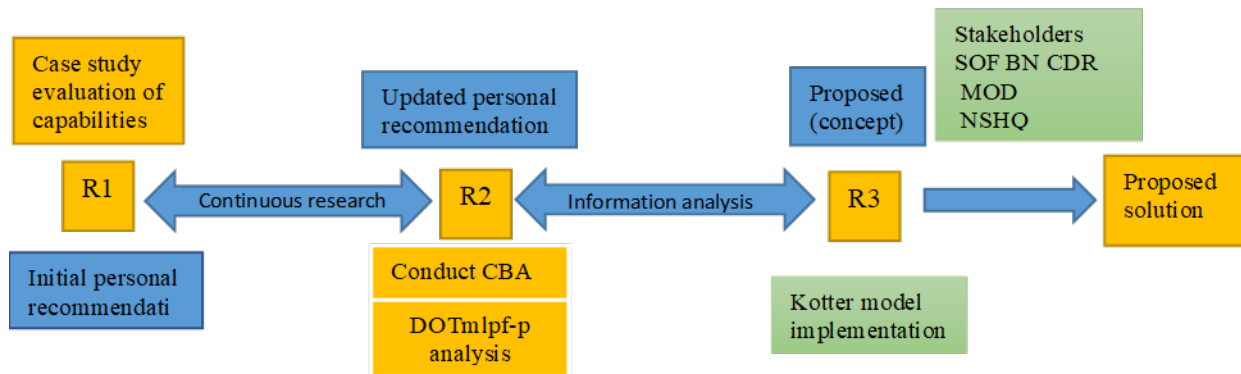


Figure 5. Author's Approach to the Research

Source: Created by author.

### Research Methodology

The study follows a professional case study design to create a more complex research methodology. As per Merriam and Tisdell's *Qualitative Research*, basic qualitative research focuses on meaning, understanding, process, a purposeful sample, data collection, inductive and comparative data analysis, and results from richly descriptive data presented as themes or categories.<sup>32</sup> It is necessary to understand the need and process of comparing the SOF from something "nebulous" to a defined, in size, organization with capabilities that satisfy all national requirements. Based on a study of

<sup>32</sup> Sharan B. Merriam and Elizabeth J. Tisdell, *Qualitative Research: A Guide to Design and Implementations* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2015), 42.

Admiral William McRaven's *Spec Ops, Case Studies in Special Operations Warfare*, we can make some comparisons with US SOF. It still cannot be directly compared to the Moldovan SOF due to various reasons. The most obvious difference is the employment of the US SOF and the significantly higher budget for the US Defense institution as a whole. However, some processes and concepts are the same, like the SOF core missions, organization structure, and Military Occupational Specialties (MOSs) applies to both. Therefore, the development of the proper structure for the Moldovan SOF Battalion can be based on comparison with several other nation's forces. Finally, but not least, much of the information is classified, which makes this paper rely on open sources of data and comparison with the author's personal experience to approach the qualitative research methodology.

In this research, the author also applies a modified capability-based assessment (CBA) through its functional area analysis (FAA), functional needs analysis (FNA), and functional solutions analysis (FSA) that considers the professional body of knowledge. The CBA is a material or non-material solution based on a detailed analysis through the DOTMLPF-P lenses.<sup>33</sup>

A modified CBA application to a set of National Strategic Documents of the Republic of Moldova provided valuable insights to identify some essential capability gaps in the existing structure of the SOF Battalion. The first step of the CBA will identify

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<sup>33</sup> US Army Command and General Staff College (CGSC), F102: Joint and Army Capability Development, F102RA-Consolidated Extracted Reading, in *F102: Joint and Army Capability Development*, Common Core, CGSC, Fort Leavenworth, KS, 2020.

the operational tasks, conditions, and standards needed to achieve military objectives.<sup>34</sup> The output is a description of the mission and the military problem being assessed and a list of required capabilities and associated tasks, conditions, and standards against which current and programmed solutions are analyzed to meet the mission objectives.<sup>35</sup> The author provides the background information and the current SOF Forces Battalion status by analyzing the conditions that require transformation and the capabilities evaluation needed for the SOF Battalion. Furthermore, all national interests and objectives are also stated that imply the development of some urgent current and future capabilities for the SOF Battalion to accomplish its missions.

The second phase of the CBA process, the FNA, is used to identify and prioritize gaps that will impede the future force from accomplishing its mission.<sup>36</sup> The primary input is the approved list of tasks, conditions, and standards from the FAA, and the output analysis is a list of capability gaps, redundancies, shortfalls, and an estimate of the timeframe in that a solution is required.<sup>37</sup> The author will prioritize the existing objectives based on professional judgement and identify gaps that significantly impede the SOF Battalion from its core mission sets.

The third and last phase of the CBA process, the FSA, is where potential materiel and non-material DOTMLPF-P solutions and policy approaches to solving or mitigating

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<sup>34</sup> CGSC, F102: Joint and Army Capability Development.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

capability gaps identified in the FNA are provided.<sup>38</sup> The proposed approaches of an FSA must meet three criteria. First, approaches must be suitable strategically responsive and deliver approaches when and where they are needed. Second, approaches must be acceptable concerning policy, sustainment, personnel limitations, and technological risk. Third, approaches must be feasible in that the defense institution could resource and implement the approaches within the timeframe required.<sup>39</sup> It is essential to reiterate that the author will focus only on an evaluation through the doctrine, organization, and training domains in this research.

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<sup>38</sup> CGSC, F102: Joint and Army Capability Development.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

## CHAPTER 4

### ANALYSIS

#### Introduction

The purpose of this thesis is to research how the Moldovan SOF Battalion can improve their overall status to increase the level of interoperability with NATO as a part of the Euro-Atlantic integration process that is conducted to improve the Moldovan Army capabilities for increasing the stability and peace support operations in Eastern Region. The thesis is discussed from the SOF Battalion issues' perspective, considering all the challenges, threats, and constitutional responsibilities that the unit must perform its duties. The analysis will be conducted using three elements of the DOTMLPF-P model supported and developed by findings on the secondary research questions.

#### Initial Personal Recommendations (R1)

In this thesis, the author will be applying professional case study research beginning with his judgment implication for providing necessary recommendations, moving towards identification process and necessary solutions proposal, and using the research methodology that was explained in chapter 3. Further, the author will provide R1 for the organizational structure to add two additional companies. The author is not trying to change the entire organizational structure of SOF Battalion but proposes adding Combat Support (CS) and Combat Service Support (CSS) companies. These additions will increase the possibility of being self-sustaining for a period of more than 74 hours to be able to execute assigned missions. The author suggests that this paper is for the SOF Battalion to investigate the Doctrine, Organization, and Training domains as an approach

in more detail. The SOF Battalion was formed on the US SOF structural basis with identical Operational Detachments Alpha (ODA) and MOS only without a combat support company. The SOF Organization does not ensure SOF missions' fulfillment since the company that executes the logistical support does not have the necessary capacity to support maneuver companies. Based on this problem, SOF Battalion can carry out combat operations autonomously for only 74 hours.

SOF units generally have limited organic CS and CSS elements, so they usually require additional CS and CSS services to accomplish missions. Due to the high demand, low-density nature of CS, SOF requests these assets through the chain of command or once in theater through the allocation process. With CSS elements, SOF usually deploys with enough CSS to internally support for limited durations of time until theater support structures can be established under the Common User Logistics agreements.<sup>40</sup> According to the *Special Operations Forces Reference Manual*, typical service provided CS and CSS capabilities required to augment or replace SOF CS/CSS organic capabilities are listed below in figures 6 and 7.

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<sup>40</sup> Alvarez et al., *Special Operations Forces Reference Manual*.

### **Combat Service Support**

- Supply.
- Maintenance.
- Transportation.
- Health service support.
- Explosive ordnance disposal.
- Field services.
- Legal support.
- Finance services.
- Building and maintaining sustainment bases.
- Assessing, repairing, and maintaining infrastructure.

Figure 6. Combat Service Support

Source: John Alvarez, Robert Nalepa, Anna-Marie Wyant, and Fred Zimmerman, *Special Operations Forces Reference Manual*, 4th ed. (Fort Belvoir, VA: Defense Technical Information Center, 2015), <https://doi.org/10.21236/ADA625223>.

### **Combat Support**

- Indirect fires
- Chemical
- Engineer
- Intelligence
- Information Operations
- Military police
- Signal
- Aviation (reconnaissance, signals intelligence, mobility, strike, and IO)

Figure 7. Combat Support

Source: John Alvarez, Robert Nalepa, Anna-Marie Wyant, and Fred Zimmerman, *Special Operations Forces Reference Manual*, 4th ed. (Fort Belvoir, VA: Defense Technical Information Center, 2015), <https://doi.org/10.21236/ADA625223>.

US and NATO SOF organizational structures were selected as an example of being suitable models necessary changes in Moldovan SOF Battalion that lack those necessary elements. The recommended approach for solving and filling gaps, the author will address using Force Design Update (FDU) to develop an organization model. In fact, this option does not propose a change in whole organizational concepts of the unit but only increases its capabilities with additional companies such as CSS and CS (see figures 8 and 9). The CSS Company will require five platoons: Administrative, Maintenance, Supply, Transportation, and Medical health care services. The CS Company will require five platoons: Search and rescue dog team, Engineer and Chemical, unmanned aerial vehicle operators' team, Communications and information, and Force protection. The perspective will create conditions for well-equipped and permanently ready forces and contribute to further operations and future interoperability with SOF elements under NATO missions. The purpose is to modernize the SOF Battalion for independent execution of any given tasks.



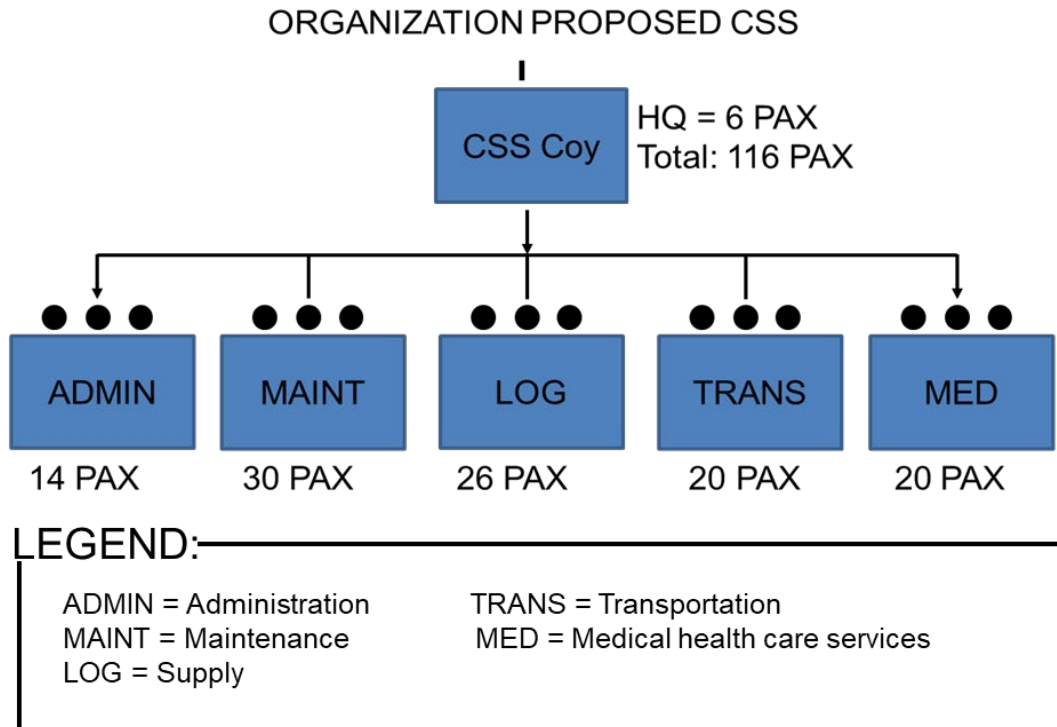


Figure 8. Initial Personal Recommendation

*Source:* Created by the author.

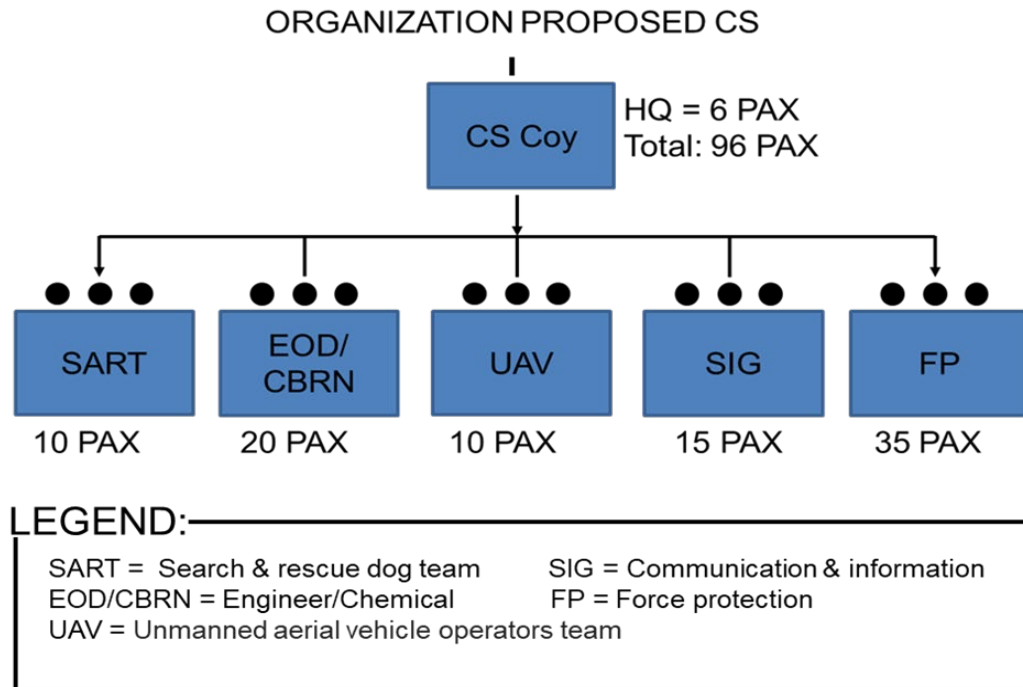


Figure 9. Initial Personal Recommendation

*Source:* Created by the author.

### What are the NATO established standards for SOF entities?

The SOF are usually joint and organized with aviation, naval, or other contributing nations' forces.<sup>41</sup> SOF provide a vital instrument ideal for the unusual and irregular operational environment. SOF allows countries an economy of force in national and collective defense. SOF is a strategic asset because of its ability to achieve political, military, psychological, and informational objectives representing the foundational instruments of national power.<sup>42</sup> AJP 3.5 describes special operations embracing two

<sup>41</sup> NATO, AJP 3.5, 1-2.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

mutually supporting and complementary approaches: the direct and indirect approach.<sup>43</sup> These approaches are alternatively known as kinetic and non-kinetic missions. The direct approach applies short, sharply focused offensive action to rapidly dominate carefully chosen vulnerability points with clarity of purpose and a clearly defined aim. The indirect approach orients efforts to loosen the adversary's grip by upsetting his balance, thereby setting conditions for the direct component's targeted application.<sup>44</sup> NATO SOF doctrine identifies three principal tasks: Military Assistance (MA), SR, and DA.<sup>45</sup> The following table gives an overview of the NATO SOCC Organizational structure.

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<sup>43</sup> NATO, AJP 3.5, 1-2.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 2-1.

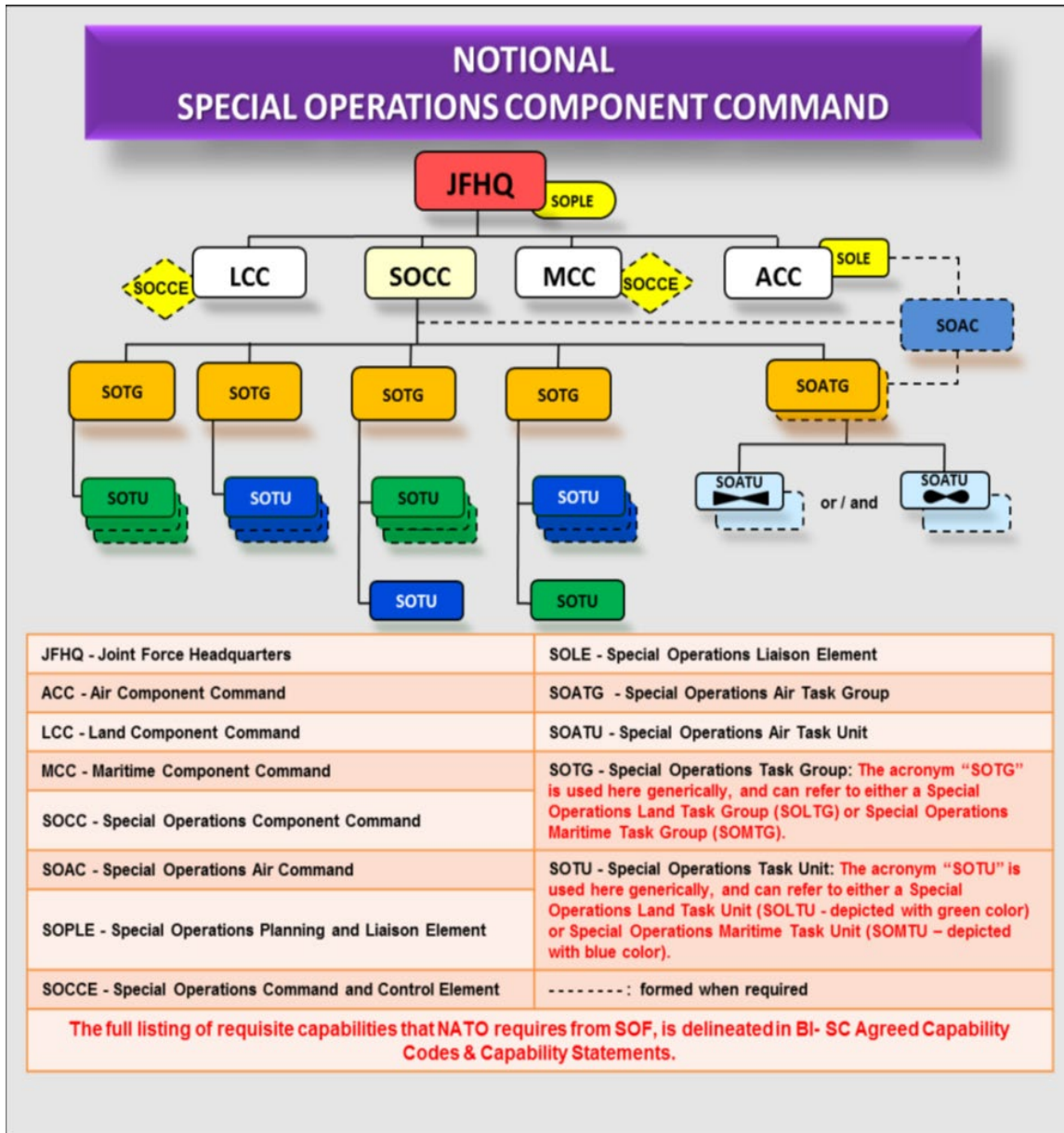


Figure 10. Notional Special Operations Component Command

*Source:* NATO Special Operations Headquarters, *Special Operations Task Group Manual*, version 1.0 (Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe, Belgium: NATO, February 6, 2015), 1-8.

The SOCC is a multinational or national joint component command formed around a framework nation (FN). SOCCs are non-standing headquarters (HQ) in the

NATO force structure tailored for each operation according to the number of SOTGs assigned and the degree of C2 required.<sup>46</sup> SOTG is a fundamental type SOF element comprised of a HQ that can conduct S1-S6 staff functions for planning and conducting Special Operations. A SOTG is made up of SOTUs. “A Special Operations Task Unit is the lowest level of a SOF tactical-level combat element [and] . . . is normally comprised of 4-16 personnel.”<sup>47</sup>

SOTG is a self-sustaining, national grouping of land or maritime SOF, in principle generated from a single nation; however, it can also be combined under a single commander.<sup>48</sup> Although some nations cannot fill a complete SOTG element due to nations’ abilities, they can fill certain requirements within a Lead Nation’s SOTG. An example of past contributions to the NATO SOF was the participation of the United States, Germany, Norway, Poland, and Romania in the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan. These nations showed a mature capability by providing highly ready SOTUs and SOTGs to NATO SOF. In 2007-2008 and beyond, Romania and Poland have committed a SOTG with two to three SOTU elements as part of the ISAF.<sup>49</sup> In Romania and Poland, their partnership with US SOF as part of ISAF and the

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<sup>46</sup> NATO, AJP 3.5, 3-1.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 3-5.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 3-4.

<sup>49</sup> LTC Buck Dellinger, “Special Operations Command Europe: Strengthening Partnerships for Global Security,” *Special Warfare* 25, no. 2 (April-June 2012): 12-15, <https://www.soc.mil/SWCS/SWmag/archive/SW2502/SW2502SpecialOperationsCommandEurope.html>.

Provincial Response Company missions has dramatically improved their capability.<sup>50</sup> Like this example, the Moldovan SOF Battalion would also improve and develop its interoperability more effectively by working together with a more extensive and more mature NATO SOF partner. DOTMLPF-P serves as a helpful tool for better analyzing gaps that need to be addressed.

### Doctrine

The NSHQ is transforming the current NATO SOF capability, leader education, development, doctrine, training, planning, information systems, and infrastructure. Besides a number of journal articles dedicated to NATO SOF integration, many other appropriate documents are published to NATO SOF. Examples of these documents are the *Special Operations Task Group (SOTG) Manual*, *Special Operational Task Unit (SOTU) Manual*, and *Special Operations Component Commander (SOCC) Manual*. These documents give a theoretical overview to structure forces for enhanced integration while emphasizing that national SOF forces should primarily structure their forces to meet national military objectives. The NATO *Military Committee Special Operations Policy* and AJP 3.5 are the NATO SOF current doctrine. They apply to all NATO and partner countries by providing an operational level overview of SOF operations that describes the establishment of temporary headquarters and command relationships during contingency operations. The NATO SOF doctrine is common to all nations SOF under NATO. The NATO SOF doctrine serves during joint training, cooperation, and

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<sup>50</sup> Dellinger, “Special Operations Command Europe: Strengthening Partnerships for Global Security,” 12-15.

deployment among all SOF elements, and is an excellent tool for improving their capabilities and standardizing Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures (TTPs) at tactical, operational, and strategic levels.

### Organization

The organizational model must be integrated into NATO SOF, and the different nations should contribute with SOTU elements under one nation or combined SOTG structure. Some nations providing forces to a SOTG cannot provide maritime or air elements due to national budgetary constraints. Those nations focus on contributing only land elements to SOTUs rely on nations with more capable and mature SOF organizations to provide the balance of capabilities. According to the SOTG manual and AJP-3.5, a SOTG is comprised of a HQ with 19 personnel that can conduct J1-J6 staff functions and can lead up to six SOTUs. Each SOTU has up to 16 personnel as a team and CS/CSS, which is one of the essential elements in supporting Special Operations. This is through (CS) up to 15 personnel and (CSS) up to 30 personnel, overall, one full operational SOTG provides C2 for six SOTUs up to 160 personnel.

### Training

The training events held by NATO and the United States regarding SOF interoperability and capabilities development were conducted based on the NATO SOF doctrine with all partners and allies. Although NATO SOF holds many training exercises with different names and places, they all cover three NATO SOF core tasks: MA, DA, SR. The Jackal Stone exercise serves as a bedrock designed to build special operations capabilities and improve interoperability among European partner nations. This exercise

is an annual event hosted by different countries each year. The Trojan Footprint is an annual SOCEUR-led exercise that brings together US, Allied, and partner special operations forces across Europe. The exercise's principal training objectives are rapid deployment to the Baltic region and synchronizing multi-domain mission command across several nations at the operational level and below. US SOF uses Joint Combined Exchange Training (JCET) as a method to improve Europe's SOF training. The training model is a means by which SOF maintains its combat readiness and simultaneously participates in theater security cooperation. This concept provides training opportunities and increases cooperation for US SOF with Allies and partners. Other nations with more mature SOF have established The Regional Joint Combined Exchange Training (RJCET), where neighbors' nations SOF execute combined training exercises to increase cooperation and interoperability in Special Operations. Likewise, NATO SOF School at the NSHQ provides different comprehensive SOF training events to improve interoperability, capability, and effectiveness partners' and allies' SOF elements through training and education to meet the requirements of NATO's special operations. These exercises and training events provide great opportunities to synchronize and deconflict communications and TTPs. At the same time, they give the possibility to achieve standardization, builds mutual trust, and improves interoperability across SOF communities.

#### NATO Special Operations Forces Requirements

All nations who participate in the NATO integration process must meet requirements set in NATO standards. Any nation wishing to contribute SOF elements may do so based on national capabilities best suited to SOTGs or SOTUs. Since different



nations have different capabilities and resources, they might contribute an organic SOTG with subordinate SOTUs. Nations with lesser resources may contribute smaller elements to a combined SOTG or just SOTU elements. In this case, the author will address some of the minimum capabilities requirements that need to be met from nations who contribute to NATO SOF and those eager to meet the NATO standard requirement to be interoperable with SOF elements see figure 11.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Supreme Allied Commander, Europe and Supreme Allied Commander, Transformation, “BI-SC Capability Codes and Capability Statements,” NATO, January 26, 2016, <https://www.scribd.com/document/382349178/Capability-Codes-and-Capability-Statements-2016-Bi-sc-Nu0083>.

1. **Description.** Capable of planning and conducting the full spectrum of special operations (including the three principal tasks of Military Assistance, Direct Action, and Special Reconnaissance.) across the full spectrum of military operations, unilaterally and independently, as directed by a SOCC or support of a regular commander.
2. **Principal Capabilities.**
  - (a) Capable of establishing procedures and employing equipment for air-land-maritime integration at the tactical level.
  - (b) Capable of employing multinational joint special operations capabilities by day and night in all terrains and environments, in all weather conditions, and under austere conditions.
  - (c) Capable of implementing non-lethal measures.
  - (d) Capable of contributing to the joint functions (including time-sensitive targeting/dynamic targeting) throughout the J.O.A., as well as conducting and/or deconflicting joint functions for subordinate forces.
  - (e) Capable of intelligence fusion using planning, mapping, network analysis software, and infrastructure to support all available intelligence's time management.
3. **Enabling Capabilities.**
  - (a) Capable of deploying liaison elements to higher H.Q.s and other entities in the J.O.A.
  - (b) Capable of retaining full operational capability by providing protection for vital H.Q. elements in chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear (CBRN) environments and maintaining sufficient command, control, communications, and computers intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (I.S.R.) redundancy to sustain operations post-CBRN events.
  - (c) Capable of providing an appropriate level of force protection (F.P.).
  - (d) Capable of integrating and employing F.P. assets and procedures, including implementing operations security (OPSEC), information security (INFOSEC), communications security (COMSEC), CBRN, and health protection policies and standards (including restrictive security procedures for sensitive or compartmentalized SOF operations).
  - (e) Capable of integration within the overall Alliance joint I.S.R. capability to permit effective collection tasking, cross-cueing other collection capabilities, and disseminating collected information to users.
  - (f) Capable of insertion into the J.O.A. as a fully integrated entity when part of the initial entry capability.
  - (g) Capable of providing sustainment across all supply classes for up to 30 standard days of supply (D.O.S.). Unit on-hand stocks should amount to 10 standards D.O.S.
  - (h) Capable of employing measures to minimize the vulnerability to a cyberattack, maintain the degree of continuity of operation acceptable to the Commander during an attack, and restore services to full operational capability after an attack.
  - (i) Capable of automatically updating logistic/operations chains of command regarding ammunition, fuel consumption, and human resources, as well as combat and non-combat-related significant damages.
  - (j) Capable of providing an appropriate level of improvised explosive device (I.E.D.) protection.

Figure 11. SOTG Capabilities Requirement

*Source:* NATO Special Operations Headquarters, *Special Operations Task Group Manual*, ver. 1.0 (Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe, Belgium: NATO, February 6, 2015), 1-8.

SOTU is the lowest level of a SOF tactical-level combat element deployed by air, land, or sea and can conduct MA, DA, SR. A SOTU, depending on actual strength, may be capable of split-team operations.<sup>52</sup> It is up to a nation to define the size of SOTU.

Regardless of its size, a SOTU should have the capabilities as shown in figure 12.

<sup>52</sup> NSHQ, SOTG, 1-9.

- (1) Plans and conducts special operations separately, as part of SOTG, or in conjunction with conventional forces.
- (2) Infiltrates and exfiltrates to/from specified operational areas by air, land, or sea.
- (3) Conducts operations in remote areas and all types of environments (desert, arctic, alpine, jungle, urban) and in hostile areas for days with minimal external support.
- (4) Develops, organizes, equips, trains, and advises or directs indigenous forces.
- (5) Conducts offensive operations to destroy, kill, or capture personnel, equipment, or infrastructure (does not have the holding capability).
- (6) Provides commanders with real-time information from all types of areas (ground truth).
- (7) Directs fires from air, land, and maritime platforms.
- (8) Operates discreetly, covertly, or overtly.
- (9) Supports time-sensitive targeting, combat search and rescue (CSAR), personnel recovery (P.R.), and a Q.R.F.
- (10) Conducts technical exploitation operations (T.E.O.s).
- (11) Able to receive resupply from air, land, and maritime assets.
- (12) Interoperable with all SOTUs operating under the same SOTG HQ

Figure 12. SOTU Capabilities Requirement

*Source:* NATO Special Operations Headquarters, *Special Operations Task Group Manual*, version 1.0 (Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe, Belgium: NATO, February 6, 2015), 1-11.

As stated earlier, the ISAF in Afghanistan is an example of nations like Lithuania, Croatia, Hungary, and Macedonia contributing and deploying SOTU elements under the leading nation SOTG element. Nevertheless, it is challenging for some of the less developed nations to meet the requirements and reach the standards without any help from developed and mature contributors such as NATO/US SOF.

### What are the capability gaps that Moldovan Special Operations Forces Battalion needs to fill to reach interoperability?

The process of gaining interoperability for the Moldovan SOF Battalion needs improvement. In this sub-chapter, the author will focus on analyzing the current state of the SOF Battalion, identify gaps, and identify required steps for improvement. The author will use the DOTMLPF-P model and emphasize three elements Doctrine, Organization, and Training. In this sub-chapter, the author will rely on open-source information and personal knowledge based on experience while serving in the SOF Battalion. All the information presented in this sub-chapter by the author is unclassified.

#### Doctrine

Unfortunately, the current essential doctrinal documents for the Moldovan Army do not have any chapters addressing specific elements of SOF. Based on that, the Army Doctrine went through a minor modification almost from its creation. The entire Moldovan Army possesses limited capabilities and lacks qualified personnel to update and align with others' national documents. As a result, all drafts of field manuals and regulations for the SOF Battalion were written by unit personnel with close collaborations with Military Academy personnel. The Military Academy serves as a coordinator for Chief of Staff approval, and is the only organization with accreditations and rights to edit and publish military doctrines, field manuals, and regulations.<sup>53</sup> The J7 Directorate of Training and Doctrine in the Main Staff of the National Army has the

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<sup>53</sup> Academia Militară, "Alexandru cel Bun," Normative Acts, accessed March 12 2021, <https://www.academy.army.md/en/informatii-publice/acte-normative/>.

mission to ensure the general planning, organization, management, and evaluation of the training process in the National Army and the Ministry of Defense institutions state higher education.<sup>54</sup> The Joint Training and Doctrines Directorate is directly responsible for the organization and individual training in the National Army. At the same time, the Directorate elaborates the proposals regarding the need to complete and improve the legislative and normative framework in the field of ensuring the state military security and the need to allocate the necessary financial resources for the training process in the National Army for the training year or special missions.

The structure also coordinates the development of troop training programs, professional development of officers, non-commissioned officers, and sergeants engaged by contract in military units and participates in the planning and organization of training activities for troop command bodies to carry out combat missions.<sup>55</sup> Almost all SOF Battalion personnel went through NATO/US schools with specific educational programs relating to Special Operations, trying to implement those pieces of knowledge for updating existing manuals and regulations regarding SOF Battalion. All manuals and regulations written by SOF Battalion personnel are like NATO/US SOF manuals with the different military equipment adjustments, weapon systems, and mission sets regarding National Strategy Objectives.

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<sup>54</sup> Ministry of Defense of the Republic of Moldova, “J7 Doctrine and Joint Training Directorate,” accessed March 14, 2021, <https://www.army.md/?lng=2&action=show&cat=186&submenuheader;=0>.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

Thus, SOF Battalion can reach its ability for required cooperation with partner nations in terms of interoperability, which is positive for the SOF Battalion. “Without common doctrine, tactics, techniques, and procedures, Alliance members and partners would be left wanting for the proper way to employ together operationally.”<sup>56</sup> From another point of view, their quality is not at the expected level as it supposes to be because some of the manuals are just a translated version of US or NATO manuals. However, National Army took a big step to reach and increase interoperability with NATO by implementing NATO standardization between its entire organization and still a lot to do towards the end state.

### Organization

The SOF Battalion is established structured and organized equivalent to US SOF. This decision was made to implement the organizational structure to meet required standards, which is beneficial for interoperability between NATO/US SOF elements. One of the National Army’s objectives is to reach interoperability with NATO by standardizing the documents to develop the necessary capabilities it needs. As SOF Battalion is part of the National Army and serves under direct command, the National Army Commander is an important strategic element. It is important to draw special attention to the development of SOF Battalion’s necessary capacities to execute the missions according to its destination. One of the current issues related to the organization

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<sup>56</sup> Cihangir Aksit, “Smart standardization: A Historical and Contemporary Success at NATO,” (NATO Standardization Agency, Brussels, Belgium, May 28, 2014), 3, [https://www.nato.int/nato\\_static/assets/pdf/pdf\\_2014\\_05/20140528\\_140528-smart-standardization.pdf](https://www.nato.int/nato_static/assets/pdf/pdf_2014_05/20140528_140528-smart-standardization.pdf).

is that SOF Battalion is completely structured to meet the minimum requirements for interoperability with NATO. The minimum requirements for one of Special Operations Forces Battalion can generate one SOTG with four to six subordinate SOTUs. To reach the maximum requirement and meet the SOF Battalion's full operational capabilities, some adjustments with additional CS and CSS elements meet the NATO SOF requirement. Now Moldovan SOF Battalion should form a complete SOTG with all its components which is normally composed of:

- (1) A HQ that can conduct the S1-S8 staff functions.
- (2) Up to six subordinate SOTUs.
- (3) CS elements.
- 4) CSS elements.<sup>57</sup>

From the organizational perspective, the SOF Battalion took many steps forward in its modernization to ensure maximum interoperability with NATO/US SOF and partners. There are still minor shortfalls that must be addressed, but overall, SOF Battalion is well suited for interoperability development towards NATO standards with insignificant adjustments.

### Training

While the Moldovan National Army seeks to improve its capability to meet necessary interoperability requirements with NATO partners, adapting NATO Doctrine and standards for the entire organization plays a crucial role in the standardization process of interoperability with the NATO forces. Training is the main element to test

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<sup>57</sup> NSHQ, SOTG, 1-8.

Doctrine to achieve interoperability with the partners and alliance. Concerning Training for SOF Battalion personnel inside the Moldovan Army remained an issue due to the lack of outdated training sites. As a result, SOF Battalion cannot receive expected training, which eventually affects its readiness status and ability to develop necessary skills. However, because of close cooperation with NATO and partners, the SOF Battalion benefits from multinational training and exercises grasps by Host Nations on their training sites. The close cooperation and participation in different exercises with NATO and the United States have significantly increased quality training. As a result, the training processes of SOF Battalion based on the exercise and training offered by Moldova's strategic partners have increased its personnel skills at the tactical and operational levels. The SOF Battalion is annually participating in various training exercises such as JCET, half of them are held in Moldova and another half outside of Moldova, like Joint Multinational Readiness Center (JMRC), in Hohenfels, Germany.

The SOF Battalion participation in JMRC Exercises gives excellent opportunities to test interoperability with SOF elements and integration with conventional forces, which is critical by ensuring reliable communications and a common picture of the operational environment. Another critical element that necessitates being mentioned is Mobile Training Teams (MTT), which help develop SOF Battalion training programs by conducting Planning, Rehearsing, and Executing the mission set. As a result of those courses, the SOF Battalion personnel can develop and conduct their training curricula and be instructors. Finally, based upon participation in multinational training exercises abroad, the Army executes a balance between its limited national training capabilities and resources. There are excellent training opportunities for the SOF Battalion derived from



multinational exercises that simulate realistic operational environments where the NATO forces and its allies operate today.

What are the venues that Moldovan Special Operations Forces Battalion can use to accelerate the modernization process?

In this subsection, the author describes several programs that offer advantages for accelerating the SOF Battalion modernization process and the National Army of Moldova as a whole. It is important to remember that the modernization process itself is not easy and requires time and resources. The Moldovan leadership wants to develop the National Army's necessary capabilities to achieve national goals and meet international requirements. To achieve its desired goal, the Moldovan leadership is trying to use all its efforts to attract foreign partners to have a modern army capable of responding to aggression against the territorial integrity of Moldova. Some aspects can accelerate the National Army's modernization, especially the SOF Battalion at all three levels tactically, operationally, and strategically. Implementation of cooperation programs between partners can produce a huge impetus to achieve strategic objectives. Based on the NATO partners' military experience, this can be useful for improving the Battalion's necessary capabilities through training events and exercises under NATO's auspices. This gives great opportunities to develop Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) and TTPs for better interoperability with partners. These exercises and training events allow the military to gain the necessary experience for their subsequent application to improve its organization. Finally, participation of the SOF Battalion in NATO-led operations allows applying the theoretical experience in practice.

### International Partnership Programs

The NATO PfP is an instrument of cooperation between NATO and partner nations based on practical cooperation and respect of democratic principles. The focus of the PfP is to allow partner countries to build their relationship with NATO based on their need. Since March 16, 1994, Moldova has been a participant in the NATO PfP program. Participation in the PfP offers Moldova a real opportunity to strengthen its national security and defense capabilities. The NATO PfP program allows the Moldovan Army to use NATO and partner countries' military construction to improve its armed forces continuously. The NATO PfP program incorporates spectrums of NATO activities, the staff preparation, the language education for the National Army officers, and provides passage to information, statistics, political, technical, and financial assistance sources.

A great perspective of the PfP program is the Moldovan Army's participation in peacekeeping operations. Activities related to military interoperability are defense reforms, military-to-military cooperation, exercises, defense-related work, civil-military relations, defense, and policy planning.<sup>58</sup> Since beginning participation in the PfP, the National Army increased its involvement in different international exercise and training events under NATO. The Operational Capability Concept Evaluation and Feedback Program (OCC E&F) is a functional multipurpose military instrument that serves as a carrier for a closer operational relationship among the Alliance and a potential contributor to NATO-led operations. This program was designed to support partners to develop

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<sup>58</sup> Government of Republic of Moldova, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and European Integration of Republic of Moldova, "Participation in International Missions by Moldovan Army," accessed April 12, 2021, <https://mfa.gov.md/en/content>.

forces that are entirely interoperable and capable of operating with NATO standards and procedures. The OCC evaluation and certification of specific military units allow them to participate in international peacekeeping missions. Participation in annual military exercises became a vital contribution to the National Army's military interoperability with the NATO partners.

The Moldovan first forces declared for OCC evaluation which started in 2009 and finished in 2013. The unit was composed of an infantry company and Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) squad, which was certified to participate in multinational peacekeeping operations. In March 2014, the certified units were deployed to support Kosovo's NATO mission as part of the Kosovo Force (KFOR).<sup>59</sup> In particular, most of those programs were driven towards Conventional forces of the National Army of Moldova. The SOF Battalion refers to a separate program of evaluation from conventional forces. The NSHQ is running the SOFEVAL program specially designed for SOF evaluation and certification those nations who are willing to contribute to NATO-led operations.

Another vital role player that contributes to Moldova's security is the United States. Moldova and the United States have established diplomatic relations since 1992, after just six months of its proclamation of Independence from the Soviet Union. Since then, Moldova benefits from several security cooperation programs that support National Army modernization and interoperability with western partners. International Military

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<sup>59</sup> Ministerul Apărării al Republicii Moldova, "Militarii moldoveni s-au alăturat Misiunii KFOR din Kosovo," video, March 8, 2012, <https://www.army.md/?lng=2&action=show&cat=122&obj=2563>.

Education and Training (IMET) and Foreign Military Financing (FMF) are the most important programs to facilitate the development of necessary capabilities and interoperability of the National Army with partners. The North Carolina National Guard signed a State Partnership Program agreement with the National Army of Moldova. In this framework, the SOF Battalion signed a Memorandum of Understanding with B/1/20th Special Forces Group (Airborne), which officially displays a partnership between SOF units. The engagement between US SOF and Moldovan SOF started in 2012, focusing on SOF training and methodology to ensure readiness for deployments and potential co-deployments. Several events have been conducted to understand better each other's organizational structure, experience a traditional SOF drill period, and conduct face-to-face planning for the upcoming Tactical Collection Team (TCT) and Unit Level Training (ULT) events.<sup>60</sup> This fruitful partnership gives the SOF Battalion opportunities to develop its necessary capabilities to meet national and international requirements by supporting its modernization process.

#### Moldova under UN/NATO/OSCE Missions

As a member state of the UN and the OSCE, the Republic of Moldova participates in peacekeeping operations not only under the UN, OSCE, and EU auspices, but also, in NATO-led operations thus deploying National Army soldiers in unstable areas. Annually, through a rotation system, the Republic of Moldova deploys between 90 and 95 soldiers in various missions. According to the commitments assumed, the

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<sup>60</sup> Military Wikia, "North Carolina-Moldova National Guard Partnership," Wikia.org, accessed April 13, 2021, [https://military.wikia.org/wiki/North\\_Carolina%E2%80%93Moldova\\_National\\_Guard\\_Partnership](https://military.wikia.org/wiki/North_Carolina%E2%80%93Moldova_National_Guard_Partnership).

Republic of Moldova shows a responsible attitude regarding the participation in these missions, the decisions regarding the level of commitment to fulfill the mission, and the national interest. Participation in missions is strengthening the international credibility of the Republic of Moldova, an essential condition of national security. The national interest, the military personnel of the National Army of the Republic of Moldova engaged in peacekeeping missions undertake these tasks with professionalism and dedication as they are aware of this responsibility and its importance to national interests. The success of those missions depends on their national security and international image of contributing nations to peace and security in the region and internationally. The missions are based on international and national documents, and some unique documents from the Ministry of Defense of the Republic of Moldova that outline the parameters of the National Army's participation in peacekeeping missions.<sup>61</sup>

The National Army has played an important role in participating in UN, OSCE, and EU peacekeeping operations and NATO-led operations. This category includes the following missions: OSCE Special Monitoring Mission in Ukraine, Iraqi Humanitarian Operation and Post-Conflict Reconstruction Operation Iraqi Freedom, Kosovo International Peacekeeping Operation (KFOR), United Nations Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), UN-led mission in Liberia (UNMIL), UN-led peacekeeping mission in Sudan (UNMIS), Peacekeeping Operation in Bosnia and Herzegovina (SFOR) under NATO mandate, Military Advisory Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina EU in the Central

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<sup>61</sup> Government of Moldova, Legea Republicii Moldova cu privire la participarea Republicii Moldova la operațiunile internaționale de menținere a păcii. Nr. 1156-XIV din 26.06.2000, *Monitorul Oficial al Republicii Moldova*, 30.11.2000, nr. 149.

African Republic EU Military Advisory Mission (EUMAM).<sup>62</sup> It is important to note that conventional forces within the National Army carry out all peacekeeping missions.

So far Moldova has not deployed any elements of the special operations forces in international operations. Since 2018, the leadership of the National Army of Moldova has been negotiating to participate with one Detachment of Special Operations forces in international operations. In this context, the Army leadership has assumed responsibility in developing the SOF Battalion's necessary capabilities for its detachment in NATO-led international operations. Based on the above, the SOF Battalion personnel is permanently involved in Peacekeeping Operations at various positions, which is one of the benefits of gaining experience by participating in cooperation between conventional and multinational forces.

### R2 Updated Personal Recommendation

Based on the initial personal recommendation, R1, described by the author in chapter 4, uses the research model in chapter 3. As a result, some aspects have been identified that need attention.

1. The SOF Battalion's primary documentation is not in line with the NDS and the NMS.
2. The organizational structure of the SOF Battalion does not ensure the fulfillment of essential missions.
3. The SOF Battalion has partial interoperability with NATO SOF partners.

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<sup>62</sup> COL Anatolie Bucuci, "Participation of the Military Personnel of the National Army in Peacekeeping Operations," Alexandru cel Bun Military Academy, accessed April 14, 2021, [https://ibn.idsi.md/sites/default/files/imag\\_file/255-266.pdf](https://ibn.idsi.md/sites/default/files/imag_file/255-266.pdf).

Based on the initial evaluation, the first issue represents the legal basis of the documents on which the activity of the SOF Battalion is based. Both the NDS and the NMS do not have exact clarity concerning the SOF Battalion because they only reference the entire Army. Simultaneously, the SOF Battalion objectives are not prescribed, which is the permissible operational environment to use SOF Battalion. Following the NMS, point 44 describes that “The component for special operations will be the element of the National Army destined to fulfill, independently or within groups of forces, special missions, participating in actions to defend the country that intended support of civilian authorities as well as in international missions/operations.”<sup>63</sup> Later the document describes the “special operations battalion [capable of] rapid intervention, trained and equipped for the execution of specific missions of special investigation, direct action and military assistance on the territory of the state or in other theaters of operations.”<sup>64</sup> Chapter IV of the NMS calls for ensuring the ability to fulfill the missions and objectives set for the Rapid Reaction Forces. The forces that will react are not indicated, only the reference to the whole Army. “These will have a high level of reaction and will ensure the rapid and flexible deployment of forces with permanent intervention capability. Besides these capabilities will aim to create adequate conditions for the generation of other categories of forces.”<sup>65</sup> Therefore, to this ambiguity in the strategic documents,

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<sup>63</sup> Ministry of Defence (MOD) of the Republic of Moldova, *National Military Strategy of the Republic of Moldova* (NMS) (Chisinau, Moldova: Ministry of Defence, 2018).

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

many of the National Army's leadership is confused and entrusts SOF Battalion with the missions not related to the unit.

The second issue is with the SOF Battalion's current organizational structure it cannot accomplish its core missions due to the lack of CSS and CS companies. Currently, the HQ Company provides the sustainment and support element, which is limited to the personnel necessary to ensure and support all core missions. If the SOF Battalion should execute missions with more than three SOTUs, those limitations in support create risk for SOTUs that will remain without the necessary support. At the same time, HQ Company does not have the necessary elements supporting the whole spectrum of Special Operations in its organizational structure. The company's structural limitation remains with two platoons, communications, and maintenance. This limitation creates personnel overloading and the tripling of missions simultaneously and the execution of some tasks that are not in their field. These CS and CSS limitations do not allow missions to be executed simultaneously with multiple SOTUs. The lack of capabilities required for the SOF Battalion leads to it being not fully operational.

Finally, third problem identified is that the SOF Battalion is partially interoperable with NATO SOF partners. Based on this, it is necessary to mention some aspects that create the problem because of NATO's interoperability. It is necessary to adapt, implement, and develop the doctrine, manuals, and organization to be fully compatible and interoperable with SOF NATO and partners. The organizational structure proposed in R1 about CS and CSS is one of NATO SOF requirements to be fully operational capable. Adding necessary capabilities such as Force Protection, Search and Rescue Dog Team (SART), Unmanned Aerial Vehicle operators (UAV), EOD, and



Chemical, Biological, Radiological, and Nuclear Team (CBRN), medical, and logistics, are essential elements to support the SOF Battalion's core missions.

### Chapter Summary

This chapter represents the most important part of the thesis. The structure of the chapter focuses on answering most secondary and tertiary research questions. The analysis begins with the definition of R1. The organizational structure necessary to be implemented for the SOF Battalion is proposed. It continues with the examination of the requirements of the SOF, which NATO stipulates. By applying the DOTMLPF-P methodology to analyze and identify the deficiencies that prevent interoperability. What are SOF organizations' standards needed for nations that are willing to contribute to NATO-led missions? Using the same methodology for the SOF Battalion identifies gaps that exist and need to be eliminated. Simultaneously, the author described how efficiency accelerates the SOF Battalion modernization process for special operations. And at the end of this chapter, the author came with an R2, which allows the transition to chapter 5 with R3.

## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### Stakeholders Engagement Considerations

In chapter 5, the author will address the importance of this research and the benefits of the recommendations proposed in R3 to be acceptable to the key decision-makers and stakeholders. To present R3, the author must assess the key decision-makers, who are interested in this research, and the benefits of the proposed changes, and here the author will address to the interested parties, these are:

1. The Commander of the SOF Battalion;
2. The Chief of the General Staff of the National Army and Minister of Defense of the Republic of Moldova;
3. The NSHQ.

Those are parties directly involved and interested in the modernization process of the SOF Battalion. While evaluating the proposed additional organization of CS and CSS companies proposed in R1. From the Commander of the SOF Battalion's perspective, the proposed organization is beneficial in supporting multilateral or simultaneous missions. According to its statute, the accessibility of the necessary assets gives the possibility to accomplish all core missions. Avoiding the overloading of the subordinated personnel gives them the possibility to deal with fulfilling the obligations according to the job description. The SOF Battalion will perform longer-term missions without being dependent on conventional force logistics. And last but not least, the unit can form a SOTG with the execution of missions simultaneously by leading up to six SOTUs, which means reaching NATO standards at the same time.

From the perspective of the Chief of the General Staff of the National Army and Minister of Defense of the Republic of Moldova proposed changes to SOF give fulfillment to the National Strategic Objectives. A fully operational SOF Battalion remains a strategic asset in case of instability in the region that can be employed anytime and anywhere. Also, the SOF Battalion can be employed under NATO-led missions with one SOTU while maintained SOTU rotational flexibility. Finally, a proposed additional organization to the SOF Battalion meets necessary NATO requirements and can be interoperable with partners in multinational operations.

For the NSHQ, it opens the possibility for the Moldovan SOF Battalion to be invited to participate in NATO-led missions. There are many examples of non-NATO nations that have contributed their SOF units under NATO-led operations across the globe. Another aspect that will give the NATO possibility to have additional assets to be employable to fulfill missions that can be performed by Moldovan SOF Battalion. Additional changes in an organization can produce negative effects if not executed properly. To have a better integration of the proposed task organization, in the resulting Action Plan, the author will use the implementation of the John P. Kotter eight-stage change model and help the decision process of key leadership involved (see figure 13).

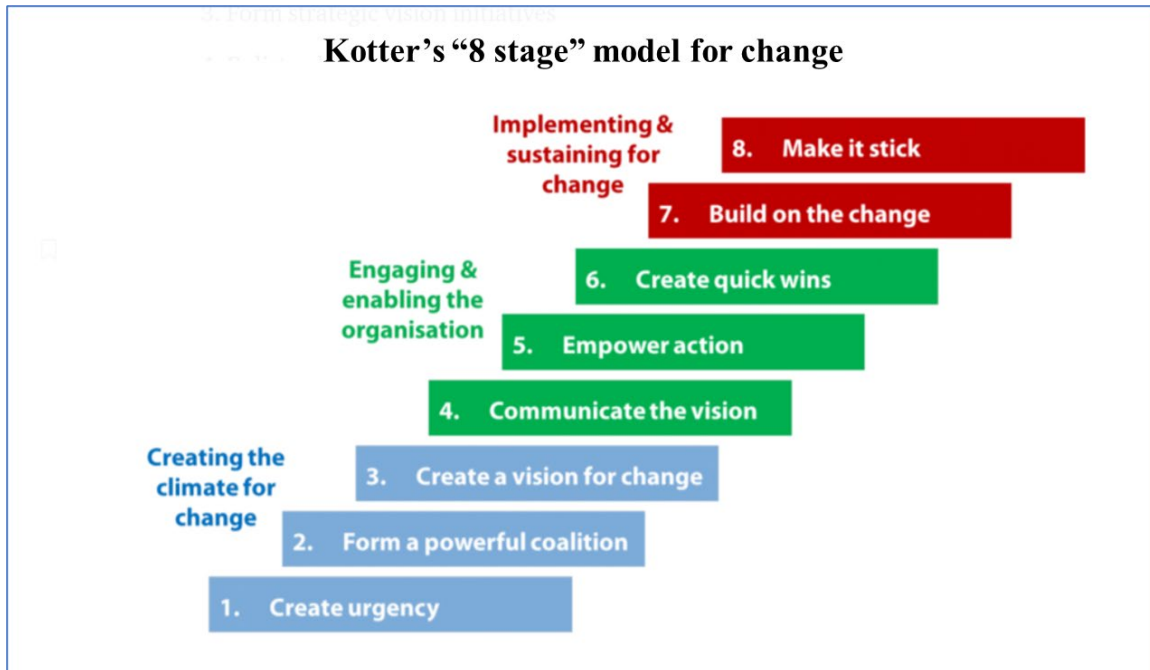
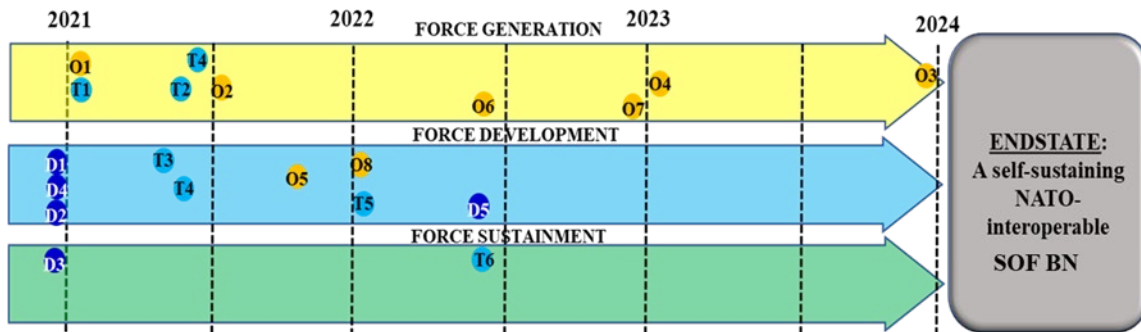


Figure 13. John P. Kotter Eight-Stage Change Model

*Source:* Warren Lynch, “A Comprehensive Guide to Kotter’s 8 Step Model of Change,” March 2, 2020, <https://warren2lynch.medium.com/a-comprehensive-guide-to-kotters-8-step-model-of-change-43d4eb86f1ea>.

All the stages from Kotter’s change model are significant, vital, and will be the main factors determining the success or failure of the change into an organization. The author will focus more specifically on the sixth step, “Create quick wins,” from the eight stages of the Kotter Model, as indirectly covered in the following Action Plan for R3 implementation (see table 3).



DOCTRINE		ORGANIZATION		TRAINING	
D1	SOF ROLE IDENTIFIED IN THE NATIONAL SECURITY LAW	O1	T/O (HQ/STAF)	T1	TRNG REQUIRs.
D2	DOCTRINE ALIGNED WITH NATIONAL SECURITY AND NATO	O2	T/O (OPERATIONAL COMMAND CELL)	T2	TRNG INSTITUTIONS
D3	SOF EMPLOYMENT CONCEPT	O3	T/O (SOLTG)	T3	TRNG PLAN & PROGR.
D4	SOF DEVELOPMENT PLAN TO NSHQ	O4	T/O (CS&CSS)	T4	SPEC.SKILL & QUALIFICAT TRACKING SYSTEM
D5	TACTICAL LEVEL DOCUMENTATIONS	O5	HQ, OC CELL ORG & RESP	T5	SOLTG TRNG
		O6	FOC HQ Cell	T6	IMPLEMENT SOLTG TRNG TO LIBG TRNG
		O7	FOC OC Cell		

Table 3. Action Plan for R3 Implementation of Short Term

Source: Created by the author.

### Recommendations for the Chief of the General Staff of the National Army and Minister of Defense of Republic of Moldova

Moldova finds itself in a particular political situation, with the new regime oriented towards Western European values. More than once, as opposed to the former government, the newly elected President expressed her vision towards a reform that could align Moldova to the EU and NATO. Consequently, the modernization of the country should include an opportunity to modernize the Moldovan Armed Forces in general and the SOF in particular. Today's operational environment offers some clues about the 'future war, which does not indicate a direct force-on-force confrontation. In fact, most

military experts agree that unconventional destabilizing actions have been and remain the trends in conducting 21st Century warfare.

Consequently, strategic decision-makers should give significant consideration to SOF Battalion as they could satisfy immediate requirements for national security. When correctly set, SOF Battalion should offer significant advantages to top military decision-makers and enables strategic, operational, and tactical levels. In other words, a solidly structured, trained, and equipped SOF Battalion is a force multiplier for any commander at every level, regardless of the operational environment's level of complexity. A very well-developed SOF Battalion is a versatile tool capable of creating effects in places and at times where conventional forces cannot operate. To this end, the Moldovan Armed Forces' military-strategic level should impose priority on organizing, training, and equipping SOF Battalion and should investigate options of improving the SOF cooperation with conventional forces.

The justification for prioritizing organization, training, and equipping the SOF Battalion lies in describing the operational environment in the Southeastern portion of Europe. As the expected destabilizing actions from the Russian Federation will remain, most likely, covert, and un-attributable, the significance and importance of the SOF Battalion in countering malign influence increases exponentially. Moreover, the SOF Battalion could also conduct data and intelligence collection to support national strategic objectives and partners. Prioritizing resources, given the economic situation, has only one way to meet the Feasible, Acceptable and Suitable criteria: re-distribution; this implies that human, fiscal, and logistical resources prioritization should shift from the conventional forces to the SOF Battalion. Moreover, existing units could be de-activated

to allow the re-location of resources. If a significant change occurs in the operational environment, SOF Battalion still acts as a force multiplier for the conventional forces, providing early warnings, lethal and non-lethal effects, or influencing enemy actions and activities.

SOF Battalion should improve their cooperation with the conventional forces to support the latter in some critical domains, such as training and intelligence collection. Given the more extensive SOF Battalion participation in NATO training events, SOF Battalion could offer training for conventional forces in multiple domains. Field exercises, staff processes, and procedures remain activities that essentially apply to both. The military-strategic level has the authority to delegate training competencies to both SOF Battalion and conventional forces, and joint training programs require limited resourcing. Thus, this option is applicable at any moment and level, regardless of the resource constraints, and enhances both partners' readiness.

#### Recommendations for Further Study

The research was limited to the DOT portion of the DOTMLPF-P framework. Further investigation could address the MLPF-P, independently or as a whole. Some concerns that require identification of solutions in a short-term horizon could be:

1. How should the national strategic level re-adjust the Moldovan SOF's core tasks to enlarge the spectrum of the SOF activities in support of national security objectives? This investigation requires sensitive information to support the study, and it may be classified; it should reside at the Moldovan MOD level.

2. How can the Moldovan SOF increase its capabilities to operate in a contested environment using its current structure, training, and doctrine and improving the other domains of the DOTMLPF-P framework?

Concerns that require identification of solution in a mid-term horizon could be: how can the Moldovan SOF increase its ability to create operational effects supporting the national security objectives and contribute to improving the common operating picture for allies and partners? This investigation should focus on Materiel acquisitions to reflect the existing DOT and improve the overall capabilities. Given the current economic situation, this approach can not address the short and mid-term horizons.

### Personal Learning Reflections

Besides the academic rigor inherent in this collaborative research, the thesis development provided the opportunity to understand the DOTMLPF-P construct's value, familiarize with NATO standards for SOF formations, and investigate in-depth the US perspective on SOF.

Moldova does not use the DOTMLPF-P framework, nor its NATO equivalent, the DOTMLPF-I version. Moreover, as it resulted from the research, any modernization process has followed exclusively an empirical approach that led to several failures to achieve full interoperability. Without stating that only applying the DOTMPLF-P lenses entails success when confronted with modernization, a coherent approach to modernization efforts ensures the balance between set objectives, resources, and methods. Consequently, a validated theoretical framework should help decision-makers find the balance for limited resources' effective employment. Successful military organizations worldwide have always managed to establish the right approach to



modernization, which involved planning for the ‘war of the future,’ tailoring objectives to the existing resources and following the approved path. The exposure to the DOTMLPF-P construct provided valuable lessons that shape a field grade officer’s perspective when facing the complex problem of operating in a resource constraint environment.

The Moldovan Armed Forces aim to reach interoperability with NATO member states, and become familiar with its doctrine is one required step. NATO is the most successful military alliance that exists today, and its approach to constantly improving its doctrine may have contributed to the success. The research provided the opportunity to analyze in-depth the existing documents and understand that they provide sufficient and necessary guidance to follow in the process of aligning the Moldovan SOF to its Western neighbors. Moreover, as part of the DOTMLPF-P framework, familiarizing with NATO doctrine ensures a smooth transition from the obsolete soviet approach to a modern Western one that stood the test of time and is adjusted continuously. Although not entirely available, the NATO doctrine provided a valuable source of information in the quest to determine requirements and choose a path to identify modernization solutions. Furthermore, where NATO standards were missing, the US doctrine filled the gaps to complete the description.

The United States has a very comprehensive approach to SOF development and employment. The long history of using the SOF in operations determined the strength that the US SOF units have today. Moreover, the existing organization, training, and doctrine captured lessons learned along the way. The ever-growing fame of US SOF formations and their willingness to train in different environments determined the Moldovan decision-makers to involve Moldovan troops in joint training as often as

possible. Thus, besides the partnership with the Romanian Special Operations Forces (ROU SOF), the United States provided most of the joint training opportunities among the NATO partners. Given all the above and the availability of US sources, the research benefited from the extensive and comprehensive SOF doctrine, operating concepts, and case studies. Again, from a field-grade officer's perspective, the opportunity to be immersed in the US SOF culture enlarges horizons and expertise. Moreover, gaining expertise entitles field-grade officers to provide valuable advice to decision-makers.

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