

**REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE**

*Form Approved OMB  
No. 0704-0188*

The 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 the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing the 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 OMB control number.  
**PLEASE DO NOT RETURN YOUR FORM TO THE ABOVE ADDRESS.**

<b>1. REPORT DATE (DD-MM-YYYY)</b> 05-05-2017	<b>2. REPORT TYPE</b> Master's Thesis	<b>3. DATES COVERED (From - To)</b> Sep 2016 – May 2017
--	--	--

<b>4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE</b>  MARSOC and Joint Forcible Entry Operations: Essential for Confronting Future Irregular Conflict	<b>5a. CONTRACT NUMBER</b> N/A
	<b>5b. GRANT NUMBER</b> N/A
	<b>5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER</b> N/A

<b>6. AUTHOR(S)</b>  Cabral, Lauren A., Major, US Army	<b>5d. PROJECT NUMBER</b> N/A
	<b>5e. TASK NUMBER</b> N/A
	<b>5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER</b> N/A

<b>7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)</b> USMC Command and Staff College Marine Corps University 2076 South Street Quantico, VA 22134-5068	<b>8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER</b> N/A
--	--

<b>9. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)</b>  N/A	<b>10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S)</b> N/A
	<b>11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S)</b> N/A

**12. DISTRIBUTION/AVAILABILITY STATEMENT**  
Approved for public release, distribution unlimited.

**13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES**  
N/A

**14. ABSTRACT**  
Since its inception in 2006, MARSOC has emphasized its capabilities in two areas—Counter Terrorism and Direct Action with partnered forces. As irregular conflict rises around the world, USSOCOM must recognize the significance of MARSOC’s knowledge in amphibious operations, and the possibility of a Joint Forcible Entry Operation where stability operations would require SOF expertise in irregular warfare (IW) methods. This paper will, therefore, discuss MARSOC in detail and illuminate its great capability in enhancing the successes of the MAGTF ashore through partner capacity building operations using irregular warfare (IW) methods.

**15. SUBJECT TERMS**  
MARSOC; USSOCOM; Joint Forcible Entry Operations (JFEO); Irregular Warfare (IW).

<b>16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF:</b>			<b>17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT</b>	<b>18. NUMBER OF PAGES</b>	<b>19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON</b>	
<b>a. REPORT</b>	<b>b. ABSTRACT</b>	<b>c. THIS PAGE</b>			USMC Command and Staff College	
Unclass	Unclass	Unclass	UU	30	<b>19b. TELEPHONE NUMBER (Include area code)</b> (703) 784-3330 (Admin Office)	

United States Marine Corps  
Command and Staff College  
Marine Corps University  
2076 South Street  
Marine Corps Combat Development Command  
Quantico, Virginia 22134-5068

MASTER OF MILITARY STUDIES

---

**TITLE:**

MARSOC AND JOINT FORCIBLE ENTRY OPERATIONS: ESSENTIAL FOR  
CONFRONTING FUTURE IRREGULAR CONFLICT

**AUTHOR:**

MAJ Lauren A. Cabral

AY 16-17

---

Mentor and Oral Defense Committee Member:

Approved: J.W. Gordon

Date: 5/5/17

Oral Defense Committee Member:

Approved: Michael A Lewis

Date: 5/5/2017

BENJAMIN J. PAPPAS, LTCOL, USMC

BJP  
5/5/2017

## DISCLAIMER

THE OPINIONS AND CONCLUSIONS EXPRESSED HEREIN ARE THOSE OF THE INDIVIDUAL STUDENT AUTHOR AND DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT THE VIEWS OF EITHER THE MARINE CORPS COMMAND AND STAFF COLLEGE OR ANY OTHER GOVERNMENTAL AGENCY. REFERENCES TO THIS STUDY SHOULD INCLUDE THE FOREGOING STATEMENT.

QUOTATION FROM, ABSTRACTION FROM, OR REPRODUCTION OF ALL OR ANY PART OF THIS DOCUMENT IS PERMITTED PROVIDED PROPER ACKNOWLEDGEMENT IS MADE.

## Table of Contents

	<b>Page</b>
Preface.....	iii
Executive Summary.....	v
Introduction.....	1
Marine Air-Ground Task Force (MAGTF) and Joint Forcible Entry Operations (JFEO)....	2
MARSOC: The Force and Its Organization.....	4
USSOCOM and MARSOC: The Obligated Relationship.....	6
Irregular Warfare (IW) .....	8
The Special Operations Manual Vs Marine Corps Operating Concept.....	12
Case Study: The Dominican Republic.....	14
Case Study: Notional use of MARSOF in Malaysia.....	17
Conclusion.....	19
Bibliography.....	22

## Preface

In 2014, after completing Company Command, I was blessed with the opportunity to serve in an Unconventional Warfare Battalion with 1st Special Forces Group (Airborne). As a logistics Army officer by trade, I left the Special Forces organization more intrigued and fascinated with the Special Operations Forces (SOF) community and the assets they train to provide to the conventional force during peace and wartime. Following this assignment, I was selected to spend the next year at Command and Staff College with the Marine Corps at Quantico, VA, where I studied Marine Air-Ground Task Force (MAGTF) capabilities writ large.

After many lectures, extensive readings in the Marine Corps Operating Concept, and exercises in Marine Air-Ground Task Force (MAGTF) operations, I naturally reverted to my time in the Special Operations Forces community as a predominately “Phase Zero” planner. The more questions I asked about the assets Marine Special Operations Forces (MARSOF) provided, the more I recognized the great potential for enhancing efforts from MARSOC, to the MAGTF. Since their establishment in 2006, MARSOC has been an entity in the Marine Corps always seeking to advance their role under the US Special Operations Command (USSOCOM). I particularly saw that MARSOC, as Marines first, have a great opportunity to support Joint Forcible Entry Operations (JFEO)— a task specifically and already designed for execution by the Marine Corps.

As operational assessments take place in MARSOC doctrine, planners must consider incorporating its strengths of access and placement to locations where known MAGTF operations may occur. These forces must set the conditions and benefit entry or follow-on operations during JFEOs. My gratitude extends to COLs Gary Grubb, Louis Zeisman, and Owen

Ray who took the chance on me to challenge myself in the SOF community, and to the staff at Command and Staff College who acknowledged the potential of this information to be relevant. Lastly, to Major Donald Reed who always takes the time to mentor me as a professional and shape me as a scholar of the Profession of Arms.

## Executive Summary

**Title:** MARSOC and Joint Forcible Entry Operations: Essential for Future Irregular Conflict

**Author:** Major Lauren A. Cabral, United States Army

**Thesis:** United States Special Operations Command (USSOCOM) must identify MARSOCs organization as the Special Operations Forces (SOF) element that can enhance all Joint Forcible Entry Operations (JFEO), thereby increasing success in combating irregular conflict through a synced Special Forces Liaison Element (SOFLE) and a MARSOC led Joint Special Operations Task Force (JSOTF).

**Discussion:** Since World War II, the Marine Corps has continuously devoted its training, readiness, and expertise in a joint, combined arms effort to provide the Department of Defense with a scalable and multi-functional force ashore. This asset, known as the Marine Air-Ground Task Force (MAGTF), is comprised of a Ground Combat Element, a Logistics Combat Element, and an Aviation Combat Element, and is an expeditionary force that operates as a joint effort with a Naval Fleet. When deployed forward, the MAGTF may conduct a Joint Forcible Entry Operation (JFEO) to execute various national interests. According to JP 3-18,<sup>1</sup> “SOF may be introduced to the area well in advance of a possible assault to develop or prepare an area for forcible entry.” The USSOCOM Handbook explicitly states that “NSW (Naval Special Warfare) also provides maritime-specific special operations to meet U.S. Navy fleet requirements”<sup>2</sup> and may be called upon to support the amphibious landing for the MAGTF.<sup>3</sup> However, an operational gap in support of stability operations exists following the MAGTF’s arrival ashore. Since 2006, while making several changes to its organization, MARSOC has trained, manned, and equipped its force to predominantly fill operational requirements for Army and Navy SOF, deploying in support of Operations Iraqi and Enduring Freedom. While each service under USSOCOM seeks to offer a unique capability that provides complimentary efforts for its conventional forces, so should MARSOC train and equip its forces to enhance MAGTF JFEOs through Irregular Warfare (IW) methods. Case studies of the MAGTFs JFEO operation in the Dominican Republic, and a hypothetical scenario in Malaysia will illuminate a substantial justification for identifying MARSOC as the lead element to conduct complementry and supplementry roles in support of the MAGTFs JFEO.

**Conclusion:** As the Department of Defense continues to make developments toward a joint military force that is capable of combating irregular conflict, SOCOM must leverage

---

<sup>1</sup> Joint Chiefs of Staff. Joint Publication 3-18 *Joint Forcible Entry Operations* (Washington, DC: Headquarters Department of Defense, November 27, 2012), 47.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 49.

<sup>3</sup> Joint Special Operations University, *Special Operations Forces Reference Manual*. 4<sup>th</sup> ed., (MacDill AFB, Florida: The JSOU Press, 2015), 49.

MARSOC's capability of access and placement to enhance the Marine Corps MAGTF. Thus, USSOCOM must prioritize MARSOC's METL (Mission Essential Task List) to address the void of a directed SOF element in support of a joint forcible entry operation (JFEO).

## **Introduction**

Marine Special Operations Command (MARSOC) is a branch of US Special Operations Command (USSOCOM) that executes doctrinal, core special operation functions. Since its inception in 2006, MARSOC has emphasized its capabilities in two areas—Counter Terrorism and Direct Action with partnered forces. Despite its training in all nine Special Operations Forces (SOF) core functions, MARSOC must focus its training efforts on a future in warfare that will require irregular methods; this will indeed provide complementary and supplementary opportunistic tactics for the Marine Corps MAGTF during Joint Forcible Entry Operations. As irregular conflict rises around the world, USSOCOM must recognize the significance of MARSOC’s knowledge in amphibious operations, and the possibility of a Joint Forcible Entry Operation where stability operations would require SOF expertise in irregular warfare (IW) methods. This paper will, therefore, discuss MARSOC in detail and illuminate its great capability in enhancing the successes of the MAGTF ashore through partner capacity building operations using irregular warfare (IW) methods.

Currently, a crucial opportunity may be derived from examining MARSOC’s Mission Essential Task List (METL) in MAGTF operations. This opportunity is clear from the USSOCOM Reference Manual and will be described below. While the manual aligns SOF missions best suited for its conventional forces, SOCOM neglects to address a particular SOF core activity for MARSOC.<sup>4</sup> This study aims to answer how MARSOC should effectively prioritize their training and execution efforts to focus on complementary and supplementary efforts to prepare for future war that will very likely require a JFEO.

---

<sup>4</sup> Joint Special Operations University, *Special Operations Forces Reference Manual*. 4<sup>th</sup> ed., (MacDill AFB, Florida: The JSOU Press, 2015), 3-6, 4-4

## **Marine Air-Ground Task Force (MAGTF) and Joint Forcible Entry Operations (JFEO)**

The MAGTF is the Marine Corps' all inclusive, multi-functional, and most expeditionary asset. This Marine Corps asset executes amphibious landings that are followed by numerous ground missions ashore. Formally established in late 1963, this power projection force delivers ground and aviation assets forward and is also a rapid multiplier that is capable of executing combat and non-combat missions ashore. Upon reaching shore via Navy vessel, the MAGTF specializes in Joint Forcible Entry Operations (JFEO), securing a lodgment (or base camp ashore), aiding the population, or defeating weapons of mass destruction threats. By way of forcible entry, the MAGTF seizes and holds a lodgment in a hostile or potentially hostile area against an armed opposition for a period long enough to last through the duration of the mission.<sup>5</sup> Its reputation consistently gains recognition as an emergency responder, and the MAGTF possesses the capability to tailor the capacity of its forces to any fixed functional purpose. This amphibious Marine method has delivered stability in combat regions such as South Korea, Vietnam, the Dominican Republic, and Afghanistan.

The success of MAGTF operations increases the military's credibility as a viable option across the Range of Military Operations (ROMO), executing missions from combined arms maneuver warfare to humanitarian aid assistance. As seen through many historical events, decisive and swift victories require forcible entries and the ability of follow-up forces to surge. The best entity in the Department of Defense to meet national security objectives advancing from the MAGTF ashore, is found in the enterprise whose roots lay in amphibious operations—MARSOC.

---

<sup>5</sup> Joint Chiefs of Staff. Joint Publication 3-18, *Joint Forcible Entry Operations* (Washington, DC: Headquarters Department of Defense, November 27, 2012), 13.

In a study conducted by Rand Corporation in 2006, the series called “Project Air Force,” recommended that the Department of Defense shift its focus of ground forces to cover both direct and indirect stability operations.<sup>6</sup> Although the study aims to urge the Marine Corps of ditching its bread and butter of MAGTF functions, its logic accurately illustrates a focus gap within the Department of Defense, while also illuminating the significance of a closer MARSOC/MAGTF relationship: “The imperative to promote stability and democracy abroad will place the greatest demands on the Army, the Marine Corps, and special operations forces.”<sup>7</sup> Thus, if this prediction calls for the importance of readiness in the Marine Corps and SOF, so should SOCOM and MARSOC acknowledge the importance of training with the MAGTF where future missions will require irregular and joint methods.

SOF elements prove to be critical for all stages of forcible entry operations. As the Special Operations Reference Manual illustrates, SOF forces employed before a forcible entry may seize the key terrain, collect intelligence, train guerrilla forces, or conduct other activities that can enable the introduction of the conventional forces. These forces can also interdict targets (especially those capable of disrupting the assault ashore), seize objectives, and conduct other operations to support the main force during the execution stages. As in any campaign plan, SOF plays a vital role in the termination or transition of the closing stages to the operation through working with multinational agencies, the host nation, intergovernmental partners, and interagency.<sup>8</sup> However, what the reference manual fails to illuminate is the importance of SOF

---

<sup>6</sup> Rand Project Air Force, *New Division of Labor: Meeting America’s Security Challenges Beyond Iraq*, (Santa Monica, Ca: Rand Corporation, 2007), 47.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid, 73.

<sup>8</sup> Joint Special Operations University, *Special Operations Forces Reference Manual*. 4<sup>th</sup> ed., (MacDill AFB, Florida: The JSOU Press, 2015), 17.

employed succeeding a JFEO, which are ways of tampering down instability to prevent disintegration and a need for major combat security operations.

Often, the lack of joint military training and clearly aligned doctrine present challenges of integration, interoperability, and interdependence when executing joint forcible entry operations. Although the Marine Corps Operating Concept acknowledges a need to develop MAGTF-SOF doctrine, the bottom line is that USSOCOM must identify a SOF service component that understands tactics in amphibious operations to achieve effectiveness. The increase of current security missions requires US forces participation and necessitates the employment of joint forces. A unity of effort is the central factor in the success of these joint missions, and American forces have acknowledged when fighting alongside partner forces, fire and air power from naval and land based assets is essential. It is likely that ground force units (MARSOC) will require fire support by air, and MAGTF power projection will require intelligence to counter enemy activity. Thus, USSOCOM must acknowledge the importance of directing MARSOC as the joint task force forward of the MAGTF to achieve effectiveness when executing JFEOs.

### **MARSOC: The Force and its Organization**

The Marine Corps' component of USSOCOM separates into three independent units that receive training to suit their particular areas of responsibilities. These units include the Marine Raider Regiment, the Marine Raider Support Group, and the Marine Special Operations School. The Marine Raider Regiment (MRR), headquartered at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina, consists of three Marine Raider Battalions: two battalions located in North Carolina and one in California. When US Central Command, the Global Combatant Command (GCC) for twenty countries in the Middle East regions, moved to stabilization operations across the area of

responsibility, the military engagement focus turned to advising and assisting indigenous forces in their abilities to lead, train, and equip their ground forces.<sup>9</sup> As a result, the necessity to deploy SOF units for direct action and special reconnaissance purposes significantly decreased.

Recognizing this shift, MARSOC leaders aligned the three Raider battalions to add capability in various GCCs. These battalions execute SOF core activities in Security Force Assistance, Foreign Internal Defense, and Counterterrorism while also working under the command and control of the PACOM, CENTCOM, and AFRICOM Theater Special Operation Commands (TSOC) (Figure 1). Since the reallocation of its forces, MARSOC has significantly contributed to these GCCs, providing advice, training, and synchronization of combat skills to host nation forces that enhance their tactical prowess and reduce the risk of external and internal attacks.

Although the demand for SOF organizations to provide a direct-action capability was significantly high at the genesis of MARSOC, the operational lessons learned both in Iraq and Afghanistan proved that an indirect and direct approach, which IW renders, is critical and essential to current US national interest in stability operations during irregular conflict. Colin S. Gray, author and Professor of International Politics and Strategic Studies, states:

“stability operations must be approached as being integral to strategy, not as behavior that follows the “war proper.” War is only about the peace that follows. It should be waged in such a style that the subsequent peace is not fatally mortgaged. With respect to irregular conflict, the current focus of most attention, stability operations, are, or should be, part and parcel of the US strategy from the very outset. If you wage the war, be it regular or irregular, intelligently and effectively, the need for postwar stability operations should be minimal.”<sup>10</sup>

---

<sup>9</sup>Lloyd J. Austin III “The Posture of US Central Command” (statement, MacDill Air Force Base, FL, (Mar 8, 2016), US CENTCOM <http://www.centcom.mil/ABOUT-US/POSTURE-STATEMENT/POSTURE-STATEMENT-CONTINUED/>.

<sup>10</sup> Colin S. Gray, "Stability Operations in Strategic Perspective: A Skeptical View." *Parameters* 36 (2): 4-14, (2006).

These IW mission sets include fundamental SOF core functions where MARSOC has the opportunity to specialize in essential stability operations needed in JFEOs.

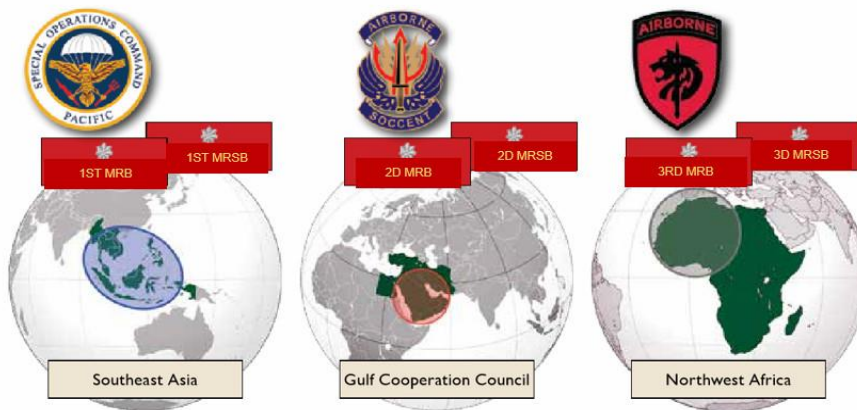


Figure 1: Depiction of the MRB Regional Alignment<sup>11</sup>

### **USSOCOM and MARSOC: The Obligated Relationship**

The birth of USSOCOM came to fruition after the disastrous 1980 attempt to rescue American embassy hostages in Iran, which demonstrated a requirement for a unified special operations command. The clash of several different SOF maneuvers led to numerous errors and ultimately resulted in a failed hostage rescue mission. Since this failed attempt, USSOCOM strives to organize its enterprise in ways that enable each service component to carry out various tasks. These functions include direct action, counter-terrorism, special reconnaissance, foreign internal defense, counter-narcotics, unconventional warfare, civil affairs, and Military Support Information Operations (MISO). USSOCOM is a combatant command (COCOM) responsible for manning, training, and equipping SOF elements to meet national interests in a variety of

<sup>11</sup> Joint Special Operations University, *Special Operations Forces Reference Manual*. 4<sup>th</sup> ed., (MacDill AFB, Florida: The JSOU Press, 2015), 6-4.

environments.<sup>12</sup> Each branch of service under USSOCOM has a unique and self-sustaining Special Operations Command (SOC) Headquarters that USSOCOM can action to conduct a joint operation at any given time.

Since the establishment of USSOCOM in 1986, Marine Corps' participation in the USSOCOM enterprise has continued to be a topic of debate. A general feeling of reluctance spread quickly among the Marine Corps as its leaders argued that the detachment of a select Marine Special Operations unit would be detrimental to the unit as a whole. However, MARSOC was officially activated on February 24<sup>th</sup>, 2006, in North Carolina, shortly after US Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld mandated the addition to USSOCOM.<sup>13</sup> The establishment of MARSOC was a significant step towards the integration of Marine forces into USSOCOM, and its role in the Global War on Terror proved an essential asset across the Department of Defense.

The creation of MARSOC followed the pilot program identified as Marine Corps Detachment One (DET1). To determine the efficacy of Marine Corps integration under USSOCOM, Marine Corps Commandant General James Jones established the multifunctional special detachment on June 19<sup>th</sup>, 2003.<sup>14</sup> This unique element consisted of highly selected Marines (generally coming from Force Recon elements of the I and II MEF), Special Amphibious RECON Corpsmen, and support personnel who served alongside SEAL Team One and Naval Special Warfare Squadron One. In March 2004, the tenacity, talent, and effectiveness of DET1 flourished during operations in Baghdad, Iraq, and created a viable potential for a Marine Special Operations asset in the USSOCOM community. Conclusively, the Marine Corps

---

<sup>12</sup> Ibid, 2-1.

<sup>13</sup> Fred L. Schultz, "MarSOC: Just Call Them MARINES." *United States Naval Institute*, Proceedings 132, no. 1 (Jan 2006): 49.

<sup>14</sup> Dick Couch, *Always Faithful, Always Forward*, (New York: Berkley Caliber, 2014), 27.

SOCOM Proof of Concept study conducted by USSOCOM officials determined the efficacy of DET1, indicating strong performance and success. The dissolution of DET1 gave way for the creation of MARSOC just two short years later. However, these results only proved that another asset used for the current direct action and counter-insurgency fight existed within the Marine Corps.<sup>15</sup>

Increased terror threats and the September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks on US soil drove MARSOC to align its training and execution efforts in the same manner that it fought in Iraq with SEAL Team One. As a result, much of the MARSOC's training and selection curriculum continues to place particular emphasis on special reconnaissance and irregular warfare.<sup>16</sup> Over the past ten years, MARSOC demonstrated reliability as a USSOCOM addition in Iraq and Afghanistan, and consistently proves its capability in performing SOF functions in many GCCs. However, the days of rapid deployments in support of a direct-action mission have since dramatically shifted to advising, assisting, and rebuilding partnered nations across all GCCs. Thus, MARSOC must recognize an opportunity to leverage its abilities of access and placement during JFEOs by executing IW missions as part of required strategies in stability operations. These missions also assist in preventing the mistakes the US learned through fifteen years of combat deployments.

### **Irregular Warfare (IW)**

The Special Operations manual characterizes IW as “a violent struggle among state and nonstate actors for legitimacy and influence over the relevant population(s).”<sup>17</sup> This method of

---

<sup>15</sup> Joint Special Operations University, “MCSOCOM Proof of Concept Deployment Evaluation Report,” Joint Special Operations University, Halbert, FL, September 2004, [www.proceedings.ndia.org/warfare\\_division/readaheads/marsocevalreport.doc](http://www.proceedings.ndia.org/warfare_division/readaheads/marsocevalreport.doc).

<sup>16</sup> Ibid, 124-253.

<sup>17</sup> Joint Chiefs of Staff. Joint Publication 3-05, *Special Operations* (Washington, DC: Headquarters Department of Defense, July 16, 2014), II-1.

warfare uses small SOF elements to coerce or disrupt populations of people who are working against legitimate government organizations where conventional forces are not suitable. Irregular warfare tactics are stability efforts that involve counter-insurgency (COIN), counterterrorism (CT), and foreign internal defense (FID) (Figure 2). COIN and CT operations focus on defeating violent insurgents or groups of populations that pose security threats to the US or partnered nations and is typically followed by FID. Foreign internal defense (FID) is “the participation by civilian and military agencies of a government in any of the action programs taken by another government or other designated organization to free and protect its society from subversion, lawlessness, insurgency, terrorism, and other threats to their security in support of the of HN [Host Nation] IDAD [Internal Defense And Development] program.”<sup>18</sup>

Special Forces conduct FID operations worldwide in every GCC but are most heavily utilized in Iraq and Afghanistan. Done over a span of several years, FID can take several decades to see the return of collaborative investments with HN allies. Through many FID operations around the globe, the US continues to battle counter progressive behavior that takes time to condition when dealing with host nations who have cultural and environmental challenges.<sup>19</sup> These counter progressive behaviors include corruption of US financing, green on blue attacks, and refusal to lead in security cooperation functions.

When using forms of irregular warfare, consistency in the use of rotational forces and knowledge in culture and environmental factors is crucial for progression. All SOF units conduct forms of IW and the sole responsibility does not belong to just one component under USSOCOM. However, while several SOF units under USSOCOM continue to deploy in support

---

<sup>18</sup> Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint Publication 3-22. *Foreign Internal Defense* (Washington, D.C.: Joint Chief of Staff, 2010) I-1.

<sup>19</sup> David J. Kilcullen, "New Paradigms for 21st Century Conflict," *eJournal USA* 12, no. 5 (2007): 39-45.

of stability operations within the CENTCOM region, MARSOC must recognize a protracted opportunity to execute IW across several GCCs such as the Pacific, Africa, European, and Southern areas where MAGTF exercises frequently take place and irregular conflict recurrently rises.

Instability in countries such as India, Malaysia, and Burma present a consistent long-term investment throughout the Asia-Pacific region for both the MAGTF and MARSOC.<sup>20</sup> IW methods are the most vital strategic security goals for the US because of its ability to build partner capacity. These SOF efforts counter “transnational threats; sustain legitimate and effective public safety, security, and justice sector institutions; support legitimate self-defense; contribute to U.S. or partner military operations which may have urgent requirements; maintain control of their territory and jurisdiction waters including air, land, and sea borders; and help indigenous forces assume greater responsibility for operations where U.S. military forces are present.”<sup>21</sup> Predictability, reliability, and dedicated SOF elements are essential when assisting countries with weak security. Consistency in partnered efforts breeds knowledge of variables that too often military planners inadvertently ignore. Some of these variables include differences in culture, religion, civil-military boundaries, and economic or educational levels.

Undoubtedly, US efforts in stability operations focus on pursuing interdependency of the host nation and US military forces. However, what appears to be missing for the MAGTF ashore, is a directed and suitable SOF component that enhances the fundamental principles of war that

---

<sup>20</sup> Matthew E. Miller, “Special Operations Forces and the Professionalization of Foreign Internal Defense,” *Small Wars Journal*, 2016, <http://smallwarsjournal.com/jrnl/art/special-operations-forces-and-the-professionalization-of-foreign-internal-defense>.

<sup>21</sup> The White House Office of the Press Secretary, *Presidential Policy Directive 23 (PPD23), US Security Sector Assistance Policy*, Directive 23, April 04, 2013, <https://www.hsdl.org/?view&did=747214>

Carl Von Clausewitz proved were essential in any military operation. Through MARSOCs knowledge in amphibious operations and its execution in IW operations, Clausewitz' fundamental principles of speed, security, repetition, maneuver, simplicity, economy of force, and purpose are achieved if the nation should call on the MAGTF.

These capabilities are achieved through the coordination and synchronization of MARSOC's SOFLE (Special Operation Forces Liaison Element) and a MARSOC led Joint Special Operations Forces Task Force (JSOTF). These fifteen man SOFLEs are typically led by a Lieutenant Colonel and manned with SOF operators who are responsible for coordinating Marine Expeditionary Units (MEU) and SOF joint operations. Additionally, these SOFLEs are capable of coordinating special reconnaissance elements before the MAGTF's arrival which contributes to closing critical intelligence gaps for the MAGTF's landing. Through a MARSOC SOFLE, complementary and supplementary functions are provided to enhance MAGTF operations, and strategic objectives in stability operations using a MARSOC led JSOTF forward are reached where the MAGTF would create risk in speed, security, and simplicity. Furthermore, a MARSOC led JSOTF may also provide necessary intelligence updates specifically for the lodgment establishment through stability mission sets in IW (Foreign Internal Defense (FID), Counter Insurgency (COIN), etc.).

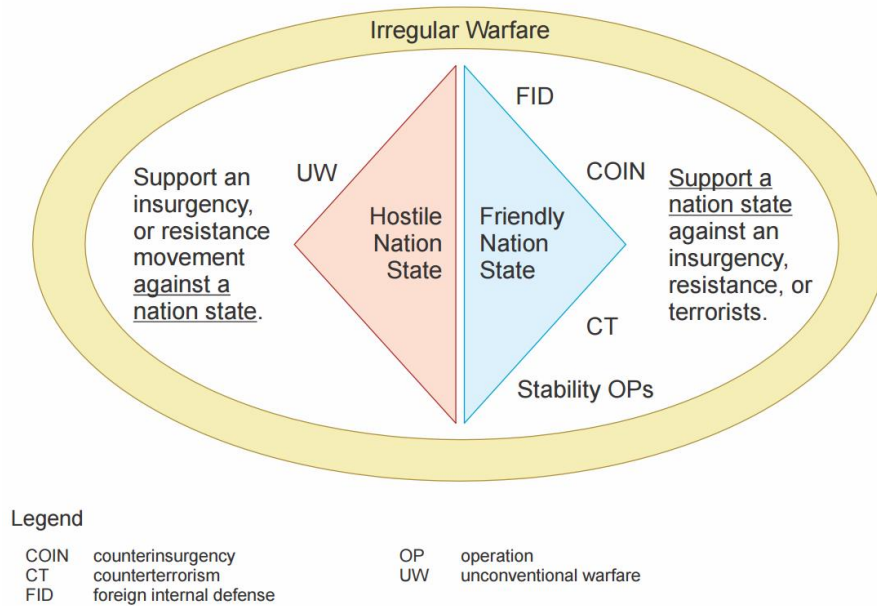


Figure 2: Relationship Between Special Operations and Irregular Warfare<sup>22</sup>

## The SOF Reference Manual vs. the Marine Corps Operating Concept

The USSOCOM reference manual provides task and purpose frameworks for each service component under USSOCOM and gives a general mission essential task lists (METL) determined by the wartime requirements that each unit must achieve. As it states, “MARSOC’s small wars heritage and MAGTF mentality drive an emphasis on well-developed intelligence, gained by employing all-source intelligence professionals down to the team level while supporting robust C2 [Command and Control] capabilities at all levels. This makes MARSOC well-suited for SFA, FID, and COIN missions supported by related core activities and tasks.”<sup>23</sup> Committing one MRB to Special Operations Command-Pacific, Special Operations Command-

<sup>22</sup> Joint Chiefs of Staff. Joint Publication 3-05, *Special Operations* (Washington, DC: Headquarters Department of Defense, July 16, 2014), 29.

<sup>23</sup> Joint Special Operations University, *Special Operations Forces Reference Manual 4<sup>th</sup> ed.*, (MacDill AFB, Florida: The JSOU Press, 2015), 144.

Central, and Special Operations Command- Africa, SOCOM directs MARSOC to focus greater efforts in land-locked regions conducting counter-terrorism and counter-insurgency with other SOF elements, rather than modifying its METL to place a stronger emphasis on all forms of IW along the littorals.

The Marine Corps Operating Concept suggests that although both elements remain actively engaged in several of the same regions, little has been done to achieve integration, interoperability, and interdependence of the MAGTF and MARSOC.<sup>24</sup> Under the Naval Special Warfare Command, Navy SOF elements are trained to work in the Sea, Air, and Land, and their ability to work underwater is the primary function that distinguishes the Navy from other special operation forces. A successful forcible entry conducted by the MAGTF requires the involvement of the Naval Special Warfare Command that would, in accordance with its METL, be called upon to perform underwater mine demolition of the coastal waters. Subsequently, forward of the MAGTF ashore presents an opportunity for MARSOC to provide complementary efforts as funding from USSOCOM for building partner capacity would support full spectrum special operation missions—all SOF core activities.

Full-spectrum special operation missions allow MARSOC's SOFLE to coordinate for special reconnaissance before entry through the TSOC. Additionally, for purposes of continuity and knowledge in amphibious landings, the TSOC must consider MARSOC as the lead element for the JSOTF. A MARSOC led JSOTF is the best option for follow-on stability operations, where the tactics used would entail IW methods and provide intelligence for the MAGTF if Marine assault forces are needed. Dating back to the Vietnam era, MARSOC continues to

---

<sup>24</sup> Headquarters US Marine Corps, *Marine Corps Operating Concept*, (Washington DC: Headquarters US Marine Corps, September 2016), 15.

volunteer for FID and other IW missions that require professional forces capable of investing time and patience. Therefore, some recommended solutions for MARSOC's METL aims at developing itself as a "jack of all trades," providing tangible results that support JFEOs by using IW methods.

Doctrine in Joint Publications 3-05 (Special Operations) and 3-18 (Joint Forcible Entry Operations) state that SOF forces train to conduct core functions before and following JFEOs. These guidelines in published doctrine all point to an obvious suitable and feasible option—MARSOC. Case studies of the MAGTF JFEO operation in the Dominican Republic and a hypothetical scenario in Malaysia will illuminate a strong case for the need of MARSOC to focus its specialty enhancing the MAGTF. These examples indicate both a past and likely potential for MARSOC's capacity to enhance the MAGTF.

### **Lessons of a Joint Forcible Entry in the Dominican Republic**

In April 1965, US President Lyndon B. Johnson authorized the launch of 42,000 Marines in a full sea and land assault off the coast of the Dominican Republic (DR). While US Marine amphibious units deployed to Vietnam to fight a growing communist aggression, likewise, disorder among the Dominicans ensued following many military-led coups in a split between anti-communist and leftist reign. Fearing that the Dominican Republic was heading down the same road that communist country Cuba was in, the US Ambassador to Cuba predicted that a stable government appeared doubtful. Elements of the 82nd Airborne Division and the 4th Marine Expeditionary Unit deployed in support of Operation POWERPACK to extract all Americans that feared for their lives when lethal activity and disarray spread across the city of Santo Domingo. Upon arrival ashore, the MEB (Marine Expeditionary Brigade) set up an

international safe zone for all US citizens in Santo Domingo, securing all entry points into the area until the Marines and Army forces removed them out of the country.<sup>25</sup>

The mission to retrieve American citizens was effective on several accounts but proved that the extraction mission itself was only half the battle. Though the Marine Corps demonstrated its expeditionary and quick response ability to conduct a joint forcible entry, communication problems arose between US leaders pinned at the Embassy under sniper fire and US Marine forces ashore. Rebel and military forces traveled along main roads, but the sensitivity level of these intelligence reports made distribution over unsecured lines impossible to US military forces on the ground (Figure 3). Moreover, special reconnaissance teams from Army and Marine elements took several days away from planning the rescue mission to assess areas that presented high-risk factors for airborne and MAGTF lodgment operations.

The lack in US partner building, assistance in creating a stable democracy, and support for sustaining sovereignty are the greatest lessons taken from the crisis response mission. During the drawdown of troops on the ground, the challenge of rebuilding the DR's government belonged to The Organization of American States (OAS) and the Army's 42<sup>nd</sup> Civil Affairs Company.<sup>26</sup> This only Civil Affairs Company worked with multiple interagency groups to reconstruct major government ran administrations such as public health, security agencies, economy, school systems, and military-civil control. However, due to the complexity of this task, it required a consistent and professional military force that was trained in all cultural and language aspects, to positively reconstruct major government agencies. In the years that followed

---

<sup>25</sup> Jack K. Ringler, "U.S. Marine Corps Operations in the Dominican Republic," April-June 1965. (Washington: Historical Division, Headquarters US Marine Corps, 1992), 9-31.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid, 24.

the exit of US troops, the DR required mentorship and education in synchronization of security forces as some military officials and local security forces differed in political views.

The US failed to recognize the significance of continued IW operations in the DR, which presumably required follow-on, partner capacity building missions such as foreign internal defense to ensure security progression. Since the invasion, the DR security forces have been unable to unite its security border efforts to combat drug trafficking, illegal immigration, and hate crimes. In efforts to provide interoperability of Marine and SOF, USSOCOM implemented the SOFLE for the MAGTF in 2015. However, joint doctrine does not direct a MARSOC led SOFLE and the MAGTF still struggles to train with a consistent SOF organization. Military doctrine must identify MARSOC as the SOF element responsible for leading and executing follow-on SOF functions before and succeeding a JFEO to prevent identical operational shortfalls of reconnaissance for the MAGTFs landing, security cooperation in support of government officials, and civil-military stability efforts seen in Operation POWERPACK.

Although recent studies show the Dominican Republic as one of the fastest growing economies, current President of the DR Danilo Medina battles significantly growing threats of intra-state conflict. Intra-state conflict grievances appear in pockets of the rural areas of the DR where the economic growth has yet to affect the poorest areas of country positively and it thus, promotes a sense of delegitimization of the current government. Additionally, the ever-growing consensus throughout the country of government corruption and discrimination toward the citizens of the DR is evident in public speech liberties, freedom of assembly, Rule of Law violations, and personal autonomy. Security cooperation with the Dominican Republic is vital to US interest due to its proximity and extensive trade relationship. The country battles weakened security in its ability to combat drug trafficking, human trafficking, and illegal immigration of

fugitives.<sup>27</sup> These critical intra-state threats present a clear SOF opportunity for future engagement with all security forces in the DR, and a potential to exercise interoperability and integration with joint forces such as the MAGTF along the littorals. These joint operations link protection of core strategic interests in reducing barriers of import and export materials. This case study illustrates an opportunity to assess MAGTF amphibious landings and aligns IW operations to Sun Tzu’s philosophy, believing “To ... not prepare is the greatest of crimes; to be prepared beforehand for any contingency is the greatest of virtues.”<sup>28</sup>

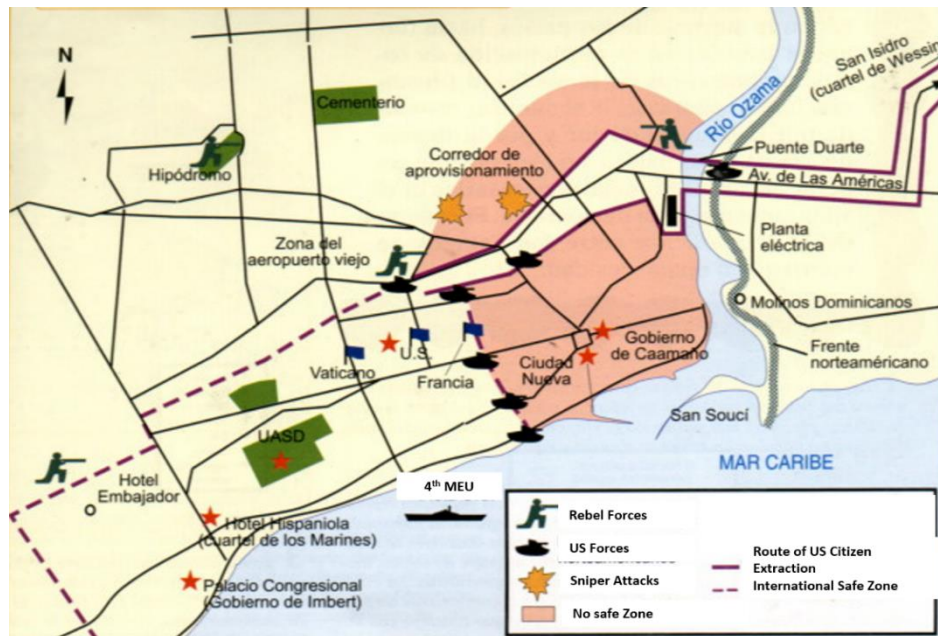


Figure 3: International Safe Zone

## Hypothetical Use of MARSOF in Malaysia

<sup>27</sup> US State Department, *US Relations in the Dominican Republic*, <https://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/35639.htm>.

<sup>28</sup> Sun Tzu, *The Complete Art of War*, e-book ed, (New York: Start Publishing LLC, October 2013), 47.

Since the realignment of MARSOF elements to several GCCs, MARSOC's Joint Combined Exercise Training (JCET) continues to demonstrate progressive partner capacity in the Asia-Pacific region. Through these partnered activities, MARSOC conducts training with host nation maritime forces that not only assist in providing the host nation security during steady state operations but also display potential for partnerships with the US in crisis/conflict. A theoretical case study in Malaysia explains the strength of these possible actions.

Certainly, it is not out of the realm of possibility that Malaysia could suffer from a massive typhoon. As seen in past historical events of this caliber, these types of natural disasters frequently overwhelm the government's ability to respond and provide for its people. While the populace waits for order and control, the suffering ignites dormant internal strife and results in a coup d' etat—precursors to a civil war. In this scenario, a junta of generals are struggling for control over the military and the elected government is left for exile. As a result, the US President and GCC commander decide that it is in the US government's interest to land the MAGTF with a task to stabilize the capital so the elected government can return to power and begin stability operations in the host nation.

As the MAGTF begins JFEO along the beach to secure an area for landing Marines and other troops, the MARSOC SOFLE makes contact with the MARSOC led JSOTF on the peninsula. These MARSOF elements quickly partner with the Malaysian coastal marine force forward due to its sustained training relationship over the last ten years. Stabilization of the crisis occurs through MARSOC's joint effort with Malaysian forces by securing a portion of the capital that allows for official government officials to return to the country.

In this hypothetical case study, the lessons learned in the Dominican Republic are used to create measures of success by supporting the partnered force. Through these supporting efforts, the SOFLE quickly synchronizes and coordinates for special reconnaissance in support of the MAGTFs landing, and also gains situational awareness of SOF activity as it works toward stability operations. Thereby, deconflicting MAGTF lodgment operations ashore and providing air and fire support to SOF elements as needed. Additionally, these joint operations assist the Malaysian forces by protecting against internal security threats, enforcing responsibility of its national defense to the Malaysian government, and legitimizes the government by restoring the safety of the populace.

## **Conclusion**

It is common in MARSOC's culture to hear the motto "Marines are who we are; SOF is what we do." In keeping with the foundations of Marine Corps pride, USSOCOM must leverage the experiences in MARSOC's history and provide MARSOC an opportunity to develop itself in Irregular Warfare operations along the littorals that complement Marine Corps conventional forces. Moreover, these directed missions allow MARSOC to distinguish itself from any other SOF service component in the USSOCOM enterprise. As the Marine Corps Operating Concept continues to revise the MAGTF force in ways to project and sustain power ashore, MARSOC must leverage its joint capability to exercise IW. This SOF operation ultimately assists a host nation in combating threats, and also meets US foreign diplomatic intent in maintaining security relationships through stability operations. Implementation of the Special Operation Forces Liaison Element (SOFLE) forward deployed with the MAGTF allows increased integration, interoperability, and interdependence of conventional and special operations forces. However,

the catalyst for successful power projection ashore lies in the operations of a synced SOFLE and MARSOC led JSOTF.

MARSOC must consider its proficiency in irregular warfare as it continues to reevaluate its training, readiness, and expertise for strategy in the 21st-century war. Colin S. Gray stresses the significance of recognizing and understanding defense strategies to achieve victory in future warfare. As the character of war continues to change, many can assume that one characteristic of the future is evident in today's conflict around the world—anarchy against nationalism. Moreover, while it appears that most units under USSOCOM gain its reputation in direct-action missions, MARSOC has incredible potential to produce world-wide security efforts along the littorals. The metrics then would be measured in host nations that support stability operations and are building irrepressible civil-military societies through various forms of IW, rather than a metric in body count.

Most recent critics on the future of warfare such as Ralph Peters and Robert Kaplan, in fact, believe that future of intra-state and trans-state conflict will most certainly require SOF access and influence for persistent presence in conflict locations.<sup>29</sup> Furthermore, 40% of country capitals are located along the coast where it is plausible that the MAGTF may be used to assist a host nation's government to control civil unrest; all but three of these countries are members of the United Nations and will likely require intervention from other countries that will support operations in peace, security, and protection of humanity.

---

<sup>29</sup> Colin S. Gray, *Another Bloody Century: Future Warfare* (London: Phoenix, 2005), 253.

Since MARSOC is manned with less than 2,000 personnel,<sup>30</sup> MARSOC must prioritize its limited forces along the littorals to stay ahead of stability requirements post-war. With 40% of coastal capitals across the world (all but three of those countries are members of the United Nations), SOCOM must acknowledge a greater return when aligning MARSOC to these coastal areas if the MAGTF should be called upon to defeat or prevent civil unrest.

MARSOCs ability to execute irregular warfare to enhance the MAGTF's joint forcible entry operations offers great and positive joint potential, and is in fact what can distinguish it from any other component within USSOCOM. As indicated above, the *Special Forces Reference Manual* emphasizes the capabilities of each SOF service component and how they perform to enhance its conventional forces. So also, should USSOCOM build upon the ways in which MARSOC can enhance the Marine Corps Operating Concept. Hence, United States Special Operations Command must direct Marine Special Operations Command as the as that SOF element responsible for supporting Joint Forcible Entry Operations.

---

<sup>30</sup> Hope Hodge Seck, "MARSOC remains a growing, changing force after 9 years," *Marine Corps Times*, February 21, 2015, <https://www.marinecorpstimes.com/story/military/2015/02/21/marsoc-at-9-anniversary/23607665/>

## Bibliography

- Austin, Lloyd J. III "The Posture of US Central Command" (statement, MacDill Air Force Base, FL, (Mar 8, 2016), US CENTCOM, <http://www.centcom.mil/ABOUT-US/POSTURESTATEMENT/POSTURESTATEMENT-CONTINUED/>
- Brewington, Brooks, R. "Combined Action Platoons: A Strategy for Peace Enforcement." Master's thesis, Marine Corps University, 1996.
- Butler Jr, Frank K. "Tactical Medicine Training for SEAL Mission Commanders." *Military Medicine* 166, no. 7 (2001).
- Gray, Colin S. *Another Bloody Century: Future Warfare*. London: Phoenix, 2006.
- Gray, Colin S. "Stability Operations in Strategic Perspective: A Skeptical View." *Parameters* 36 (2): 4-14, (2006).
- Couch, Dick. *Always Faithful, Always Forward: The Forging of a Special Operations Marine*. First edition. New York: Berkley Caliber, 2014.
- Headquarters US Marine Corps. *Marine Corps Operating Concept*. Headquarters US Marine Corps, September 2016.
- Joint Chiefs of Staff. Joint Publication 3-05. *Special Operations*. Washington, DC: Headquarters Department of Defense, July 16, 2014.
- Joint Chiefs of Staff. Joint Publication 3-18. *Joint Forcible Entry Operations*. Washington, DC: Headquarters Department of Defense, November 27, 2012.
- Joint Chiefs of Staff. *Foreign Internal Defense*. Joint Publication 3-22. (Washington, D.C.: Joint Chief of Staff, 2010.
- Joint Special Operations University (U.S.). *Special Operations Forces Reference Manual*. 4<sup>th</sup> ed. MacDill AFB, Florida: The JSOU Press, 2015.
- Joint Special Operations University, "MCSOCOM Proof of Concept Deployment Evaluation Report," Halburt, FL: The JSOUS Press, 2004.  
[www.proceedings.ndia.org/warfare\\_division/readaheads/marsocevalreport.doc](http://www.proceedings.ndia.org/warfare_division/readaheads/marsocevalreport.doc)
- Kilcullen, David J. "New Paradigms for 21st-Century Conflict." *eJournal USA* 12, no. 5, 2007.
- Melson, Charles. *Vietnam Marines 1956-1975*. Oxford, UK: Osprey Publishing, 1992.
- Miller, Matthew E. "Special Operations Forces and the Professionalization of Foreign Internal Defense." *Small Wars Journal* (2016)  
<http://smallwarsjournal.com/jrnl/art/special-operations-forces-and-the-professionalization-of-foreign-internal-defense>

Rand Project Air Force. *New Division of Labor: Meeting America's Security Challenges Beyond Iraq*. Santa Monica, Ca: Rand Corporation, 2007.

Schultz, Fred L. "MarSOC: Just Call Them Marines." *Proceedings-United States Naval Institute* 132, no. 1, 2006.

Simpson, Elizabeth. "The Navy Cross: Extraordinary Heroism in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Other Conflicts." *Air Power History* 57, no. 2, 2010.

Sun Tzu, *The Complete Art of War*, e-book ed. New York: Start Publishing LLC, October 2013.

US State Department, *US Relations in the Dominican Republic*.  
<https://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/35639.htm>

The White House Office of the Press Secretary. *Presidential Policy Directive 23 (PPD23), US Security Sector Assistance Policy*. Directive 23, April 04, 2013.  
<https://www.hsdl.org/?view&did=747214>