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MASTER OF MILITARY STUDIES

TITLE:

ADAPTING SPECIAL OPERATIONS STRATEGY TO INCORPORATE THE FULL RANGE
OF ACQUISITION CAPABILITY

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

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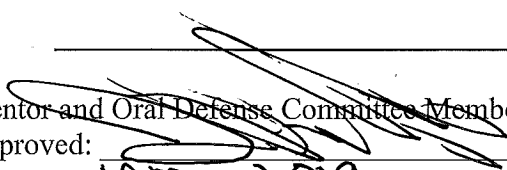
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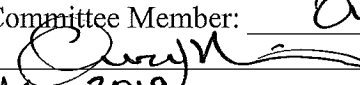
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Executive Summary

Title: Adapting Special Operations Strategy to Incorporate the Full Range of Acquisition Capability

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Thesis: Updating the unit acquisition strategy as a campaign plan with appropriate measures of effectiveness will mitigate many of the current challenges to incorporating long-term acquisition strategy development while maintaining the operational flexibility necessary for special operations forces.

Discussion: USSOCOM has many privileges granted to it as part of its specialized and highly regarded mission set, to include a separate funding line and acquisition force. It is the only command with acquisition authority that so fiercely defends having their operators as central to the entire requirements and acquisition process, and this culture is often the envy of other services looking for rapid acquisitions. This culture is not without its drawbacks, as operators are highly specialized and trained to be exceptionally detail oriented in the near-term, this leaves long-term acquisition strategy overlooked, creating a fundamental mismatch of best ways to carry out missions. The operator must remain flexible for fast paced operational shifts while acquisitions must take on multi-year projects to deliver much needed capability. By adopting a campaign plan style strategy for unit acquisitions, units can mitigate the challenges to incorporating the full range of acquisitions for the fastest and most effective capability delivery. A campaign plan format does this through measures of effectiveness driving objectives, having a limited lifespan, and driving measurable assessments of whether or not the objectives are even the right objectives for the desired end states.

Conclusion: To varying degrees, investing the time in creating a campaign plan style strategy mitigates the mismatch in time when operators need capabilities and the acquisition arm's ability to deliver, operator-only sourced requirements, an operator's need to be flexible in every way, the right training, and appropriate accountability for the whole process.

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Preface

Finding yourself the example of an extreme case is often really good (e.g. an Olympian) or really bad (e.g. a Darwin Award recipient). Most often, the best path forward is finding a balance across multiple factors and tensions, and that is why I wanted to look at Special Operations acquisitions strategies, study them, and ways to find the right balance between freeform flexibility and processing rigor. The unusual and lauded quality within USSOCOM is the often opposite position or culture compared to the services. Where users struggle to have their voices heard in acquisition cycle of big services, USSOCOM users have by far the loudest voice. User engagement is incredible, but having far and away the largest voice may not be the right balance for a combatant command that demands rapid delivery of capability. I wanted to analyze some reasonable and verifiable ways units within USSOCOM could increase capability without giving away the culture of flexibility, which itself is a balancing act. Operators are charged with using “the pointy end of the spear” and my hope is that this paper gives credence to all the supporting elements and their voices to keep the rest of the spear in proper fighting form.

I want to thank the academic staff at USMC Command & Staff College for all the mentoring and my family for the patience and time to put this together. I especially want to thank LTC(ret.) Christian Ayers for the acquisition mentorship, taking so much time to provide feedback throughout the process, and most importantly for setting the example of everything an excellent leader embodies. His encouragement and investment in this process is appreciated beyond words.

Introduction

United States Special Operations Command (USSOCOM) Acquisitions operate in a unique way compared to the larger services. When the Air Force needs a new plane, several people disappear into a program office, and 10 years later a new plane emerges. No pilot or maintainer is exactly sure who defined its required capabilities, but these users must accept the choices others made for decades to come. The end users have limited ability to engage in the acquisitions process. USSOCOM takes a different approach. The operator defines his need, advocates for the capabilities needed to get the mission done, and his staff signs off on the requirement to get executed. An acquisition force dedicated to this and all special operations operators executes this requirement. This same operator will participate in technical design meetings, early assessments, and final acceptance. He has the ability to provide feedback throughout the entire process. He is given dedicated money and authorities to execute quickly¹. SOCOM's acquisition arm, dedicated to equipping its most elite, has many advantages over their big service brethren. There are also challenges to this unique acquisitions implementation. The rapid pace of acquisitions with predominantly short project times, combined with operators focused solely on performance of the mission, leads to an incentive to focus predominantly on the present and near-term events and less so on mid-to-long-term strategies. Lack of long-term planning affects the strength and effectiveness of innovation and acquisitions, especially in planning and execution of the Fiscal Year Defense Program (FYDP) and Program Objective Memorandum (POM), the means to secure funding for the next five years. USSOCOM acquisitions have adapted to rapidly execute the short term and some mid-term needs, but it struggles to incorporate the benefits of long-term projects solely through its own adaptation. To fully incorporate rapid acquisitions across the range of projects, the units must also adapt.

Updating the unit acquisition strategy in the same fashion as a campaign plan with appropriate measures of effectiveness can mitigate many of the current challenges to incorporating long-term acquisition strategy development while maintaining the operational flexibility necessary for special operations forces.

This paper will show that the certain acquisition forces within USSOCOM are uniquely aligned with operational units such that they can together deliver better capability faster by adopting a campaign plan style acquisition strategy and taking advantage of the full range of acquisition timelines. The first section will provide context of how special operations and acquisitions reached their current state. The next section will lay out the significant challenges remaining to successfully incorporating rapid acquisitions in the SOF environment. The third section will examine a number of the features of a campaign plan format and their usefulness, followed by an evaluation of how they may mitigate challenges of a unit's acquisition efforts. Finally, this paper will address challenges that remain and conclusions on the benefits of a campaign plan format for acquisition strategy, and it will explain how it can incentivize a balance of strategic planning while maintaining the flexibility to adjust to USSOCOM's pace of operational change and capability needs.

Background & Context

Strategy, as defined by joint doctrine, is a “set of ideas for employing the instruments of national power in a synchronized and integrated fashion to achieve theater or multinational objectives.”ⁱⁱ Joint doctrine goes on to describe many aspects of strategy and how it provides purpose, but it also states the “without it, action tends to be ad hoc, incoherent, and potentially counterproductive.”ⁱⁱⁱ The US military understands and embraces this, keeping with the long history of theorists on war and lessons learned from wars throughout history that reinforce its

necessity. Each theater-level command is mandated to provide campaign plans, which provide a five to seven-year strategy to meet the particular objectives assigned to it.^{iv} Strategy can cover space and time in significantly different ways, depending on the objectives to be met. For military acquisition purposes, time is most typical. Thus, for the purposes of this paper, long-term strategy covers a five to seven-year range of time to match a typical campaign plan timespan. Midterm strategies typically range from 18 months to three years, with short term strategies covering less than 18 months. Discussing timespans is important because any restriction in the time allotted to achieve objectives affects the range of options available to those taking action, especially as it pertains to military operations and acquisitions. Equally important is understanding what constitutes the components of sound strategy and how to evaluate the success of each strategy. At this point, introducing the defense acquisition community, special operations, and the special operations acquisition model will provide additional context for focusing strategy.

The Defense Acquisition Community has a daunting task of equipping America's Department of Defense (DOD) with everything from nuts and bolts to aircraft and ships to services for computer support to cryptographers to even acquisition specialists. The community is perpetually in a sea of change, evolution, and reform, providing many lessons to apply in new and different ways. The Defense Acquisition Workforce Improvement Act (DAWIA) was a major milestone in the evolution and professionalization of defense acquisitions, adding more rigor and training to a previously minimally trained community.^v Gone are the days where the P-51A Mustang had its first flight less than six months after its proposal.^{vi} Also gone are the days of operational testing being the first opportunity to find and fix flaws in design. Much more time and energy are devoted to planning each project or program before starting production, often

dedicating time to building prototypes for developmental projects as well. The acquisition community focuses on risk mitigation, which increases the chance of resolving major issues early. Resolving issues early leads to lower costs and faster delivery times. Unfortunately, the answer to poor acquisition performance for so long was to add more rigor, milestone decisions, and oversight to the point that the acquisition process has become its own bureaucratic enemy. Acquisitions became overly risk averse and made the process take longer and cost more. Thankfully, USSOCOM is leading the way to bring back balance to the acquisition process with focus applied to tailoring, streamlining, rapid, and agile programs.

The time at one extreme of the pendulum swing was not a fruitless endeavor. Focused analysis of metrics at all levels of planning and strategic development paved the way to a data driven understanding of how to adapt. This analytical ability is key to moving forward in ways that continue to integrate all fields of defense and defense acquisition from individual projects to entire acquisition strategies, especially with a unique organization at the forefront.

United States Special Operations Command (USSOCOM) was created in 1979, beginning a unique history unlike any in the acquisition community. It was born out of the need to train and equip elite forces for highly specialized missions across the DOD. Until 2016, was the only combatant command with its own acquisition force.^{vii} SOCOM's own acquisition force is one of many ways it applies extra resources to giving its operators all the tools they need to succeed in their mission. The devotion to its people reflects one of the SOF truths: Special Operations Forces (SOF) cannot be created overnight.^{viii} Special forces operators are recruited and trained to apply highly exquisite skills with maturity, autonomy, and initiative. This cultivated culture and mindset of an operator provides USSOCOM with different opportunities and challenges to equip their force.

SOCOM has a completely separate line of funding from the services (MFP-11) to ensure resources are available for special operations material and services that fall beyond the scope of the major services. Major Force Program 11 funding is dedicated to the development or procurement of items that are SOF-peculiar.^{ix} This means they may use a rifle common to the services when it will accomplish the mission, but SOCOM can develop modifications to a service rifle if needed to accomplish a SOF unique task. To succeed in developing and procuring these SOF-peculiar items, USSOCOM created (currently named) Special Operations Forces Acquisition, Technology, & Logistics (AT&L) as its acquisition arm. SOF AT&L operates within SOCOM's headquarters and reports directly to the USSOCOM commander, just like all special operations forces and their supporting units.

SOF AT&L is much more operationally aligned than the service acquisition arms. It has adapted to equip a force that is by nature more reactionary, forming groups both functionally and capability focused to best serve the needs of the operators in rapid cycles with smaller projects.^x The SOF acquisition community embeds with the operational forces, giving a unique ability for operators to engage, participate, and even assist in driving key parts of an acquisition program.^{xi} Every SOF AT&L policy focuses on the mission to get a capability to the operator as fast as possible by removing people and processes that may hinder or disrupt accurate communication and translation of requirements. Some Program Executive Offices (PEO) are aligned by capability, such as PEO-Rotary Wing or PEO-Fixed Wing, and they develop SOF-peculiar solutions to airborne platforms, such as the helicopters used in the Osama Bin Laden raid. Other PEOs are functionally aligned and they focus on acquisitions for specific unit, whatever those needs may be. Members of these acquisition offices often closely embedded and in some cases collocate with the units. This gives PEOs like PEO-SOF Warrior particularly unique duties in

terms of acquisitions and maintaining an operational focus. These acquisition forces and the programs and projects executed each individually account for specific unit capabilities and gaps. The programs mirror a unit's current and future strategies, and a project's success or failure can significantly impact a unit's ability to carry out its mission. This uniquely entangled acquisition force, its adaptation, and the contribution it can provide are the focus of this paper as it translates to unit acquisition strategy.

Problem Analysis

A significant challenge to the acquisition community equipping special operations forces using the full range of acquisition capability is the mismatch of the pace of operational change to which an operator adheres compared to the acquisition community's need to develop a comprehensive plan many years into the future and deviate as little as possible. Both the operator and acquisitions professional have developed these methods to be most effective and efficient in the missions they execute. This mismatch, however, creates a tension that acquisitions and units must mitigate to deliver capabilities to SOF at the pace demanded by both communities. Five main issues contribute to the mismatch.

First, the time needed to execute an acquisition project or program often exceeds the window of time available from requirement generation to required delivery. Second, the benefit of having all requirements come directly from the operator inadvertently hinders the acquisition community, as acquisition action can only begin with a valid documented requirement.^{xii} Third, the SOCOM-adopted mentality of remaining operationally flexible affects operator desire to provide a requirement that may reduce that flexibility. Fourth, the unit staff providing the formalized requirements lacks the training to bridge the operator-to-acquisition planning gap.

And finally, accountability is not directly assigned to the unit, directorate, or person responsible for bridging that gap.

Conflicting Windows of Time

SOF AT&L has aligned itself with special operations forces to deliver material and services at a pace often envied by other services, but even at these speeds, the window of time to deliver some projects cannot meet SOF's needs without changes. The PEOs within SOF AT&L adapted to this first issue applying specific focus to executing projects within 24 months, as that is typically the longest operators are able to wait for any identified capability.^{xiii} This adaptation to focusing on near-term projects and programs is possible since procurement of commercial, existing SOF-peculiar equipment, or equipment requiring minor modifications accomplishes many of the needs of operators. The issue that still requires mitigation is the range of projects and programs that take significantly longer to execute. Research and development (R&D) acquisition typically requires "ground up" development and can take three years, five years, or longer to field the first operational prototype. AT&L adapted by assigning the science and technology (S&T) branch to focus on many of these types of projects outside of the PEO taskings. This branch investigates emerging technologies and funds prototypes to advance technology to the point a PEO could deliver the capability to units. The functional PEOs, however, are responsible for executing these types of projects when units need solutions to unique problems. These projects reflect either a critical need or high reward since the amount of time and energy required to bring these developments to fruition requires operator patience and commitment to a plan much longer than typical. The issue of conflicting timeframes arises again due to the timeframe to deliver being beyond when the operator needs to field a capability. Even in the midst of critical need or high reward, operators resist committing to the program with

these longer times to deliver. Neither USSOCOM nor SOF AT&L want to face a scenario of delivering a critical capability too late to be useful and waste resources that could have been put to better use, or fail to deliver a capability critical to mission success. Acquisitions and operators adapted further to increase speed of delivery by reducing required life expectancy of developments and seeking the “80% solution.” This term reflects a product with unresolved deficiencies, but the capability is more important in the field at 80% than languishing in development. Regardless, these program and projects exist with the aforementioned risks, and the amount of time required to field these capabilities is essentially fixed. Developmental projects, while incredibly rewarding, are longer than the typical two-year window for SOF acquisitions. Projects should not be discounted just due to their acquisition times, but approving them often faces significant resistance from operators with veto power in the form of the requirement generation process.

Operator Driven Requirements

The special operations and acquisitions communities know operators get exactly what they need because the operator is the one providing the requirement. That single source for requirement generation comes with a significant cost. The PEO cannot take any acquisition actions without a requirement properly validated, no matter how far in advance someone recognizes the need for a requirement.^{xiv} This situation exists such that the start of the window for a project or program completely depends on the unit delivering a requirement. SOF AT&L therefore has no authority to affect the beginning beyond advocacy for development of the requirement. Combined with the aforementioned fixed amount of time required to execute a requirement, this leaves acquisitions with little ability to control when a project begins or ends, yet they remain responsible for the execution.

This limitation on AT&L is understandable in the context of how this situation was created. Any unit is keen to retain any and all authority or freedom to maneuver it has established over its history. The thought of giving any amount of that authority away quickly gives way to a slippery slope bias, ending in no authority for the organization to determine its own path. An aversion to relinquishing authorities is understandably strong given the difficult bureaucratic process involved in any policy change. Even when confronted by the prospect of high reward, the perception that a unit can never regain that authority reinforces the desire to resist any such change. Unfortunately, that means the aversion exists to adjusting authorities even when it is in the best interest of the unit. The concern, while valid, ultimately still leaves AT&L with no authority to affect which requirement is created and when it is validated. This again prevents any ability to control when a project can begin execution as a means to control the potential delivery of a system. This is contrary to its most efficient organizational execution of acquisitions via extensive forward planning. Operators, however, tend to resist forward planning that could limit their operational flexibility.

Operational Flexibility in Acquisitions

The third issue affecting the pace of acquisitions for the SOF community is adherence to mantra that USSOCOM must remain flexible to adapt to any situation or mission at a moment's notice, and this mentality reduces an operator's willingness to submit any requirement that may reduce that flexibility. While this is not actual policy, references to the practice are common themes across USSOCOM, often alluded to via mission statements or vision statements where operators are expected to conduct the full range of military operations.^{xv} Operators are highly trained to adapt and overcome any scenario they might encounter over the course of a mission, and that ability to react is invaluable. The problem arises when that specialized ability to react to

any situation expands and becomes the only considered strategy for all aspects of any unit, to include acquisitions.

An organization that only reacts to the operational environment is the worst possible scenario for acquisitions and acquisition strategy development.^{xvi} As an organization, there are three typical ways to have a strategic stance as defined by Andrews, Boyne, and Walker in their study comparing strategy and organizational performance in public service: the prospector, defender, and reactor. Prospectors have few problems reorganizing and adapting as they always seek more opportunity in the market system, even in the public sector, and they are often characterized as revolutionary, innovative, or early adopters. This means prospectors strategically take risks and devote resources to seeking new ways to capitalize on the environment in which they find themselves. Defenders stick to the known good solution and are characterized as evolutionary or late adopters, improving known good processes. Common examples in this realm are big businesses and most public services. Reactors, in contrast, have no consistent stance, lack strategy forethought in their actions, and either react purely to the outside environment or are forced into some sort of strategy by an external source such as a legislative authority.^{xvii} Reactors consistently are the worst organizational performers. A unit's ability to be maximally flexible with no acquisition strategy is a reactionary stance, and that is far worse than trading some flexibility to incorporate some basic long-term strategic direction. This is the place in which much of the special operations forces find themselves.

Units within SOCOM adhere to the idea that maximum flexibility is key to mission success. Flexibility with regard to acquisitions is inherently reduced, and there is value in acknowledging that perspective. Each year, many acquisition activities are a continuation of previous investment decisions such as an option year of a service contract or completion of

multi-year project. These sorts of commitments reflect the consequence of short or mid-term planning and the choice to accept a reasonable trade of flexibility to gain the stability required to see a project through to the end once it received support. Acceptance of reduced flexibility in the name of greater capability appears as a balancing act, developed over the current tension between acquisitions and the operator. The operators have found value in trading flexibility for capability in the short term and limited mid-term acquisition timelines, but that situation still leaves a lack of operator support for projects and programs that require longer term planning.

Units within USSOCOM retain the ability to react to the current situation in terms of acquisitions than other services, but being purely reactionary often proves to be least effective at acquisition and organizational success.^{xviii} Units relinquish flexibility only when the acquisitions community could adapt no further to rapidly equip in ever shorter timelines and the required capability is critical to unit mission success. Units have recognized the value in long-term investments, but the reward often had to be incredibly high or absolutely critical to mission success. That critically high reward as an entrance criterion still leaves acquisitions with many missed opportunities. Additionally, the natural tendency of the military bureaucracy to resist change compounds the issue to make change within units even more difficult. Ironically, this combination of events and embedded culture leaves organizations adhering to the need for maximum flexibility, but they resist adapting for the promise of greater capability in the long term at the expense of flexibility in the short term. This is not an unreasonable attitude to have, however, due to concern for loss of authority discussed earlier and in line with the next issue of training.

Training Deficiencies

Special Operations Forces receive some of the most advanced training available to military members, but these skills do not necessarily translate to long-term strategic thinking to bridge the operator-to-acquisitions gap.^{xix} These forces are designed to expertly execute missions in places and in ways no conventional force could achieve. A reasonable assumption might be that a special operations operator is specially trained to successfully execute a mission with a thousand possible variations of factors that could occur over the course of that mission, where each second that passes could define success or failure. Few forces in the military are provided that level of training or required to navigate the strenuous selection processes designed to mature these operators. This training naturally and appropriately focuses operators on the short-term needs and goals. The drawback to an operator's focus on the near-term leaves little consideration for long-term planning, which is essential for acquisitions. In a climate where requirements flow only from operators, this mismatch of perspectives is a major hinderance to the SOF community and the acquisitions community that supports it.

In contrast to operators, SOF AT&L is specifically trained to consider long-term planning as part of its acquisition rigor, but they struggle with other obstacles to effectively close the training mismatch. The training provided to the SOF acquisitions community is extensive and covers short to long-term planning as well as requirements and execution of those projects. Acquisitions training conforms to laws and recommendations that professionalize the training and effectiveness of the acquisitions community. It incorporates successful business practices and analytical expertise from organizations such as the General Accounting Office as well as mature commercial business practices.^{xx} The depth of SOF acquisition training could be argued as a corresponding degree of training to operators, in that they consider the next thousand things that could happen so that they may determine how to navigate challenges for unit and programmatic

success. This timeline typically covers many years, however, compared to an operator's hours, days, or weeks of considerations. Different missions call for different training, and the SOF acquisitions community does all it can to support the operator. Acquisition personnel are capable of recommending requirements to the operators, and to do this even more effectively, are embedded in units and constantly participate in planning and strategic processes.^{xxi}

Unfortunately, from the strategic perspective of requirements generation, there is often a bias to operators' own internally generated ideas compared to the acquisition recommendation where longer term strategy might be more effective. This bias is understood. Requirements and ideas are very typically received more favorably from someone with special status or within the organization compared to an outsider or someone without special status.^{xxii} SOF AT&L seeks to minimize this bias with active engagement in planning and embedding in units as part of its strategy, but the fact remains that the acquisitions community is still only able to advise on requirements planning and generation in spite of having significantly more training in acquisition strategy and development.

Accountability Gaps

The final issue affecting the difficulty in bridging the gap between the operator and acquisition community search for the most effectiveness is accountability for the requirement and the planning process.^{xxiii} Each unit is responsible for developing its own requirements with its own process for validation. The acquisitions community is responsible for the execution of those requirements. The responsibility for balancing the capability needs of each unit and the time and resources required to provide those capabilities belongs to the unit. As discussed earlier, they lack any incentive to find balance beyond the short-term, due to the training and predisposition to listen only to insider input.^{xxiv} Given that the people within each unit

responsible for recording and submitting the operator's requirements have little incentive to plan for the long term, the effect is that of only repeating the operator's requirements, which mirror short and possibly mid-term strategic solutions, once again leaving solutions that require longer planning from receiving the attention deserved. In contrast, SOF AT&L is uniquely trained to recognize the value of these projects requiring longer execution cycles and embedded in the unit to understand the day-to-day capabilities and needs of the operators. Unfortunately, this again falls victim to the bias of bottom-up requirement submission, the lack of incentive to deliver capability verses requirements, and the desire to remain flexibility even in environments where flexibility negatively affects outcomes.

The Campaign Plan Solution

As expected, there are ways to mitigate the issues described and bring more capability to the special operations forces. They are at the same time nothing new to public service and the military and also a potential major shift for individuals and units used to being as flexible or inflexible as they desired. The unusual answer to these issues is actually somewhat opposite that of the larger services. A MITRE study on improving acquisitions across the services advises to "incorporate user input and feedback," something that USSOCOM and their specialized units already adhere to with unbending ferocity, and it undeniably provides the right capability to the operator.^{xv} The answer to these issues lies in achieving a balance between the needs of the operators and needs of the acquisition teams supporting the operators. The acquisition community achieved the current balance by adapting to the needs and habits of the SOF operators, units, and community, with little expectation or request of the operator to adapt. The acquisition community has many successes with these efforts, but the ability to deliver a comprehensive set of capabilities across the full spectrum of required timelines is currently

unachievable. The units, in conjunction with the acquisition community, can mitigate these issues by adopting an in-depth acquisition strategy, comparable to a campaign plan. An in-depth planning approach is also in line with the basic tenets of the GPRA, which is the government policy enacted to inject modern business practices into the public sector.^{xxvi}

Investing in the development of a complete acquisition strategy to the level of a campaign plan provides the framework to provide acquisitions more completely and deliver capability across the entire range of projects and programs. It achieves this by forcing thought and commitment to strategic level objectives, assigning accountability and metrics to those objectives, forcing objectives to be based on outcome, and providing a limited lifespan for its application. According to the US Army's Campaign Planning Handbook and Joint Publication 1, a campaign consists of multiple coordinated activities to achieve "strategic and operational objectives within a given space and time."^{xxvii} Acquisitions is one of the means to meet unit missions via addressing capability needs, and this type of plan aligns well with the needs of acquisition planning, which is determining specific tasks to meet operational and strategic objectives. A campaign at the theater level has several mandated components, such as a current assessment, mission statement, and intermediate objectives.^{xxviii} These items, along with other features typical to plans such as means of assessment provide everything necessary to a successful acquisition strategy. Units often incorporate most of the components into any level of planning, and acquisition planning is no different. Specific elements that make a campaign plan stand out are its adherence to the need for means of assessment, that each objective be measurable, that those measurements are based on outcomes, and each objective and measure has explicitly assigned accountability. The final key feature of a campaign plan that makes it so

ideal in its limited lifespan of looking no further than 5-7 years ahead, which provides the means to assess whether or not the plan as a whole accomplishes what it set out to do.

Each and every objective must be measurable, and they must be measurable by outcomes.^{xxix} The only way to truly assess success at the level of a campaign plan is whether or not the plan achieved a given outcome. The term applied most often is a measure of effectiveness (MOE). MOEs associate the objectives to the desired end state of each LOE. A common error at this level of planning is only assigning measures of performance (MOPs) to objectives.^{xxx} MOPs are often measuring outputs, and those are excellent in that they are much more easily and readily measured. MOPs tend to associate with operational and tactical tasks, such as aircraft shot down or enemy killed. In aggregate, MOPs may support criteria for successful achievement of an MOE, but they cannot on their own define MOE achievement.^{xxxi} As an example, a high number of enemy combatants killed (MOP) does not on its own translate to defeating an enemy's ability to fight (MOE). Measures of effectiveness are necessary to provide a means to measure objectives and lines of effort.

Applying measures of effectiveness and measures of performance to a unit acquisition strategy in the style of a campaign plan accomplishes many objectives for the operator and acquisition personnel. It establishes clear incentives towards which everyone can apply resources, and it provides more means of evaluation than just fiscal, which does not always reflect progress towards a desired objective.^{xxxii} In the military, and indeed any public sector organization, fiscal responsibility with taxpayer dollars is important, but it is typically a lower priority because fiscal response has little bearing on a public service organization's success.^{xxxiii} This is the direct contrast to a commercial business, where fiscal management determines profits and ultimately the business's ability to continue operating. Since fiscal responsibility is arguably

less important in the public sector, adapting a campaign strategy that leverages MOPs and MOEs tied to capabilities and outcomes provide better awareness of the factors contributing to success of the unit, to include acquisitions. For acquisitions, MOEs focus on capability outcomes that contribute directly to mission success rather than just to material solutions. An example of the adjustment is to switch from a focus on money spent and instead report on closing existing unit capability gaps. Instead of spending resources on delivering something 5% better than the current model, a systematic approach can establish projects delivering capabilities critical to total mission success or generational leaps in capability.

The feature of a limited lifespan is key to planning because it forces objectives to have an actual achievable end state defined. The temptation exists to create end states and objectives that are open ended, such as “improve stability” or “maximize capability.” The lack of a defined end state and objective provides no basis to measure progress against. Achievable defined end states look like “situation such that local law enforcement can maintain stability on its own,” or “increase capability to all weather (versus weather limited).” By limiting the timeline, a more realistic and achievable end state is defined, which can then also be measured. Additionally, not only can the objectives be measured, but the plan as a whole can then be measured. This limited lifespan provides the means to answer whether or not the correct LOEs or objectives were identified, or if the current objectives have met their useful lifespan. In other words, units gain the ability to answer whether or not the unit is asking the right questions by comparing the performance of the metrics with progress towards the end states. This limiting nature of planning provides commanders the opportunity to intentionally adjust the entire strategy with reliable feedback and set new LOEs or objectives and end states.

Acquisition strategy benefits from this feature in both strategy development and execution, as the metrics defined in the strategy incentivize different goals most important to the unit. Planning five to seven years ahead gives the unit and acquisition professionals enough time to plan and execute projects with a high degree of value that take longer by design. These projects will also directly meet the needs of the units, which in this case tends to be something like major developmental upgrades to existing systems or developing new capabilities that must get through a longer research and development phase. This time gives a larger window of time with which to commit time and resources while still planning for the immediate needs of any unit. Creating a long range plan provides information to the unit for decision making previously unavailable. When only near-term projects are available, they become the de facto choice. When a unit has the option of a small capability increase in the near-term or a large capability increase with a long-term project, the unit can make an informed decision on the direction providing best value to the mission.

Finally, this feature is especially useful during design of strategic objectives and measurements to focus on process improvements that can then be shifted to other areas needing improvements. An example of this in action comes from the United States Army Corps of Engineers' (USACE) Campaign Plan in which a task to achieve greater acquisition excellence is measuring contract award time.^{xxxiv} Over three to five years, incentivizing this metric will focus improvements on that part of the process. Once USACE reaches their goal, that metric likely no longer accurately reflects the portion of the acquisition process that dictates success, and they will need to shift their definition of successful acquisition success to another metric. Failure to shift the metric sacrifices unit and command insight into their process improvement, and the door opens to gaming the system in order to show further improvements or success on a metric that

has passed its useful life, even though personnel must still use that metric to grade their individual performance. In this respect, the SOF and SOF AT&L community are no different in the advantages of planning five to seven years ahead via end states and objectives with a known lifespan. It opens the aperture to provide more projects delivered when the operators need them, instead of years after, while ensuring no requirement goes stale.

The lifespan of a campaign plan has an additional benefit that is often overlooked. Providing an operational end state many years out provides the flexibility to measure achievement over multiple years instead of annually, as is custom. Understanding that progress is rarely linear, especially in research and development, providing a sound campaign plan provides a method to lay out benchmarks that do not need to conform to an annual cycle. Unit or acquisition generated roadmaps have that potential as well, but the level of thought devoted to a campaign plan inherently builds in the means to define and defend objectives that no longer require annual achievement. In the critical field of research and development where cycles are longer, generating objectives that focus on achievements in capability versus time on a calendar or fiscal year cycle provides more stability and a more defensible program year after year.

A campaign plan stresses accountability, and adopting this feature for an acquisition strategy is essential even though it is not new. The unique feature in a campaign plan, as shown in USACE's campaign plan, is that accountability is assigned to a single person at every level of the campaign plan, from LOE to individual actions to take for each supporting objective.^{xxxv} Many units have accountability to the unit and individual levels, but this explicit assignment in a document for all to see publicly identifies each person that is responsible and accountable for execution of that objective. With the implementation of a campaign plan style for an acquisition strategy, this accountability extends beyond fiscal management for the acquisition professionals

or POM planners. It extends beyond requirements generation for unit staff members. It encompasses the entire range of needs for a unit to achieve mission success through acquisitions, which incentivizes the bridging of the gap between requirements generation and project execution, between operator flexibility and acquisition planning necessities. This broadened accountability focuses everyone's performance around a common set of objectives with individuals held publicly accountable for achieving those goals.

Evaluation of a Campaign Plan Approach

These main features of a campaign plan style approach to unit acquisitions strategy provides many benefits and creates a more balanced approach for unit acquisitions while retaining a significant level of flexibility. A campaign plan styled approach also provides the flexibility to provide a variety of significant information specific to the unit. As an example, EUCOM's latest campaign plan lists desired capabilities and shortfalls to achieve its mission, which could directly feed an acquisition strategy.^{xxxvi} This planning approach with its flexibility addresses three of the five issues identified as significant contributors to acquisitions, with the potential for a fourth. The remaining issue of having all requirements come from operators is aided by this adapted approach, but requires more than just a planning shift.

The acquisitions community within SOF AT&L can control neither the length of time required to execute a project successfully (all else being equal), nor can it control when to begin a project, but adapting to a campaign plan style of acquisition strategy provides a greater opportunity to a unit to understand when to start a project. SOF AT&L has adapted well to provide short term needs to the units, but they are progressively less well adapted the longer the time required to execute a project.^{xxxvii} Identifying the long-term requirements of a unit via a campaign plan applies consistent coherent thought through established goals and metrics to

identify the needs of the unit that require projects of longer duration. The plan also provides a forum for SOF AT&L to assist in identifying and promoting projects with a high value and reward in spite of requiring a longer time to execute because the plan succeeds in identifying projects with high value with enough time to generate requirements and execute before the operators need a given capability.

Adopting a campaign style acquisitions strategy establishes metrics and objectives that incentivize considering and implementing solutions where some projects will be long-term as part of a balanced strategic plan. These objectives and measurable outcomes are key to addressing, improving, or highlighting a failure of the current acquisitions plan. They address accountability for bridging the gap between because the objectives become based on outcomes. Accountability for success is no longer based on number of requirements generated or validated, nor is success defined by just by obligating and executing certain colors of money. Measuring success based on outcomes such as capability delivery and closure of capability gaps are common goals across operator and acquisition processes, which eliminates the gap. These new metrics incentivize mutual support to achieve the necessary outcomes while holding an individual accountable for meeting the need, which establishes a champion necessary to provide constant pressure towards succeeding.

A sound acquisition plan can actually serve to highlight the need for additional training, though the plan itself cannot mitigate a lack of training. Through new measure of effectiveness that address outcomes, operators and staff responsible for writing requirements will also identify training beyond requirements writing that will better serve the unit and acquisition personnel responsible for executing a successful strategy. Understanding the outcomes might require more technical knowledge, strategic planning training, resource management, contract generation, or

even more or different operator engagement. MOEs will highlight deficiencies in current training due to the greater need to perform towards outcomes instead of outputs.

This plan structure also maintains the mantra of flexibility while painting reasonable pictures of the future that acquisitions can plan to execute. It maintains a unit's ability to adjust when necessary while maintaining focus on desired outcomes. The plan alleviates to some degree a unit's reliance on annual cycles of achievement while putting a time limit on the commitment to a given plan. By combining a commander's intent with a mission statement, definitive end states, and a combination of MOPs and MOEs, a unit's focus can remain razor sharp for years at a time while retaining the flexibility to adjust quickly and easily within the overarching guidance. This type of planning has the ability to reduce only flexibility that would actually hinder progress that otherwise would detract from a unit's critical mission set. An outlook focused in this way benefits acquisition strategy by having just enough rigor and planning that acquisition personnel can identify long-term projects to start so that they deliver when the operators need the capability while still providing the right products and requirement deliveries to meet short and mid-term needs as well.

The remaining contributing factor to the mismatch of acquisitions and operator needs and processes can only be mitigated via a new plan in a single scenario, otherwise improvement requires alternate means. Operators retaining sole authority to generate requirements is a policy unique to USSOCOM. In the aforementioned MITRE study, one of the main recommendations to improve service acquisitions is to increase user input and influence and weight in acquisition decisions.^{xxxviii} The need to increase the voice of operators in the main services is the opposite extreme of USSOCOM, where the operator has the only vote. Rarely does an extreme case provide the best balance, and operators miss out on technologies and ideas because of it.

Applying a new acquisition strategy cannot help contribute to a balance except in the single case that MOEs are setup such that assessments show the right requirements are not created to meet the necessary end states and a solution identified is to allow weighted input from others. The likelihood of that case is low, but the acquisition community has taken steps to assist as much as possible in this respect. As stated in SOF AT&L's strategic plan, their vision is to be "trusted experts."^{xxxix} The tasks associated with achieving that vision include embedding with operators and taking part in as much of the acquisition strategy development as possible within units. This gives acquisition professionals an opportunity to put their training to use and provide sound recommendations. Without command guidance and a substantial policy shift, the only way to affect the imbalance of operator generated requirements is to consistently provide sound recommendations and advice based on their extensive training.

Conclusions

USSOCOM acquisitions have become the model for the services to incorporate rapid acquisitions, but there are still challenges to overcome unique to special operations. The operational pace of change for the operators is faster than other services, and the nature of the organizations demands adaptation for rapid fielding. SOF AT&L has succeeded in implementing numerous initiatives to minimize the time necessary to field capability to the operators, from embedding acquisition personnel in the units to focusing on short term projects. The remaining challenge is incorporating long-term projects and programs into the acquisition strategy while still affording operators the flexibility to shift to the changing operational environment. Incorporating a greater balance of acquisition projects into the unit delivery cycle requires both unit and acquisition community adaptation. The campaign plan model is a major step forward to mitigating existing challenges.

Developing an acquisition strategy based on a campaign plan style incorporates existing strategy elements while incorporating necessary improvements to improve the way all stakeholders approach acquisitions. Combining a commander's intent and mission with desired end states and objectives created from the measurable desired outcomes bridges a gap of accountability and provides the right incentive to perform. The limited lifespan creates end states that are not open ended while providing an opportunity to measure progress on other than an annual cycle. This model, properly implemented, even creates the feedback mechanism to understand if the right objectives have been defined or when those objectives have served their purpose and the time is right to adjust.

This method requires thought. It requires active engagement in planning rigor that previous existed only in acquisitions and on general officer staffs generating theater campaign plans. Poorly implemented, or "pencil whipped," strategies using this or the current model solves nothing, and that is a major drawback. It requires constant care and feeding, but the reward is increased capability to the operator when he needs it, not after he needs it or fielded with significant deficiencies. The reward is an efficient and balanced acquisition strategy while retaining the focused flexibility needed to keep up with the operational needs of the units. Units within USSOCOM adopting a campaign plan model for acquisition strategy can continue to set the example to the services for the best methods for equipping a force with what they need, when they need it, while constantly adjusting to present an efficient approach to rapid acquisitions.

ⁱ The 1987 Defense Authorization Act, Title XIII, Part B, established Special Operations Command as well as an individual line of funding for SOCOM (MFP-11) for special operations peculiar equipment.

ⁱⁱ Department of Defense Joint Staff. *Doctrine for the Armed Forces of the United States*. Joint Publication 1. Washington DC: DOD Joint Staff, July 12, 2017, I-7.

ⁱⁱⁱ Department of Defense Joint Staff. *Strategy*. Joint Doctrine Note 1-18. Washington DC: DOD Joint Staff, April 25, 2018, I-1.

^{iv} Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. *Campaign Planning and Responsibilities*. CJCSM 3130.01A, November 25, 2014:1. Theater campaign plans are mandated by Guidance for Employment of the Force (GEF) and the Joint Strategic Capabilities Plan (JSCP).

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- ^v Layton, Evelyn. *The Defense Acquisition University: Training Professionals for the Acquisition Workforce 1992-2003*. Washington, DC: Defense Acquisition University, 2007, 17-19.
- ^{vi} <https://www.britannica.com/technology/P-51> Proposal in April 1940 and first flight in October 1940.
- ^{vii} The 2016 Defense Authorization Act granted US Cyber Command limited Acquisition Authority through 2021.
- ^{viii} United States Special Operations Command Office of Communications. *2019 Fact Book: United States Special Operations Command*. Tampa, FL: USSOCOM, 2019, 57.
- ^{ix} Loredo, Elvira N., John E. Peters, Karlyn D. Stanley, Matthew E. Boyer, William Welser IV, and Thomas S. Szayna. *Authorities and Options for Funding USSOCOM Operations*. Washington, DC: RAND National Defense Research Institute, 2014, 43-44. Verbiage of MFP-11 funding law as well as discussion on what SOF-peculiar versus service-common (MFP-2) means.
- ^x Smith, Jim. *Special Operations Forces Acquisition, Technology, & Logistics*. Powerpoint presentation. Acquisition Excellence Conference, United States Special Operations Command Headquarters, Tampa, FL, March 12, 2019, 3.
- ^{xi} Smith, Jim, Acquisition Executive, Special Operations Forces Acquisition, Technology & Logistics. Jim Smith to all SOF AT&L. Memorandum. "SOF AT&L Mission Tasking Letter for 2018." June 6, 2018, 1.
- ^{xii} Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. *Implementation of the Joint Capabilities Integration and Development System*. CJCSI 5123.01H, August 31, 2018. D-1.
- ^{xiii} Smith, Jim. *Special Operations Forces Acquisition, Technology, & Logistics*. Powerpoint presentation. Acquisition Excellence Conference, United States Special Operations Command Headquarters, Tampa, FL, March 12, 2019, 3.
- ^{xiv} Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. *Implementation of the Joint Capabilities Integration and Development System*. CJCSI 5123.01H, August 31, 2018. D-1.
- ^{xv} United States Special Operations Command Office of Communications. *2019 Fact Book: United States Special Operations Command*. Tampa, FL: USSOCOM, 2019, 18, 24, 30.
- ^{xvi} Rhys Andrews, George A. Boyne, and Richard M. Walker. "Strategy Content and Organizational Performance: An empirical Analysis." *Public Administration Review* 66, no. 1 (Jan-Feb 2006), 58. Study of public strategy adoption as a reactor to the environment was associated with organizational failure and a lack of ability to adopt other strategies.
- ^{xvii} *Ibid*, 53.
- ^{xviii} *Ibid*.
- ^{xix} United States Special Operations Command Office of Communications. *2019 Fact Book: United States Special Operations Command*. Tampa, FL: USSOCOM, 2019.
- ^{xx} The Defense Acquisition Workforce Improvement Act, subsequent creation of the Defense Acquisition University, and acquisition recommendations such as the GAO 95-187 referenced in the paper all contribute to the acquisition standards and practices being as rigorous as they are today.
- ^{xxi} Smith, Jim, Acquisition Executive, Special Operations Forces Acquisition, Technology & Logistics. Jim Smith to all SOF AT&L. Memorandum. "SOF AT&L Mission Tasking Letter for 2018." June 6, 2018, 1.
- ^{xxii} Reitzig, Markus, and Olav Sorenson. "Biases in the Selection Stage of Bottom-Up Strategy Formulation," *Strategic Management Journal* 34, no. 7 (July 2013): 783.
- ^{xxiii} Thrasher, Roger, Eliahu Neiwood, Dan Ward, and Pete Modigliani. *Authority, Autonomy, and Accountability: Defense Fielding Principles for Innovation and Speed to Mission*. McLean, VA: MITRE Corporation, June 2017, 9.
- ^{xxiv} Reitzig, Markus, and Olav Sorenson. "Biases in the Selection Stage of Bottom-Up Strategy Formulation," *Strategic Management Journal* 34, no. 7 (July 2013), 783. solutions require multiple reviewers to compensate.
- ^{xxv} Thrasher, Roger, Eliahu Neiwood, Dan Ward, and Pete Modigliani. *Authority, Autonomy, and Accountability: Defense Fielding Principles for Innovation and Speed to Mission*. McLean, VA: MITRE Corporation, June 2017, 9.
- ^{xxvi} Harman, Beryl. "The Government Performance and Results Act: Strategic Planning of the Future." *Acquisition Review Quarterly* (Summer 1997): 263-264. While the passing of the GPRA coincided roughly with DAWIA and other substantial overhaul of government acquisitions, and it mandated now common items such as five-year plans and mission statements.
- ^{xxvii} Department of Defense Joint Staff. *Doctrine for the Armed Forces of the United States*. Joint Publication 1. Washington DC: DOD Joint Staff, July 12, 2017, p I-9.
- ^{xxviii} Haseman, COL Mark. *Campaign Planning Handbook*. Carlisle Barracks, PA: US Army War College Department of Military Strategy, Planning, and Operations, Academic Year 2019, 64.
- ^{xxix} *Ibid*, 66-67.
- ^{xxx} John M. Green. *Establishing Measures of Effectiveness* (Washington, DC: Office of Secretary of Defense Pentagon, March 27, 2001), 3.
- ^{xxxi} *Ibid*.

^{xxxii} Christopher Hood, "Public Management by Numbers as a Performance-Enhancing Drug: Two Hypotheses," *Public Administration Review* 72 (2012): S86.

^{xxxiii} Rhys Andrews, George A. Boyne, and Richard M. Walker. "Strategy Content and Organizational Performance: An empirical Analysis." *Public Administration Review* 66, no. 1 (Jan-Feb 2006), 53. fiscal concerns not top priority

^{xxxiv} Semonite, LGEN Todd T. *USACE Campaign Plan*. (Washington DC: US Army Corps of Engineers, June 1, 2017), 42

^{xxxv} *Ibid*, 7.

^{xxxvi} The US European Command Campaign Plan is a classified document, but the fact that it contains sections related to resource shortfalls and capability gaps is not. The reviewed release of the EUCOM Campaign Plan is January 2018.

^{xxxvii} Smith, Jim. *Special Operations Forces Acquisition, Technology, & Logistics*. Powerpoint presentation. (Acquisition Excellence Conference, United States Special Operations Command Headquarters, Tampa, FL, March 12, 2019), 10.

^{xxxviii} Thrasher, Roger, Eliahu Neiwood, Dan Ward, and Pete Modigliani. *Authority, Autonomy, and Accountability: Defense Fielding Principles for Innovation and Speed to Mission*. McLean, VA: MITRE Corporation, June 2017, 9.

^{xxxix} SOF AT&L 2018 Strategy Vision, 1.

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