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MASTER OF MILITARY STUDIES

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**PREPARING FOR THE FUTURE OPERATING ENVIRONMENT BY TAMING THE  
MILITARY-INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX**

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT  
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF  
MASTER OF MILITARY STUDIES

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## Executive Summary

**Title:** Preparing for the Future Operating Environment by Taming the Military-Industrial Complex

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**Thesis:** The US Department of Defense (DoD) can maintain the capabilities needed for the future operating environment (FOE) by constructing a military focusing on verified requirements using the principles of special operations forces (SOF) as a guide, thereby lowering the high costs associated with an industrialized military.

**Discussion:** Secretary of Defense Robert Gates stated at the Eisenhower library in 2010, “Before making claims of requirements not being met or alleged “gaps”—in ships, tactical fighters, personnel, or anything else—we need to evaluate the criteria upon which requirements are based and the wider real world context.” Wars and conflict during the twentieth century, specifically the World Wars, lost the characteristics of restraint and evolved into a total war concept stressing the need for overwhelming military power. After WWII, state-on-state conflict changed again when President Dwight Eisenhower moved the security strategy focused on a large standing military to a strategy focused on psychological, economic, and political components teamed with a more frugal, smaller military that relied upon “massive retaliatory power.” The character of war changed yet again with the Indochina conflicts using counter-insurgency tactics and culminated in the 1990s with Operation DESERT STORM and the revolution in military affairs (RMA) theory. But conducting war in the twenty-first century is expensive and protracted and does not afford the US military the opportunity to annihilate the enemy to the point of no longer providing resistance. With this shift in warfare comes the need for a smaller, concentrated military that can combat non-state actors while not being a financial drain and simultaneously conduct short-term military operations against state actors.

**Conclusion:** Focusing efforts on a military built for the current characteristics of war rather than a military focused on past models or unfounded requirements is of utmost importance. Capability requirements needed for the FOE do not require the construction of a dated Cold War model when an increasing use of information warfare and cyber warfare comes at a cheaper cost for an adversary who cannot match US industrial output. Using the principles of SOF as a guide allows the Pentagon the capability of fielding a relevant force, while also lowering the high capacity costs associated with this thesis’ warnings against defense spending practices.

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## Introduction

The US government's decades-long funding of the military industrial complex provides numerous warnings that foreshadow some of the nation's current financial problems. In 1935, Marine Corps officer General Smedley Butler openly criticized the government for profiting from war under the guise of security in *War is a Racket*.<sup>1</sup> A few decades later President Dwight D. Eisenhower coined the term 'military-industrial complex' and warned against the close relationship with the US government during his farewell address in 1961.<sup>2</sup> Arguments counter to President Eisenhower's comments about 'unwarranted influence' were hushed—in the few places they existed. President Eisenhower's warning was followed by President John F. Kennedy's warning that peace was only enforceable by humans, not by the weapons of war.<sup>3</sup> After another two decades in 1983, Pentagon analyst Franklin Spinney was briefing the Senate Armed Services Committee on the "underlying problems of defense planning and weapons procurement" lamenting out of control spending habits that benefit wealthy defense contractors and others connected to the Pentagon under the guise of security and defense.<sup>4</sup> Americans have been warned about unwanted influence and spending habits of the defense system, yet the government continues on the same course in the face of fiscal ills stemming from no budget and trillions in debt that have direct repercussions and challenge economic stability and national security.

A Government Accountability Office (GAO) report published in January 2017 emphasized "long-term fiscal projections that show the federal government is on an unsustainable path" unless a budget that better aligns income with expenditures is created and adhered to for government spending.<sup>5</sup> As former Secretary of Defense Robert Gates stated at the Eisenhower Library in 2010, "before making claims of requirements not being met or alleged

gaps—in ships, tactical fighters, personnel, or anything else—we need to evaluate the criteria upon which requirements are based and the wider real world context.”<sup>6</sup> Secretary Gates further detailed this point by asking what was the point of having a larger navy than the next thirteen navies combined, and more than twenty times the aircraft of China.<sup>7</sup> The United States has created a force built to prevail against a near-peer competitor that the United States has not fought, meaning that the nation has spent billions on a war that it is not fighting. Therefore, the United States does not have a military that matches the current or future threats because of its unwillingness to move past the large conventional formations of the Cold War. The focus of US spending should, instead, focus on the current world of globalization and multi-state economic enmeshment.

The future operating environment (FOE) and the characteristics of war are trending towards information warfare (IW) activities. Therefore, it becomes even more important to construct a military built for the future, rather than one that continues to fund a military built for the past. As trends shift to the use of information to manipulate and coerce adversaries, a smaller more agile military is needed to support the new main effort – IW - and supporting US diplomatic and economic efforts. The importance of a dynamic intelligence apparatus is magnified as IW can blur the traditional military lines of effort, particularly with service members unused to employing IW capabilities and toolsets. The United States must understand the enemy and its intentions while understanding the intentions of its allies in the new IW world.<sup>8</sup>

As the FOE trends towards non-state actors and proxies, the United States can achieve fiscal efficiencies by shifting structurally and intellectually from a heavily industrialized military to a force centered on a smaller and lighter military. This paper proposes that the Department of

Defense (DoD) can enhance the capabilities needed for the FOE by constructing a military focused on the principles of special operations forces (SOF) while lowering the high costs associated with an industrialized military and providing more choices to decision-makers at the Pentagon and White House.

The principles of SOF permits the DoD to better prepare for the FOE by utilizing smaller military elements rather than the bludgeoning tactics of annihilation and attrition typically employed by a large military built for offensive operations.<sup>9</sup> Spending billions of dollars in pay and benefits as well as equipping the growth of a military model that is outdated due to the transforming characteristics of war does little to curtail wasteful spending or create an agile force.

More specifically, this paper argues that by using SOF theory the US military can gain efficiencies and maximize the effectiveness of the general-purpose forces (GPF) by changing the structure of the military to one with smaller elements aligned more with the MAGTF than the Army's brigade structure. As part of this analysis, this paper describes the strategic confusion that exists as evidenced by the contradictory comments by current leadership. The analysis will articulate the FOE and how the current military (specifically the Army) is not fit to fight in the present or future operating environment. By clearly identifying and accepting that the characteristics of war have changed, the Pentagon can reprioritize the efforts to build necessary capabilities and reconstruct the military in a manner more in line with current the DoD. This paper also details some of the unfortunate spending practices that degrade public trust and confidence in Pentagon leadership, and degrade the military's capability to fight in the future. Finally, this paper presents counterarguments and makes recommendations regarding how the United States can increase capability without increasing costly capacity.

To focus on key drivers for the development of a future military force, this paper will not discuss all of the nuanced issues that feed into such a complicated topic as the military-industrial complex, a subject examined by many other analysts. However, it will detail the larger drivers that support the continuation of the military-industrial complex. For one to understand the core of the issues surrounding the military, one must start at the White House. Understanding the national strategies employed by numerous presidential administrations is key to building a military built for current conflicts and the FOE. That being said, there are still areas the DoD can directly influence within its authorities.

### *Strategic Confusion*

Before exploring the FOE and spending practices of the DoD that directly affect the structure of military forces, it is important to analyze current US strategy and recent comments by President Donald Trump pertaining to it. On the campaign trail in 2016, President Trump lamented the fact that President Barack Obama's administration "crippled us with wasteful spending" and overextended resources.<sup>10</sup> President Trump detailed further that US actions in Iraq, Libya, and Syria created the opportunity for the Islamic State to grow. The president has since selected the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS) and radical Islam writ large as his primary national security focus instead of the competing priorities of President Obama's strategy. In identifying radical Islam as a key national security priority, President Trump also made it clear that military force is not always the answer as it encompasses a philosophical fight while also requiring the assistance of foreign partners struggling with extremists to help in the ideological fight. In the same campaign speech, after previously talking about wasteful spending and overextension of resources, President Trump called for (and continues to call for) increasing the military's manpower to Operation DESERT STORM numbers.<sup>11</sup> The comments against

overextending resources due to the lack of strategic focus while also advocating a larger military are contradictory. Creating a larger, more powerful force without increasing spending and cost has proven impossible in the past. Furthermore, such a large military rarely stays inactive. As international relations theorist Christopher Layne contends, "states with lots of power usually succumb to the temptation to use it."<sup>12</sup> Thomas Ricks, author, and editor of *Foreign Policy* states, "money will not fix what ails our military. We don't have a supply problem, we have a demand problem created by poor strategy."<sup>13</sup> Historian Williamson Murray takes it a step further declaring, "no matter how effective the military institutions might be at the tactical and operational levels, if the strategy and political framework within which they were fighting was flawed, the result was defeat."<sup>14</sup> These arguments highlight that without a sound strategy the Pentagon will seek opportunities to justify its budget dollars with unnecessary military actions. Spending money isn't necessarily a bad thing but what it is spent on requires further examination and justification to the US populace particularly when focusing efforts on national defense.

When exploring the instruments of strategic defense such as nuclear deterrence and ballistic missile defense, it is important not to conflate strategic deterrence mechanisms with land forces. Deterrence weapons are for defense as prescribed by the strategic defense initiative whereas land forces are for offensive operations.<sup>15</sup> This is not to say a strategy of deterrence is inexpensive but that it applies more to the national interest than large standing military forces that this paper will detail later. If the nation is going to have an offensive element why not have a smaller force that has flexibility and agility to react to a fluid environment? Such a force would change the calculus of political decisions.<sup>16</sup> Simply having the capability is the deterrent. There is no reason why the United States and its allies need twenty times the capability of its closest near-peer.

### *Learning from History*

Exploration of US history shows that wars and conflict during the twentieth century, specifically the two World Wars, lost the characteristics of restraint. Military conflict evolved into a total war concept where “bloody encounters of nations, in which each contending side seeks the complete defeat, or if possible, the destruction of the enemy” demonstrated the need for overwhelming military power.<sup>17</sup> After WWII, state-on-state conflict changed again when President Eisenhower changed the security strategy from a focus on a large standing military to a more frugal, smaller military that relied upon “massive retaliatory power” in the form of nuclear deterrence.<sup>18</sup> The characteristics of war changed yet again with the Indochina conflicts using counter-insurgency tactics and culminated with Operation DESERT STORM and the supposed revolution in military affairs (RMA) theory. Conducting war in the twenty-first century has become even more expensive and protracted than the globe-spanning wars of the previous century.<sup>19</sup> This author does not expect to see a military environment where the US military annihilates the enemy so as to “reduce him to such a physical and moral state that he feels himself incapable of continuing the struggle.”<sup>20</sup> With this shift in the character of warfare comes the need for a smaller, concentrated military that can combat non-state actors while still maintaining the ability to use speed and agility to counter traditional military elements. In essence, utilizing some of the principles set forth by President Eisenhower permits the United States to maintain a strategic deterrence while reducing the cost of the entire military.

### *Military Strategy of Annihilation vs. Precision Operations*

General Albert Wedemeyer, one of the strategists responsible for the Victory Plan of 1941, taught that deep attacks into enemy territory to destroy command and control, logistics, and communication hubs did more to damage enemy forces than a force-on-force battle.<sup>21</sup>

Colmar Freiherr von der Goltz, a Prussian military theorist, believed that the nation which could mobilize the quickest had the advantage and could defeat larger forces not ready to fight.<sup>22</sup> Yet, the Pentagon continues to construct a military built to fight an attrition war instead of one designed for deep attacks into enemy territory with smaller units. By better-utilizing the precision capabilities and technologies of the US military, the DoD can make optimal use of assets and change the structure of its offensive capabilities.

Understanding how to properly use a military is key to comprehending the national objective of the United States. When it comes to waging war, the current national military strategy requires the US military to fight one major regional conflict. This is down from the historical requirement of fighting two, as previously dictated by civilian leadership, yet it is imperative for this national strategy to become the basis for all future DoD planning efforts.<sup>23</sup> After determining the national objective, the Pentagon must devise a strategy to accommodate the aforementioned national objectives. After the grand strategy comes the need to determine the resources to accomplish the military strategy supporting national objectives. Finally, construction and equipping the military force is the final question to answer when conducting strategic planning.<sup>24</sup> Unfortunately, the aforementioned questions by former Secretary Gates call into the question the habits of the Pentagon and service component leadership. Curtailing excessive spending while remaining focused on holistic, strategic goals needs to occur before gains can be made in making a more agile force built for the FOE.

The application of SOF theory will be the first step in curtailing excessive manpower requirements in Army brigades and changing them into the more functional special purpose marine air-ground task force (MAGTF) constructs employed by the Marine Corps. The Marine Corps is used to functioning as smaller units within a rapid response planning process compared

to the Army that uses a more time intensive, deliberate planning process. Finally, as history has shown, it is easy to build larger military units used for attrition tactics compared to constructing smaller units that require better planning, technology, and intelligence support to exact a more precise outcome. A GPF infantryman can be trained in weeks and thrown into the breach whereas smaller units that function autonomously require increased levels of training and technological support.

### *Future Operating Environment*



The “Marine Corps Operating Concept” published in September 2016 espouses five key drivers within the FOE: “complex terrain, technology proliferation, information as a weapon, battle signatures, and increasingly contested maritime domain.”<sup>25</sup> Complex terrain requires Marines and military service members to prepare for a ‘three-block war’ that spans the range of military

operations.<sup>26</sup> The Marine Corps Intelligence Agency’s Complexity of Conflict graphic clearly articulates three of the five pillars of the strategy focusing on non-conventional characteristics of war with the two remaining pillars focused on capability rather than capacity. Shortfalls within the concept of IW are overcome by increasing capabilities or growing new ones that apply to the

current and future environments rather than creating more infantry. Many of the prescribed shortfalls are available in currently fielded Marine Corps units, but it would require a change in the Corps table of organization and staffing goal away from combat arms units. The remainder of the Marine Corps Operating Concept focuses on other capabilities and the Navy's capacity to support amphibious operations. Technology and scientific advancement grant the military advantages against the nation's adversaries. General Robert Neller, the current Commandant of the Marine Corps, implores Marines to validate concepts and think critically in the document's foreword: "Mistakes are paid for in blood and incompetence can lead to catastrophic defeat...proactive involvement in validating our operating concept is critical to ensuring we can *Innovate, Adapt, and Win!*"<sup>27</sup> Therefore, increasing the size of the Marine Corps or the Army is not required when sufficient capabilities reside in the current structure. Innovating and adapting doesn't mean asking for more capacity but rather utilizing the capacity the military has and better utilizing the current structure. Retraining service members is far simpler and cost effective compared to making new capabilities while current capabilities sit idle. It takes advantage of the previous training efforts and money invested into retaining good service members rather than rebuilding from scratch making force multipliers out of the retraining process. In doing so, the first step to creating smaller, more effective units is in motion before exploring further spending practices.

### **Defense Spending**

When analyzing the spending practices of the government, the second most costly budget expenditure within the federal government is defense spending at \$595 billion. When combined with the cost of veterans care at \$175 billion and the pending request for further funds from the new Secretary of Defense, defense spending competes with Social Security as the largest budget

expenditure.<sup>28</sup> Combine the current budget allocation for defense spending with the recent exposing of \$125 billion in administrative waste from the Pentagon, and there are ample reasons why the monetary spending by the defense budget must modify programs and reallocate funding to other programs within the federal budget or pay down the national debt.<sup>29</sup>

The Pentagon is a boon both in terms of creating jobs and cultivating layers of bureaucracy. Overhead costs the DoD almost a quarter of its budget with over a million-people employed as contractors, civilians, and military personnel to fill office jobs far removed from the operational units. With this enormous amount of spending, it is difficult to justify the aforementioned calls to expand the size of the military, nor continue spending taxpayer dollars on cost overruns by the military-industrial complex. Yet, senior officials continue to do just that. As Deputy-Defense Secretary Robert Work stated in response to the \$125 billion in administrative waste findings, “I think it vastly overstates what’s really going on.”<sup>30</sup> Additionally, Work lamented the internal review board, which he helped to create, as not understanding how difficult it is to fix bureaucratic cost overruns. He added that the DoD, “will never be as efficient as a commercial organization. We’re the largest bureaucracy in the world. There’s going to be some inherent inefficiencies in that.”<sup>31</sup> “Inefficiencies” may not be a word that adequately explains \$125 billion of excess a year. The ethical concerns from the leaders that want to hide information due to fear that the budget can possibly dwindle while calling the report recommendations unrealistic is alarming as well.<sup>32</sup>

Combining the internal Pentagon report detailing \$125 billion in waste with recently published comments by President Trump wanting to increase defense spending by an additional \$54 billion (with an additional \$30 billion in supplemental spending) totaling upwards of ~\$680 billion for 2017, leaves many pondering why more money is needed. The message becomes

inconsistent particularly when the president states, “we are going to do more with less and make the government lean...we can do so much more with the money we spend.”<sup>33</sup> The proof clearly shows the Pentagon is not doing more with less. Most military professionals would welcome more spending, but the capacity of the military should not be increased because it already faces issues with maintaining equipment and equipping current troop strength.<sup>34</sup> It is estimated that another \$55 billion to \$90 billion a year would be needed to maintain the recommended capacity increase.<sup>35</sup> Making units smaller decreases personnel cost while still maintaining capabilities. When scrutinizing the spending associated with the current structure and the FOE it should leave many questioning how the DoD can still remain effective while increasing efficiencies. Using SOF principles will afford the DoD that capability by making more agile units that military theorists of the past yearned to have at their disposal to make conflict more precise.

### **Application of SOF Theory**

Admiral William McRaven, a SOF theorist and former commander of US Special Operations Command and US Joint Special Operations Command, summed up why special operations are such an important and viable means of military intervention. SOF defies conventional wisdom in that a small force can “defeat a much larger or well-entrenched opponent.”<sup>36</sup> Simply by minimizing the tensions involved in the execution process through detailed planning, special operations can achieve relative superiority over the enemy. The same principles of SOF can be applied to the GPF in making a better fighting force without needing a large attrition style military.

Oft quoted theorist Carl von Clausewitz stated, “the defensive form of warfare is intrinsically stronger than the offense. It contributes resisting power, the ability to preserve and protect oneself. Thus, the defense generally has a negative aim, that of resisting the enemy’s

will...if we are to mount an offensive to impose our will, we must develop enough force to overcome the inherent superiority of the enemy's defense."<sup>37</sup> The theory goes on to summarize the only way to defeat the stronger form of warfare (defense) is through superior numbers.<sup>38</sup> However, there is a multitude of examples of smaller forces defeating much larger adversaries: The Battle of Marathon, The Six Day War, and the Yom Kippur War. But how? Through relative superiority, Admiral McRaven explains how smaller units can defeat larger forces and act as a lethal means to enact US policy objectives. This thesis claims relative superiority and the subsequent principles not only apply to SOF but apply to general purpose military forces as well. The previous examples were not decided by special operators with night vision goggles swooping in on specialized helicopters. They were defined by smaller forces reliant on speed and other principles espoused by Admiral McRaven that are applicable to GPF; however, many of these principles are found more in the Marine Corps and less in the Army due to its sheer size and makeup.

### *Relative Superiority*

Admiral McRaven defines relative superiority as "a condition that exists when an attacking force, generally smaller, gains a decisive advantage over a larger or well-defended enemy."<sup>39</sup> He goes on to state there are three basic properties required for his special operations theory to hold true: achieve relative superiority at the pivotal moment in an engagement; once achieving relative superiority, sustaining it to guarantee victory; and finally, that if a unit loses relative superiority, it is difficult to regain.<sup>40</sup>

One of the key weaknesses in special forces is the lack of firepower relative to that of a larger, more robust conventional force. This lack of firepower can become apparent when a special operations unit loses the initiative and relative superiority. When outgunned, the smaller

unit is almost certainly doomed to failure. But this is where the smaller GPF units become applicable to the fight compared to an extremely small SOF team. GPF units have the ability to function as a middleweight capacity to affect the battlespace. What permits SOF to complete the objective is the ability to gain relative superiority early in the engagement; however, the longer an engagement continues the more likely the outcome favors the enemy due to the enemy's size, will, and other uncertainties (the fog of war) that often fall in the favor of a larger force. A smaller unit maintains relative superiority through cutting-edge technology, a robust intelligence apparatus, and effective training that molds elite personnel. SOF embodies these characteristics and is, therefore, able to maintain relative superiority. Research has shown that SOF succeeds due to the advantages in assets and resources of which many general-purpose force units do not have access.<sup>41</sup> These tools allow SOF the ability to reduce the area of vulnerability to a manageable level, thus increasing the likelihood of success.<sup>42</sup> By applying what Admiral McRaven calls the six principles of special operations, smaller, well-trained and better-equipped forces can defeat larger forces in a defense without the attrition factors theorists such as Clausewitz would normally expect yet readily apply to the application of GPF in the model of a MAGTF but not a brigade. The following six principles permit relative superiority.

#### *Principles of SOF*

*Simplicity* is a key element of any operation, but large units make it difficult to develop simple plans, maintain concealment, conduct full-dress rehearsals on a detailed mock-up, and gain the tactical surprise due to lack of speed. Simply put, large forces become more vulnerable to Murphy's Law.<sup>43</sup> Planners and practitioners facilitate simplicity during the planning, preparation, and execution of the prescribed mission. Limiting the number of objectives to only those that are fundamental to victory also allows units to focus training efforts. Also, limiting the

number of personnel, reducing the time on the objective while simultaneously decreasing complexity also increases the opportunity for victory. Profiting from vetted and verified intelligence can reduce the unknowns during the planning process helps as well. Technological innovation allows for success against larger forces by reducing obstructions in the conduct of successful missions. Innovation can also come in the form of unconventional tactics taking advantage of sensitive technological applications.<sup>44</sup>

*Security* is the second principle relevant to the success of small units. Admiral McRaven states, “if a plan is not simple it will be difficult to conceal the operation’s intent and even more difficult to rehearse the mission. And if the operation is difficult to conceal and rehearse it will be nearly impossible to execute with *surprise, speed, and purpose*.”<sup>45</sup> Clausewitz also felt security was of extreme importance when he declared, “surprise will never be achieved under lax conditions [poor security] and conduct.”<sup>46</sup> Tight security prevents an adversary from gaining the knowledge of impending actions. Operational security is important to gaining relative superiority and required when using smaller elements against larger defensive elements. By preventing the adversary from gaining an unexpected advantage the smaller size forces can maintain secrecy and surprise.

Achieving *surprise* will never occur if security is not of the utmost importance as the adversary can learn of the plan prior to US forces moving. The surprise is usually planned, but most of the time it is not achieved and consequently degrades the success on the objective. Joint publications define surprise as the ability to “strike the enemy at a time or place, or in a manner, for which he is unprepared.”<sup>47</sup> Speed permits the element of surprise to be successful. The surprise mechanism remains constant when special operation elements or smaller units have the ability to use surprise to take advantage of the enemy. A unit's timing, as discussed by Admiral

McRaven, explores the utility of taking advantage of technological advancements that permits US forces to operate during periods of darkness. Good intelligence will determine when the best time to conduct an operation is as derived from a multitude of events provided by the intelligence process and the adversary's actions. The surprise will not suffice or guarantee mission accomplishment on its own as it must work in coordination with the other prescribed principles.<sup>48</sup> Surprise is not gained by large military forces in today's environment with the use of open source information available at the fingertips of civilians and military alike.

*Repetition* is important to improve the attacking elements' ability to execute the mission and counter any 'what if' scenarios the enemy might employ. A crewman aboard one of the midget submarines tasked with destroying the German battleship Tirpitz stated, "if you are going to do anything dangerous, the best way to accomplish it is to train, train, train, so that in the excitement of the situation you do the thing automatically."<sup>49</sup> Quickly earning relative superiority stems from routine and repetition. It hones individual skills and small unit skills. This allows for identification of any weaknesses at the team level and adjusting the plan in the name of simplicity and mission accomplishment.<sup>50</sup>

Marine Corps publications often reference the importance of *speed*. *Fleet Marine Force Manual 1-3: Tactics* discusses the relativity of speed.<sup>51</sup> Speed is relative to large, conventional forces but with smaller units it is paramount. Speed is an inherent requirement when attempting to seize relative superiority on an objective. To use speed to one's advantage, the unit must be small, agile, and well equipped to sustain action against the enemy. Clausewitz highlights the need for speed when using a smaller force to engage the enemy declaring, "the more restricted the strength the more restricted the goals must be; further, the more restricted the strength, the

more limited the duration."<sup>52</sup> This commentary also plays into the requirement for simple plans with a small number of objectives. The more complex a plan is the quicker it will fall apart.<sup>53</sup>

Finally, a *purpose* ensures service members clearly understand the mission and everyone understands the objective of the mission. Individuals throughout the team require dedication and personal commitment. An Austrian SS officer, Lieutenant Colonel Otto Skorzeny, states, "when a man is moved by pure enthusiasm and by the conviction that he is risking his life in a noble cause he provides the essential elements for his success."<sup>54</sup> Purpose on the national level comes from a coherent national strategy that is implemented to the tactical level.

All of the aforementioned points easily apply to the GPF and make a better force fit for the FOE rather than continuing to build a military on the past models. Whether by using SOF by itself or applying SOF principles to the GPF, the United States has the ability to maintain a high level of lethality while putting in place a long-term strategy to better focus efforts of the new administration and curtail excess spending as well. A July 2015, GAO study reported a \$9.8 billion budget for SOF out of the \$575 billion budget for the entire Department of Defense in 2014, equating to one point seven percent of defense spending. When comparing SOF to the GPF one can easily see the efficiency of its capability.<sup>55</sup> A strategy and prioritization within the DoD need to focus US defense spending habits on creating a more flexible military for the FOE and stopping building a military for past wars.

#### *Cost Efficient and Just as Effective*

Entering an engagement using the six principles of special operations theory as prescribed by Admiral McRaven ensures relative superiority and reduces the area of vulnerability, permitting much smaller units to achieve mission success against adversarial elements in a position of strength. Using advanced technological capabilities to develop insertion

platforms limits discovery by the opposition, while speed and surprise support the need for gaining relative superiority. The use of a detailed, robust intelligence apparatus that portrays the enemy as clearly as possible to the raid force also ensures relative superiority by a smaller element. Admiral McRaven asserts, “success favors those with initiative who, by virtue of their planning, preparation, and rapid execution, can exploit the weakness of the defense and defeat the enemy. This is how special operations succeed.”<sup>56</sup> The same principles can be applied to smaller GPF units. Examining the utility of smaller units does not depict SOF principles as a silver bullet that ensures the US military has the ability to carry out the policy of geopolitics, for certain types of missions are simply not conducive to special operations. However, Admiral McRaven’s theory validates the ability to use a precise, direct approach rather than the blunt use of large, standing, and expensive military forces.

Larger militaries do not have the flexibility or agility to identify a problem, submit a recommendation, and improve the chance of success in a condensed period similar SOF units or the Marine Corps. Moving large units takes time and substantial monetary resources. Some will argue that SOF and the various support mechanisms required are expensive as well, but it boils down to relative perspective. The return on the investment becomes justified when conducting a cost versus benefit analysis. SOF are better trained, more capable, and better equipped. Applying the same principles to the GPF allows the military to maintain a smaller standing military with the ability to inflict kinetic damage yet also allows the US government to be more selective when utilizing military power. It also permits the Pentagon to retain a top-rate military force at much lower cost.

With the revival of proxies and the actions of extremist non-state actors, the use of terrorist organizations and other militia type-proxies have replaced state-on-state military

actions. Unconventional warfare has a different set of rules where one side is stuck in a conventional rule book that binds its hands and makes actions increasingly difficult and frustrating. The adversary is free to inflict damage by exploiting gaps within the proverbial rule book as non-state actors. However, tiered special operations organizations teamed with more agile GPF permit the exploitation of information and networks as well as a rapid targeting process that provides little time for combatants to develop a cogent decision-making process. This tandem also allows the maintenance of enough combat power to action state actors if need be. This smaller footprint also saves billions while still accomplishing essential tasks provided by special operations forces in the name of counterterrorism and other directed missions. With a capable, robust intelligence mechanism rarely afforded to general purpose forces along with precision guided munitions and access to unmanned aerial systems, smaller units have the ability to minimize collateral damage while remaining extremely lethal. Also, combining a robust intelligence mechanism with a complimentary information warfare plan, as well as increasing the use of cyber operations can off-set any deficiencies created by utilizing a smaller force.

### **Counterarguments**

Secretary of Defense James Mattis states, “you are part of the world’s most feared and trusted force. Engage your brain before you engage your weapon.”<sup>57</sup> Just because the United States can do something does not mean it should do something, particularly if it does not coincide with US national interests as defined by the nation’s security strategy. Tying the use of military operations to national strategy is of keen importance. Secretary Mattis implores the use of critical thinking before the use of physical violence while simultaneously learning from previous failures involving ill-fated US political strategy. National level decisions regarding the use of military power will be less difficult when thoroughly synthesized within the strategy.

Many skeptics will claim that military muscle remains a required necessity. Proponents for a large military quickly point to the Russian invasions of Georgia in 2008 or the recent Crimean invasion as justification for a worst-case scenario military. Another SOF theorist, Robert Spulak, calls for a larger military due to the number of requirements levied upon the military. This concept goes against the previous point by Secretary Mattis. It requires critically thinking about strategic decisions and building a military for the future rather than the past while curbing a policymaker's foreign strategy indulgence or lobbyists' pandering.<sup>58</sup>

Finally, recognizing key events in history is important to identify the problem. Each time defense spending warnings were made public, a subsequent conflict (World War II, Vietnam, and Cold War—specifically Afghanistan—and Middle East conflicts) followed, justifying previous expenditures and future expenditures while silencing previous warnings about unwarranted influence in the US budget and foreign policy agendas. Many will simply call it happenstance, but it is convenient for the military-industrial complex and said influencers. Critics within and outside of the military have warned of the dangers of this influence and yet the same mistakes continue to be made costing trillions of dollars and thousands of lives in the last decade.

### **Recommendations**

First, military leaders must adhere to the recommendations by the internal Pentagon investigation to save \$100+ billion by lessening bureaucracy and cutting administrative offices, while ceasing the development of costly billion-dollar ventures that duplicate efforts as detailed in the Pentagon's aforementioned internal investigation. The House of Representatives must evaluate spending projects such as buying more tanks to add to the more than 6,000 already in the military arsenal or decreasing the spending amount on manned aerial systems.<sup>59</sup> Operating

within the budget requires making difficult decisions regarding wants or needs when developing a defense strategy aimed for the current and FOE. The United States must guard against an overextension of military commitments around the world, and this can be achieved by avoiding a focus on capacity that costs billions annually. The United States can remain a power while curtailing largess spending on the military-industrial complex and numbers of service members that equate to billions in pay and benefits. There needs to be a synergy between the president and his cabinet, and cooperation takes commitment as well as the willingness to make difficult decisions under the auspices of curtailing excess spending on nice-to-have tools rather than needs. In doing so, the actions of the Pentagon will be a non-zero sum gain for the military and the nation.<sup>60</sup> Also, auditing the Pentagon will further spotlight spending malpractice.

Secondly, shifting the structure of the Army brigade to that of a Marine Corps regiment provides a more agile force that is better task organized and able to support missions around the globe in a timelier manner. The arguments that the Army should stay large and cumbersome while the Marine Corps is contracted or done away with completely is unjustified and displays intrinsic prejudice. The left-over structure could then easily be shifted to creating other regiments creating increased flexibility or better yet, providing more IW and cyber capabilities to operate within the FOE decreasing the shortfalls in needed areas. Smaller units can adhere to the principles of SOF whereas larger units cannot as previously detailed. The US needs to be prepared to conduct operations across the range of military operations by embracing SOF principles that apply to the GPF.

Finally, auditing the Pentagon through a zero-based review, though difficult and time intensive, would go much further in analyzing the capabilities and resources actually required of the nation. And if cutting manpower is not tenable through the review process, cross-training

capable service members within the information and cyber arenas make better use of the current military without increasing manning capacity. They become force providers from the national level down to the tactical level of military operations. Making difficult decisions requires a prioritized national defense along with further extending the reach of additional US foreign policy mechanisms. The military needs better network defense capabilities as well as cyber capabilities that take far longer to train and build rather than increasing combat arms mechanisms that can be trained in a far shorter period of time when needed.

The decisions made by the Pentagon and the current presidential administration are not just for today, but for tomorrow. Focusing efforts on a relevant military built for the current characteristics of war and FOE rather than a military focused on past models or unfounded requirements are of utmost importance. Capability requirements needed for the FOE do not require construction of a dated Cold War model when an increasing use of IW and cyber warfare come at a cheaper cost against an adversary who cannot match US output. Compound these issues with Congress' inability to pass a budget and many within the DoD are becoming increasingly frustrated. Vice-Chairman of Joint Chiefs of Staff General Paul Selva recently stated, "continuing resolutions force us to spend money on things we don't need and prevent us from spending money on things we need."<sup>61</sup> Using the principles of SOF as a guide allows the Pentagon the capability of fielding a relevant force, while also lowering the high capacity costs associated with this document's warnings against defense spending practices.<sup>62</sup>

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## Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> Smedley Butler, *War is a Racket* (Port Townsend: Feral House, 1935).  
The book by General Butler carries the same theme throughout its entirety and therefore will not have a specific page associated to the endnote.
- <sup>2</sup> Dwight Eisenhower, “The Farewell Address.” (speech, Washington, DC, January 17, 1961), Eisenhower Presidential Library  
[https://www.eisenhower.archives.gov/research/online\\_documents/farewell\\_address.html](https://www.eisenhower.archives.gov/research/online_documents/farewell_address.html).
- <sup>3</sup> John Kennedy, “Commencement Address at American University.” (speech, Washington, DC, June 10, 1963), Kennedy Presidential Library [https://www.jfklibrary.org/Research/Research-Aids/JFK-Speeches/American-University\\_19630610.aspx](https://www.jfklibrary.org/Research/Research-Aids/JFK-Speeches/American-University_19630610.aspx).
- <sup>4</sup> Walter Isaacson, “The Winds of Reform: Runaway weapons costs prompt a new look at military planning,” *Time Weekly Magazine*, March 7, 1983: 12.
- <sup>5</sup> Government Accountability Office, *Fiscal Outlook & Debt* (Washington, DC: Government Accountability Office, 2017), [https://www.gao.gov/fiscal\\_outlook/overview#t=0](https://www.gao.gov/fiscal_outlook/overview#t=0).
- <sup>6</sup> Robert Gates, “Secretary of Defense Speech at Eisenhower Library.” (speech, Abilene, KS May 8, 2010), Eisenhower Presidential Library.  
<http://archive.defense.gov/speeches/speech.aspx?speechid=1467>.
- <sup>7</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>8</sup> Fuller, 56-57.
- <sup>9</sup> Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Doctrine for Joint Special Operations Joint Pub 3-05* (Washington, DC: Department of Defense, 2014), [http://www.dtic.mil/doctrine/new\\_pubs/jp3\\_05.pdf](http://www.dtic.mil/doctrine/new_pubs/jp3_05.pdf); Special operations are “characterized by one or more of the following: time-sensitivity, clandestine or covert nature, low visibility, work with or through indigenous forces, greater requirements for regional orientation and cultural expertise, and a higher degree of risk.”
- <sup>10</sup> Donald Trump, “Donald J. Trump Foreign Policy Speech.” (speech, Washington, DC. April 27, 2016) NY Times. <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/04/28/us/politics/transcript-trump-foreign-policy.html>.
- <sup>11</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>12</sup> Christopher Layne, *The Peace of Illusions: American Grand Strategy from 1940 to the Present* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006), 2.
- <sup>13</sup> Thomas Ricks, “America’s military doesn’t need more money- what it needs is an engaged public to demand a genuine strategy.” *Foreign Policy*. February 2017,  
<http://foreignpolicy.com/2017/02/27/americas-military-doesnt-need-more-money-what-it-needs-is-an-engaged-public-to-demand-a-genuine-strategy/>.
- <sup>14</sup> Williamson Murray and Wayne Wei-siang Hsieh, *A Savage War: A Military History of the Civil War* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016), 527.
- <sup>15</sup> US Department of State, *Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI), 1983* (Washington, DC: US State Department, 1983), <https://2001-2009.state.gov/r/pa/ho/time/rd/104253.htm>.
- <sup>16</sup> Andrew Bacevich, *The Limits of Power: The End of American Exceptionalism* (New York, Macmillan, 2009), 129; Synthesis of information and understanding the problem led President Ronald Reagan’s Secretary of Defense, Caspar Weinberger, to detail the U.S. should only get involved in conflicts with limited engagements and clear exit strategies after analyzing the strategy used in Vietnam.

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<sup>17</sup> Colmar Freiherr von der Goltz, *The Conduct of War: A Short treatise on its Most Important Branches and Guiding Rules* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Truebner, 1899), 5.

<sup>18</sup> Stephen Metz, “Eisenhower as Strategist: The Coherent Use of Military Power in War and Peace,” *Strategic Studies Institute*. February 1993.

<http://www.strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/pubs/summary.cfm?q=359>.

<sup>19</sup> Steven Metz and James Kievit, “Strategy and the Revolution in Military Affairs: From Theory to Policy.” *Strategic Studies Institute*. June 1995.

<http://www.au.af.mil/au/awc/awcgate/ssi/stratrma.pdf>.

<sup>20</sup> J.F.C. Fuller, *On Future Warfare* (London: Sifton, Praed, 1928), 8.

<sup>21</sup> Kirkpatrick, 32.

<sup>22</sup> J.F.C. Fuller, *The Reformation of War* (London: Hutchinson, 1923), 22.

<sup>23</sup> US Department of Defense, *2010 Quadrennial Defense Review: Overview and Implications for National Security Planning* (Washington, DC, January 29, 2010),

[http://www.defense.gov/Portals/1/features/defenseReviews/QDR/QDR\\_as\\_of\\_29JAN10\\_1600.pdf](http://www.defense.gov/Portals/1/features/defenseReviews/QDR/QDR_as_of_29JAN10_1600.pdf).

<sup>24</sup> Kirkpatrick, 60-61.

<sup>25</sup> United States Marine Corps, *Marine Corps Operating Concept: How an Expeditionary Force Operates in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* (Washington, DC: HQMC, 2016), 5,

<http://www.mcwl.marines.mil/Portals/34/Images/MarineCorpsOperatingConceptSept2016.pdf?ver=2016-12-02-073359-207>.

<sup>26</sup> Charles Krulak, “The Strategic Corporal: Leadership in the Three Block War.” *Marine Corps Gazette*. January 1999. [http://www.au.af.mil/au/awc/awcgate/usmc/strategic\\_corporal.htm](http://www.au.af.mil/au/awc/awcgate/usmc/strategic_corporal.htm); “The three-block war -- contingencies in which Marines may be confronted by the entire spectrum of tactical challenges in the span of a few hours and within the space of three contiguous city blocks.”

Marine Corps Operating Concept, i.

<sup>28</sup> Donald Trump, *Presidential Memorandum on Rebuilding the U.S. Armed Forces*

(Washington, DC: White House, 2017), <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2017/01/27/presidential-memorandum-rebuilding-us-armed-forces>;

James Mattis, *Implementation Guidance for Budget Directives in the National Security Presidential*

*Memorandum on Rebuilding the U.S. Armed Forces* (Washington, DC: Pentagon, 2017),

[https://www.govexec.com/media/gbc/docs/pdfs\\_edit/osd001007-17\\_final\\_res.pdf](https://www.govexec.com/media/gbc/docs/pdfs_edit/osd001007-17_final_res.pdf).

<sup>29</sup> Bob Woodward and Craig Whitlock, “Pentagon buries evidence of \$125 billion in bureaucratic waste,” *Washington Post*, December 05, 2016,

[https://www.washingtonpost.com/investigations/pentagon-buries-evidence-of-125-billion-in-bureaucratic-waste/2016/12/05/e0668c76-9af6-11e6-a0ed-ab0774c1ea5\\_story.html?utm\\_term=.3be4fb35f2a6](https://www.washingtonpost.com/investigations/pentagon-buries-evidence-of-125-billion-in-bureaucratic-waste/2016/12/05/e0668c76-9af6-11e6-a0ed-ab0774c1ea5_story.html?utm_term=.3be4fb35f2a6);

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<http://apps.washingtonpost.com/g/documents/investigations/defense-business-board-study-from-jan-2015-identifying-125-billion-in-waste/2236/?ref>.

<sup>30</sup> Woodward and Whitlock; The ‘it’ refers to the internal investigation that uncovered billions in waste.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

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<sup>33</sup> Abby Phillip and Kelsey Snell, “Trump to Propose 10 Percent Spike in Defense Spending, Major Cuts to Other Agencies,” *Washington Post*. February 27, 2017, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/powerpost/trump-to-propose-10-percent-spike-in-defense-spending-massive-cuts-to-other-agencies/2017/02/27/867f9690-fcf2-11e6-99b4-9e613afeb09f\\_story.html?utm\\_term=.cf398fdb6dc](https://www.washingtonpost.com/powerpost/trump-to-propose-10-percent-spike-in-defense-spending-massive-cuts-to-other-agencies/2017/02/27/867f9690-fcf2-11e6-99b4-9e613afeb09f_story.html?utm_term=.cf398fdb6dc).

<sup>34</sup> Government Accountability Office, *DOD’s Readiness Rebuilding Efforts May Be at Risk without a Comprehensive Plan* (Washington, DC: Government Accountability Office, 2016), <http://www.gao.gov/assets/680/679556.pdf>.

<sup>35</sup> Mark Cancian, “Trump’s Defense Budget: Place Your Bet!” *CSIS.org*, January 23, 2017, <https://www.csis.org/analysis/trumps-defense-budget-place-your-bet>; Mackenzie Eaglen and Rick Berger, “How much will Donald Trump really spend on defense?” *AEI.org*, November 10, 2016, <https://www.aei.org/publication/how-much-will-donald-trump-really-spend-on-defense/>; Dan Lamothe, “Trump promises ‘great rebuilding of the Armed Forces’ while signing executive order at the Pentagon,” *Washington Post*, January 27, 2017, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/checkpoint/wp/2017/01/27/draft-executive-order-shows-how-trump-wants-to-grow-the-u-s-military-significantly/?utm\\_term=.951f82d2b0dd](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/checkpoint/wp/2017/01/27/draft-executive-order-shows-how-trump-wants-to-grow-the-u-s-military-significantly/?utm_term=.951f82d2b0dd).

<sup>36</sup> William McRaven, *Spec Ops: Case Studies in Special Operations Warfare Theory and Practice* (New York: Random House Publishing, 1995), 1.

<sup>37</sup> Carl von Clausewitz, *On War* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976), 358.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid*, 194.

<sup>39</sup> McRaven, 4.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid*, 4-6.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid*, 6.

<sup>43</sup> “Murphy’s Law” Merriam-Webster Dictionary. Accessed March 16, 2017.

<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/Murphy's%20Law>; An observation: anything that can go wrong will go wrong.

<sup>44</sup> McRaven, 11-14.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid*, 9.

<sup>46</sup> Clausewitz, 198.

<sup>47</sup> JCS, *Doctrine for Joint Special Operations*, E-5.

<sup>48</sup> McRaven, 16-19.

<sup>49</sup> Thomas Gallagher, *The X-Craft Raid* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1971), 20.

<sup>50</sup> McRaven, 15-16.

<sup>51</sup> Headquarters US Marine Corps, *Fleet Marine Force Manual 1-3 Tactics* (Washington, DC: Headquarters US Marine Corps, 1991), 63.

<sup>52</sup> Clausewitz, 283.

<sup>53</sup> McRaven, 19-20.

<sup>54</sup> Otto Skorzeny, *Skorzeny’s Secret Mission* (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1950), 87; McRaven, 21-23.

<sup>55</sup> Government Accountability Office, *Special Operations Forces: Opportunities Exist to Improve Transparency of Funding and Assess Potential to Lessen Some Deployments* (Washington, DC: Government Accountability Office, 2015).

<http://www.gao.gov/products/GAO-15-571>.

<sup>56</sup> McRaven, 391.

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<sup>57</sup> James Mattis, "Commanding General's Message to All Hands" (message, 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Division, Camp Pendleton, CA, March 2003), <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Genmattisltr.jpg>.

<sup>58</sup> Robert Spulak, *A Theory of Special Operations: The Origin, Qualities, and Use of SOF* (Hurlburt Field, Florida: JSOU Press, 2007), 10.

<sup>59</sup> The House of Representatives still maintains the 'power of the purse' and more scrutiny, as well as accountability, should be required from the nation's system of checks and balances.

<sup>62</sup> Janet Chen, Su-I Lu, and Dan Vekheter, "Non-Zero-Sum Games" *Stanford University*, <https://cs.stanford.edu/people/eroberts/courses/soco/projects/1998-99/game-theory/nonzero.html>;

A non-zero-sum game is an optimal solution or 'win-win' situation as a branch of game theory.

<sup>61</sup> Scott Maucione, "Vice Chairman of Joint Chiefs Selva Tells Congress off over CR issues," *Federal News Radio*. April 2017, <https://federalnewsradio.com/defense-news/2017/04/vice-chairman-joint-chiefs-selva-tells-congress-off-cr-issues/>.

<sup>62</sup> Dwight Eisenhower, "The Farewell Address." (speech, Washington, DC, January 17, 1961), Eisenhower Presidential Library

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