



NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL

MONTEREY, CALIFORNIA

THESIS

**A STUDY ON THE FEASIBILITY OF NETHERLANDS
SPECIAL OPERATION FORCES CONDUCTING
UNCONVENTIONAL WARFARE**

by

Nico Zoontjens

June 2022

Thesis Advisor:
Second Reader:

Kalev I. Sepp
Martijn W.M. Kitzen,
Netherlands Defence Academy

Approved for public release. Distribution is unlimited.

THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE			<i>Form Approved OMB No. 0704-0188</i>	
Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instruction, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to Washington headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports, 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington, VA 22202-4302, and to the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reduction Project (0704-0188) Washington, DC, 20503.				
1. AGENCY USE ONLY (Leave blank)		2. REPORT DATE June 2022	3. REPORT TYPE AND DATES COVERED Master's thesis	
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE A STUDY ON THE FEASIBILITY OF NETHERLANDS SPECIAL OPERATION FORCES CONDUCTING UNCONVENTIONAL WARFARE			5. FUNDING NUMBERS	
6. AUTHOR(S) Nico Zontjens				
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) Naval Postgraduate School Monterey, CA 93943-5000			8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER	
9. SPONSORING / MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) N/A			10. SPONSORING / MONITORING AGENCY REPORT NUMBER	
11. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES The views expressed in this thesis are those of the author and do not reflect the official policy or position of the Department of Defense or the U.S. Government.				
12a. DISTRIBUTION / AVAILABILITY STATEMENT Approved for public release. Distribution is unlimited.			12b. DISTRIBUTION CODE A	
13. ABSTRACT (maximum 200 words) In the past three decades, The Netherlands' Special Operations Forces (NLD SOF) operated in various geographical regions and executed the three principal tasks of SOF: (1) Military Assistance, (2) Special Reconnaissance, and (3) Direct Action. In the execution of these operations that focused on fighting terrorism, no consideration was given for Unconventional Warfare (UW) operations. Therefore, this study seeks to address the following research question: "To what extent can NLD SOF conduct UW operations given the NLD political-strategic setting?" To answer the research question, this study uses a qualitative approach. Besides information from existing literature, government documents, and media reports, interviews with key subject matter experts provide first-hand assessments on UW operations. It turns out that NLD SOF are not adequately educated, trained, and equipped to conduct UW operations, because UW is not currently a doctrinal task for NLD SOF and, therefore, is not taught during NLD SOF qualification courses. The Netherlands' policy documents such as the Integrated International Security Strategy, the Defence Notes and The Netherlands' Defence Doctrine provide interpretation for the NLD government to consider UW as a viable option for ensuring stability and security on NATO and EU territories. These documents and the Dutch Constitution also provide a legal basis for the NLD government to deploy its armed forces for these missions.				
14. SUBJECT TERMS Netherlands Special Operations Forces, NLD SOF, unconventional warfare, UW, irregular warfare, IW, support to resistance			15. NUMBER OF PAGES 79	
			16. PRICE CODE	
17. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF REPORT Unclassified	18. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF THIS PAGE Unclassified	19. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF ABSTRACT Unclassified	20. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT UU	

THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

Approved for public release. Distribution is unlimited.

**A STUDY ON THE FEASIBILITY OF NETHERLANDS SPECIAL OPERATION
FORCES CONDUCTING UNCONVENTIONAL WARFARE**

Nico Zoontjens
Major, Netherlands Marine Corps

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

**MASTER OF SCIENCE IN DEFENSE ANALYSIS
(IRREGULAR WARFARE)**

from the

**NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL
June 2022**

Approved by: Kalev I. Sepp
Advisor

Martijn W.M. Kitzen
Second Reader

Carter Malkasian
Chair, Department of Defense Analysis

THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

ABSTRACT

In the past three decades, The Netherlands' Special Operations Forces (NLD SOF) operated in various geographical regions and executed the three principal tasks of SOF: (1) Military Assistance, (2) Special Reconnaissance, and (3) Direct Action. In the execution of these operations that focused on fighting terrorism, no consideration was given for Unconventional Warfare (UW) operations. Therefore, this study seeks to address the following research question: "To what extent can NLD SOF conduct UW operations given the NLD political-strategic setting?" To answer the research question, this study uses a qualitative approach. Besides information from existing literature, government documents, and media reports, interviews with key subject matter experts provide first-hand assessments on UW operations. It turns out that NLD SOF are not adequately educated, trained, and equipped to conduct UW operations, because UW is not currently a doctrinal task for NLD SOF and, therefore, is not taught during NLD SOF qualification courses. The Netherlands' policy documents such as the Integrated International Security Strategy, the Defence Notes and The Netherlands' Defence Doctrine provide interpretation for the NLD government to consider UW as a viable option for ensuring stability and security on NATO and EU territories. These documents and the Dutch Constitution also provide a legal basis for the NLD government to deploy its armed forces for these missions.

THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I.	INTRODUCTION.....	1
A.	INTRODUCTION.....	1
B.	WHY IS THIS STUDY RELEVANT?	7
C.	METHODOLOGY	7
D.	STRUCTURE.....	7
II.	AN OVERVIEW OF UNCONVENTIONAL WARFARE	9
A.	BRIEF HISTORY OF UNCONVENTIONAL WARFARE.....	9
B.	WHY DOES A GOVERNMENT CONDUCT UW?	10
C.	WHAT IS UNCONVENTIONAL WARFARE?.....	12
D.	TERMS USED IN UW DEFINITIONS.....	14
E.	THE SEVEN PHASES OF UNCONVENTIONAL WARFARE	16
F.	WHICH MILITARY ORGANIZATIONS TYPICALLY CONDUCT UW?	20
III.	ARE THE NETHERLANDS' SOF UNITS CAPABLE OF CONDUCTING UW OPERATIONS?	23
A.	THE NETHERLANDS SOF UNITS	25
B.	KORPS COMMANDOTROEPEN.....	26
C.	THE NETHERLANDS MARITIME SPECIAL OPERATIONS FORCE.....	27
D.	NETHERLANDS SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND	27
E.	TO WHAT EXTENT CAN THE NETHERLANDS SOF CONDUCT UW OPERATIONS?	28
F.	CHAPTER SUMMARY.....	32
IV.	THE NETHERLANDS' POLITICAL-STRATEGIC SETTING	33
A.	BRIEF HISTORY OF THE NETHERLANDS	33
B.	THE EVOLUTION OF THE NETHERLANDS' ARMED FORCES	35
C.	CHANGING TASKS FOR THE NETHERLANDS' ARMED FORCES	38
D.	THE DUTCH POLITICAL-STRATEGIC SETTING.....	39
E.	LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR UW OPERATIONS	44
F.	CHAPTER SUMMARY.....	47
V.	CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....	49
A.	CONCLUSION	49

B. RECOMMENDATIONS.....	50
LIST OF REFERENCES.....	53
INITIAL DISTRIBUTION LIST	59

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1.	Seven phases of UW. Adapted from USASOC	18
Figure 2.	USSOCOM Irregular Warfare activities.....	21

THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1.	Netherlands' SOF units' capabilities within the seven phases of Unconventional Warfare.	31
----------	--	----

THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

10th SFG	10th Special Forces Group
CHoD	Chief of Defence
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
COIN	Counter Insurgency
CT	Counterterrorism
DA	Direct Action
DOD	Department of Defense
EEC	European Economic Community
EU	European Union
HCSS	The Hague Center for Strategic Studies
IISS	Integrated International Security Strategy
JSOU	Joint Special Operations University
KCT	Korps Commando Troepen
MA	Military Assistance
MCSO	Ministerial Core Group Special Operations
MISO	Military Information Support Operations
MoD	Ministry of Defence
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NLD	The Netherlands
NLMARSO	Netherlands Maritime Special Operations Force
NPS	Naval Postgraduate School
OSS	Office of Strategic Services
POW	Prisoner of War
SERE	Survival, Evasion, Resistance, and Escape
SF	Special Forces
SFOD-G	Special Forces Operational Detachment-Golf
SOCOM	Special Operations Command
SOE	Special Operations Executive
SOF	Special Operations Forces
SOWC	Special Operations Warfare Center

SR	Special Reconnaissance
STR	Support to Resistance
UN	United Nations
USASOC	United States Army Special Operations Command
USSOCOM	United States Special Operations Command
UW	Unconventional Warfare

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In the last three decades, The Netherlands' Special Operations Forces (SOF) operated in various geographical regions and executed the three principal tasks of SOF: (1) Military Assistance, (2) Special Reconnaissance, and (3) Direct Action. These operations mostly were in a permissive or semi-permissive environment where a host nation accepted the international military forces in the cooperation realm of military operations. In executing these operations which focused on fighting terrorism, no consideration was given to Unconventional Warfare (UW) operations. Consequently, The Netherlands' SOF may not be adequately prepared to conduct UW operations.¹

Therefore, this study seeks to address the following research question: "To what extent can The Netherlands' Special Operations Forces conduct Unconventional Warfare operations given The Netherlands' political-strategic setting?" This study is relevant because The Netherlands' SOF might not be capable of executing UW operations at this time if the need arose, and The Netherlands' Special Operations Command's Special Operations Warfare Center and the Special Operations Forces Chair of The Netherlands Defense Academy are interested in this research question. To answer the research question, this study uses a qualitative approach. Besides information from existing literature, government documents, and media reports, interviews with key subject matter experts provide first-hand assessments on UW operations.

This research shows that The Netherlands' SOF are not adequately educated, trained, and equipped to conduct UW operations, because Unconventional Warfare is not a doctrinal task for The Netherlands' SOF and, therefore, is not taught during The Netherlands' Special Operations Forces' qualification courses or additional training. Nevertheless, with the Military Assistance and Faction Liaison missions, The Netherlands' SOF units should be capable of conducting parts of the UW mission profiles. Moreover, like The Netherlands' armed forces, most of its fellow North Atlantic Treaty Organization

¹ Rob De Wijk et al., *The Future of NLD SOF: Towards an All-Domain Force* (The Hague: The Hague Centre for Strategic Studies, 2021), <https://hcss.nl/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/Future-of-NLD-SOF-july-2021.pdf>.

(NATO) members have no UW doctrine. To close this knowledge gap, The Netherlands' government might turn to the United States, the United Kingdom, or Denmark for observing or participating in UW training programs, as these nations have comprehensive UW training programs.

This research also shows that The Netherlands' policy documents, such as the *Integrated International Security Strategy*, the *Defence Notes* and *The Netherlands' Defence Doctrine*, provide interpretation for the Netherlands' government to consider UW as a viable option for stability and security on NATO and EU territory. These documents and the Dutch Constitution also provide a legal basis for the Dutch government to deploy its armed forces for these missions. Nevertheless, there needs to be the political will to conduct UW operations, as there are some legal and decision-making hurdles for the Netherlands' government to clear before it authorizes the conduct of UW operations.

This study recommends The Netherlands' Special Operations Command write a Netherlands' SOF doctrine which includes UW as a tasking. This doctrine would be the starting point for The Netherlands' SOF units to initiate thinking about the implications of this tasking.

Furthermore, this research explains that UW is a low-cost, viable option for The Netherlands' government to have in the armed forces' toolbox; therefore, The Netherlands' government should have a UW capability within its Netherlands' SOF. This capability will provide The Netherlands' government with options to respond to threats to the Kingdom of The Netherlands, its allies, and The Netherlands' interest.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

After two years of studying and enjoying the good life of California, my thesis has finally come to an end. I want to thank my wife Melanie and my children Isabella, Liam, and Emily for their support, love, and courage to take this journey with me. Without them I could not have fulfilled this undertaking. I love you!

I also want to thank my advisor, Dr. Kalev “Gunner” Sepp, for his always motivational talks, his professional feedback and connections, and his flexibility during this research. Gunner, thank you for your support!

Furthermore, I want to thank Prof. Dr. Martijn Kitzen for his effort in making this the product that it is. From your brainstorming in the beginning to your relentless feedback during the process, thank you, Martijn!

Besides Gunner and Martijn, I want to thank the Graduate Writing Center for their assistance, encouragements, and laughter. Thank you, George, Colette, Cheryldee, C.J., and Meg for helping me to write this thesis.

And of course, I could not have acquired the data for this qualitative research without the help of my interviewees. I want to thank you for your time, which for most of you was outside of office hours, and for your willingness to participate in this research. Thank you, Joris, Paul, Joost, Ben, René, Eric, Nando, Matthias, Stian, Cedric, Kyle, and Funs.

THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

I. INTRODUCTION

A. INTRODUCTION

On February 24, 2022, armed forces of the Russian Federation invaded the independent, democratic nation of Ukraine. Russia launched multiple offensives from Russian and Belarusian territory. Many nations were shocked by the bold move by President Vladimir Putin to go to war with Ukraine. Subsequently, the democratic Western nations have been supporting President Volodymyr Zelensky with weapons, ammunition, military equipment, and medical supplies to fight the Russian invasion forces. Ukraine, however, is not a North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) member and therefore cannot directly depend on NATO's military apparatus.

The Russian invasion came as a surprise to many European countries, who were, therefore, not prepared to counter this invasion. A way to prepare for such an invasion is to conduct wargames. A wargame “is a systematic method of analyzing a plan ... to identify risks and shortcomings [in that plan] ... to foresee the dynamics of action, reaction and possible counteraction of the mission which enables the plan to be tested and subsequently refined as necessary.”¹

In 2014 the RAND Arroyo Center conducted multiple wargames focused on a possible Russian annexation of the Baltic States, which are part of NATO. The wargames revealed that it would take Russia no longer than 60 hours to reach the cities of Tallinn in Estonia and Riga in Latvia.² The research concluded, however, that an aggressive Russian attack on the Baltic States was not likely. Even so, NATO must take steps to deter Russia and make the possibility for such an attack even less likely. Given the timeframe of the wargames, it can be assumed that if such an attack does occur and NATO needs to respond, it will be far too late for NATO to react. As a result, the Baltic States could become a part of Russia again. To help the three Baltic States prepare to regain their sovereignty if

¹ Ministry of Defence, *UK Planning and Execution Handbook*, AC72099 (London: Ministry of Defence, 2018), <https://www.scribd.com/document/465225621/AC72099-PEHB-2018-1-pdf>.

² David A. Shlapak and Michael W. Johnson, “Reinforcing Deterrence on NATO's Eastern Flank: Wargaming the Defense of the Baltics” (RAND Corporation, 2016), <http://www.rand.org/t/rr1253>.

occupied by Russia, NATO should conduct Unconventional Warfare (UW) operations in these NATO member states. If this scenario were to occur, The Netherlands, as a NATO member, should assist the three Baltic States and, therefore, should be able to conduct UW operations to support the Baltic governments in ejecting the occupying forces of Russia.

Unconventional Warfare operations are typically a task for Special Operations Forces (SOF) like the United States Army Special Operations Forces, which are explicitly trained to conduct UW operations for the United States Government. Yet, this has not been the case for SOF in The Netherlands. The Netherlands Ministry of Defence requested The Hague Center for Strategic Studies (HCSS) to conduct a study on the future of The Netherlands Special Operations Forces. In this study, Rob De Wijk, founder of the HCSS, and professor of international relations and security at Leiden University, and his fellow authors state that UW will play a more significant part in future conflict phases, and in a collective defense scenario, The Netherlands' SOF should execute UW operations in a very high-risk environment.³ In separate studies, David Kilcullen, Barnett S. Koven, and the White House also claim that UW should be a focus point for SOF.,⁴⁵ As recently as 2021, President Biden stated that the United States “will maintain the proficiency of Special Operations Forces to focus on crisis response and priority counterterrorism and unconventional warfare missions.”⁶ The importance of conducting UW operations is therefore demonstrated.

If assigned this task, it is questionable whether The Netherlands' Special Operations Forces are currently prepared to conduct UW operations.⁷ In the last three decades, The Netherlands' SOF have operated in various geographical regions and

³ De Wijk et al., *The Future of NLD SOF*.

⁴ David Kilcullen, “The Evolution of Unconventional Warfare,” *Scandinavian Journal of Military Studies* 2, no. 1 (June 20, 2019): 61–71, <https://doi.org/10.31374/sjms.35>.

⁵ Barnett S. Koven, “Competing with Great Powers through Competitive Strategy and Unconventional Warfare,” *Special Operations Journal* 7, no. 1 (April 27, 2021): 68–86, <https://doi.org/10.1080/23296151.2021.1905227>.

⁶ White House, *United States Interim National Security Strategic Guidance* (Washington, DC: White House, 2021), <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/NSC-1v2.pdf>.

⁷ De Wijk et al., *The Future of NLD SOF*.

executed the three principal tasks of SOF: (1) Military Assistance, (2) Special Reconnaissance, and (3) Direct Action.⁸ In most cases, these operations were conducted in a permissive or semi-permissive environment, where a host nation accepted the international military forces in the cooperation realm of military operations. The execution of these operations that focused on fighting terrorism, in what was once known as the Global War on Terror, no consideration was given for UW operations. Moreover, The Netherlands' armed forces lack not only training to conduct UW operations, but also any SOF doctrine providing them the legal authority to undertake them. Although The Netherlands could follow NATO's SOF doctrine, it is worth noting that in NATO's SOF doctrine, UW is not a SOF activity. It is therefore not unusual that The Netherlands' SOF has not been trained or prepared to conduct UW operations; it is essentially not in their mission set.

After twenty-plus years of fighting terrorism, The Netherlands' armed forces have been focused on its second main task, which is "maintenance and promotion of the international legal order and stability."⁹ According to *The Netherlands Defence Vision 2035* and *The Netherlands Defence Doctrine*, The Netherlands' armed forces will now focus more on their first main task: "protection of national and allied territory."¹⁰ Even before the United States and its allies, after twenty years of attempted nation building, abandoned Afghanistan in September 2021, the focus of the United States military shifted towards strategic competition with China and Russia, once known as the Great Power Competition. The Dutch Ministry of Defense (MoD) Future Operating Environment document states that "the United States, has shifted its strategic focus toward Asia and [in 2035] probably [will have] largely deposited responsibility for the European part of the Treaty territory with the European partners."¹¹ The focus of The Netherlands armed

⁸ NATO Special Operations Headquarters, *NATO Standard AJP-3.5: Allied Joint Doctrine for Special Operations* (Mons: NATO Special Operations Headquarters, 2019).

⁹ Ministry of Defence, *Netherlands Defence Doctrine* (The Hague: Ministry of Defence, 2019), <https://english.defensie.nl/downloads/publications/2019/06/27/netherlands-defence-doctrine>.

¹⁰ Ministry of Defence, *Defensievisie 2035: Vechten voor een veilige toekomst [Defence Vision 2035: Fighting for a Safe Future]* (The Hague: Ministry of Defense, 2020), <https://www.defensie.nl/downloads/publicaties/2020/10/15/defensievisie-2035>.

¹¹ Ministry of Defence, *Future Operating Environment* (The Hague: Ministry of Defence, 2021).

forces, therefore, is changing towards a more territorial defense of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, the EU, and NATO territories.¹²

The strategic competition for the United States focuses mostly on China, but with the recent renewed cooperation between China and Russia both great powers should remain important for the United States to monitor.¹³ China's economy is still growing strong and is expected to be the world's biggest economy around 2030.¹⁴ Therefore, this strategic competition may be more of an economic competition in which the armed forces are a tool to deter each other from going to war with one another. Russia, on the other hand, is seeking more acknowledgment as a great power and is trying to destabilize the EU with cyber warfare and actions below the threshold of armed conflict. Moreover, Russia's invasion of Ukraine confirms Moscow's aggressive opposition to NATO and NATO's potential future members, and it has consequently flooded Europe with Ukrainian refugees.

Given that Russia aims to destabilize the EU and NATO, it is a potential adversary for The Netherlands, which is part of those two organizations. The Dutch MoD director of Operational Policy and Plans has stated that "during a large-scale armed conflict between NATO and Russia, The Netherlands serves as a vital inland and landfall for the transatlantic partners of the NATO alliance. This makes The Netherlands automatically a playing field for operations in the gray area as part of the strategic competition."¹⁵ Although it may possess strategic value in that context, The Netherlands is a small nation which thrives as a knowledge-based economy and conducts trade with many countries around the world. The Netherlands is dependent on this trade with other nations, including Russia, and The Netherlands government is therefore risk averse to conducting unilateral military operations abroad against these trade partners. Another threshold for The Netherlands

¹² Ministry of Defence, *Defensievisie 2035: Vechten voor een veilige toekomst [Defence Vision 2035: Fighting for a Safe Future]*.

¹³ "Joint Statement of the Russian Federation and the People's Republic of China on the International Relations Entering a New Era and the Global Sustainable Development," Official Internet Resources of the President of Russia, February 4, 2022, <http://en.kremlin.ru/supplement/5770>.

¹⁴ Arthur R. Kroeber, *China's Economy: What Everyone Needs to Know*, 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020).

¹⁵ Ministry of Defence, *Future Operating Environment*.

government to consider before conducting unilateral military operations abroad is The Netherlands' foreign policy, which is strongly influenced by international organizations such as NATO, the EU, and the UN. Moreover, to contribute to its policy goals, The Netherlands is host to international law institutions such as the International Criminal Court and the International Court of Justice.¹⁶ Hosting these institutions implies that The Netherlands is serious about promoting the international legal order and wants to be an example in these fields.

In 2018, The Netherlands Ministry of Defense established a Netherlands' Special Operations Command (SOCOM) to deploy The Netherlands' SOF more efficiently and effectively.¹⁷ Since then, this new command has examined the best suitable tasks and operational concepts for The Netherlands' SOF. The Netherlands' SOCOM has requested HCSS to perform a study on the functional requirements for The Netherlands' SOF.¹⁸ Furthermore, The Netherlands' SOCOM has developed a Future Operational Concept and The Netherlands' SOF Vision 2035, both of which are drawn from the National Defense Vision 2035. These studies and documents will provide a broad perspective on The Netherlands' SOF functional requirements, tasks, and operational concepts.

One probable task for SOF, which results from these documents, is conducting Unconventional Warfare.¹⁹ As Dr. Sandor Fabian, a former Hungarian special forces officer argues, "As a result of the review of their national defense frameworks, more and more countries—especially the Baltic and Scandinavian states—have realized that their existing defense establishments would never be a match for the Russian war machine and

¹⁶ "Lijst van internationale organisaties in Nederland [List of International Organizations in The Netherlands]," Rijksoverheid, accessed April 16, 2022, <https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/onderwerpen/internationale-organisaties-in-nederland/lijt-van-internationale-organisaties-in-nederland>.

¹⁷ Maurice P.P. Timmermans, "Special Operations Forces: een nieuw commando [: a new command]," *Militaire Spectator* 188, no. 11 (November 19, 2019): 520–29.

¹⁸ De Wijk et al., *The Future of NLD SOF*.

¹⁹ De Wijk et al.

have started to look at alternative solutions to defend their national sovereignty.”²⁰ UW as part of the total defense concept to deter and even eventually fight an occupying force is something especially Eastern European nations look at to prevent a Russian invasion. Similarly, De Wijk states that UW could be The Netherlands’ SOF tasking in future conflicts and in a collective defense scenario.²¹

The question then is, are The Netherlands’ Special Operations Forces capable of executing Unconventional Warfare operations? To that end, The Netherlands’ SOCOMs Special Operations Warfare Center (SOWC), supporting scientific researchers, and the SOF Chair of The Netherlands Defense Academy are interested in determining not only whether The Netherlands’ SOF can execute UW operations but whether the Dutch political and strategic environment is able to support a UW mission profile. Hence, this research seeks to address the following research question: *To what extent can The Netherlands Special Operations Forces conduct UW operations given The Netherlands’ political-strategic setting?* This research question is two-fold: 1) to what extent are The Netherlands’ Special Operations Forces capable of conducting Unconventional Warfare operations, and 2) to what extent can The Netherlands Special Operations Forces conduct Unconventional Warfare operations given The Netherlands’ political-strategic setting?

Supporting questions for this research question are:

1. What is UW and what are its operational requirements and political-strategic characteristics?
2. To what extent are The Netherlands’ SOF capabilities suited for meeting UW operational requirements?
3. What is The Netherlands’ political-strategic setting and how far does this allow for UW operations by The Netherlands’ SOF?

²⁰ Sandor Fabian, “Total Defense, Revisited: An Unconventional Solution to the Problem of Conventional Forces,” Modern War Institute, October 6, 2020, <https://mwi.usma.edu/total-defense-revisited-unconventional-solution-problem-conventional-forces/>.

²¹ De Wijk et al., *The Future of NLD SOF*.

B. WHY IS THIS STUDY RELEVANT?

This study is relevant because The Netherlands' Special Operations Forces might not be capable of executing Unconventional Warfare operations at this time if the need arises, and The Netherlands' Special Operations Command's Special Operations Warfare Center and the Special Operations Forces Chair of The Netherlands Defense Academy are interested in these research questions. This research is also relevant to assess whether The Netherlands' government should develop a new capability. This study examines 1) to what extent The Netherlands' SOF can conduct UW operations, and 2) to what extent The Netherlands' political-strategic setting is capable of supporting this UW mission profile.

This study does not emerge out of a political question for The Netherlands' government to conduct UW operations. As much literature shows that UW is in rising demand, this study solely comes from the theoretical interest of The Netherlands' SOCOM's SOWC and the SOF Chair at The Netherlands Defense Academy. This does not imply The Netherlands' government has any plans to conduct UW soon.

C. METHODOLOGY

To answer the research question, this study uses a qualitative approach. Besides information gleaned from existing theory, government documents, and media reports, the study draws on interviews with key subject matter experts to ascertain inside views on UW operations. These experts come from The Netherlands' SOF units, The Netherlands' SOCOM, and the political-strategic level. The interview questions were directed towards specific knowledge and facts on the subject and the experts' assessments about conducting UW operations. The interviews were conducted with the approval of the Naval Postgraduate School Institutional Review Board (NPS IRB). Hopefully, this research will result in new insights from which the Dutch MoD, The Netherlands' SOCOM, and The Netherlands' SOF can benefit.

D. STRUCTURE

This study consists of five chapters, including this introductory chapter. Chapter II presents relevant definitions and terms, as well as the organizational and operational

characteristics of UW. The second chapter also focuses on the political-strategic characteristics of UW. Chapter III focuses on the characteristics of the capabilities necessary to conduct UW operations. It also describes the capabilities of The Netherlands' SOF units and includes information drawn from the interview answers from The Netherlands' SOF unit commanders. This third chapter answers the first part of the research question: to what extent are The Netherlands' SOF units capable of conducting UW operations? Chapter IV analyzes The Netherlands' political and strategic settings and includes answers from the respective interviews at the political and strategic level. That fourth chapter also addresses the second part of the research question: to what extent is The Netherlands' political and strategic environment able to support UW operations? The fifth and final chapter gives a summary of this research and its findings and concludes the study. It also provides recommendations for The Netherlands' SOF and The Netherlands' SOCOM for possible future research.

II. AN OVERVIEW OF UNCONVENTIONAL WARFARE

This chapter describes why governments conduct Unconventional Warfare, what it is, and which military organizations typically conduct UW operations. This chapter first presents a short history of UW and why governments conduct UW. Secondly, the chapter explains what UW is, what different definitions of UW exist, and which different types and phases of UW exist. This chapter ends with an analysis of which units typically conduct UW.

A. BRIEF HISTORY OF UNCONVENTIONAL WARFARE

Unconventional warfare, also referred to as state sponsorship of irregular forces, is “one of the oldest and most common forms of warfare,” according to David John Kilcullen.²² Kilcullen, a counterinsurgency expert, retired Australian Army officer, and author of *The Dragons and the Snakes: How the Rest Learned to Fight the West*, states that UW has been around since “the nineteenth century irregular campaigns in the European colonies of Asia and Africa and the Anglo-Russian ‘Great Game’ in Afghanistan and Central Asia.” More recent examples are the efforts of the British T.E. Lawrence and the Arab Bureau in their fight against the Ottoman Turkish military forces during World War I, and the American Office of Strategic Services (OSS) and the British Special Operations Executive (SOE) with European resistance movements and their fight against the Nazi occupiers during World War II.²³ The increase of UW operations eventually led in 1952 to the first formal Unconventional Warfare unit: the 10th Special Forces Group (10th SFG) of the United States Army.²⁴ U.S. Army 10th SFG conducted UW across the globe in the years to follow. As Kilcullen states, UW has been around since the nineteenth century, but why do governments conduct UW?

²² Kilcullen, “The Evolution of Unconventional Warfare.”

²³ Kilcullen.

²⁴ Alfred H. Paddock, Jr., *U.S. Army Special Warfare: Its Origins; Psychological and Unconventional Warfare, 1941–1952* (Washington, D.C.: National Defense University Press, 1982), <https://www.hsdl.org/?view&did=712060>.

B. WHY DOES A GOVERNMENT CONDUCT UW?

Why does a government want to support or sponsor a resistance force or insurgency in a foreign country? This decision starts with the foreign policy goals for a nation state. When these foreign policy goals do not align with another nation state's goals, a government typically has two options: exercise diplomacy or conduct a military intervention. Between diplomacy and a military intervention, UW could be a third foreign policy option.

A nation can consider conducting UW operations when a resistance force's goals correspond with the foreign policy goals of the potential sponsor nation. For example, in 1961 the U.S. government's foreign policy goals did not match with the policy of the Soviet Union-backed Cuban leader Fidel Castro, but U.S. foreign policy goals did reflect the goals of Cuban exiles, who wanted a new, non-communist, regime. U.S. President John F. Kennedy also wanted a regime change in Cuba and therefore ordered the training and support of an exile guerilla force to invade Cuba and overthrow the Castro regime.²⁵ Although this regime change failed, it is an example of UW. Another more famous and successful example is the overthrow of the Nazi regime during World War II in occupied Europe. United States, British, French, Belgian, and Dutch Jedburgh teams were used to organize and coordinate resistance activities in support of the Allied invasion to defeat the Nazis and liberate the European nations.²⁶ Both examples are UW campaigns, but each fall into a different UW category.

Support to a resistance force or insurgency can be categorized into two types of campaign efforts: 1) part of a general war, and 2) part of a limited war.²⁷ When a UW campaign is conducted in support of an invasion by conventional forces, the primary focus

²⁵ Lucien S. Vandenbroucke, *Perilous Options: Special Operations as an Instrument of U.S. Foreign Policy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993).

²⁶ Jelle Hooiveld, *Dutch Courage: Special Forces in the Netherlands 1944–45* (Gloucestershire: Amberley Publishing, 2016).

²⁷ Mark Grdovic, *A Leader's Handbook to Unconventional Warfare*, 09–1st ed. (Fort Bragg, N.C.: U.S. Army John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School, 2009), <https://info.publicintelligence.net/USArmy-LeadersUW.pdf>.

of UW is to support the tactical and operational military objectives.²⁸ The goal is to support a conventional force and/or to distract or divert adversary forces. Examples are operations in occupied Europe during World War II, in Afghanistan in 2001 with the Northern Alliance in support of Operation Enduring Freedom, and in Iraq in 2003 with the Kurdish Peshmerga in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom. Another more current example, is a fictional scenario in which the Baltic states are overrun by the Russian Federation, and a Baltic resistance force's goal could be to overthrow the occupying Russian governance. The sponsors' goals, i.e., the goals of the NATO member states, would be to oust the Russian occupation government in the Baltic states to reinstate their sovereignty. This would be an example of UW as part of a general war in which a larger conventional NATO force could enter the Baltic States to oust the Russian occupier.

By contrast, when a UW campaign is conducted in support of a limited war scenario, the objectives are more political-strategic in nature. In a limited war scenario, UW can be used to apply pressure on an adversary. Some examples of these types of operations are the overthrow of governments in Albania (1949–1954), Cuba (1960s), and Nicaragua (1980s).²⁹ Another more present-day limited war hypothetical scenario, in which Russia annexed Ukraine's Crimean Peninsula in 2014, could be in support of the Ukrainian government to overthrow the pro-Russian separatist occupiers on the Crimea Peninsula. In a limited war scenario, UW can be a third option between diplomacy and conflict, allowing a sponsor to plausibly deny its involvement, if necessary, with UW covert actions or clandestine activities. These limited war UW operations are highly sensitive and therefore normally conducted with a small footprint.³⁰

Thus, a foreign government may choose to conduct UW operations when the resistance force's goals are aligned with the sponsor's foreign policy and interest. If the UW operations are successful, the sponsor's foreign policy objectives can be reached with

²⁸ Grdovic.

²⁹ Grdovic.

³⁰ Kilcullen, "The Evolution of Unconventional Warfare."

only a small footprint. As Kilcullen observes, UW is the “most cost-effective and historically most successful form of warfare.”³¹

Unconventional Warfare practitioners or policy makers use many confusing terms when they refer to UW operations like irregular warfare, political warfare, or guerilla warfare. But what does UW really encompass? This chapter has thus far looked at *why* governments conduct UW, and it is up to those governments to decide *if*, *when*, and *where* they conduct UW. The next section of this chapter looks at what constitutes UW.

C. WHAT IS UNCONVENTIONAL WARFARE?

Unconventional warfare is a subset of irregular warfare and is commonly cross-referenced with special warfare and guerilla warfare; furthermore, these terms mean roughly the same thing. As Kilcullen explains, these are “operations by specialized forces to advise, assist and accompany local partners conducting resistance warfare against a hostile state or occupying force.”³²

Unconventional Warfare is a term that does not exist in *The Netherlands’ Defence Doctrine*. The Netherlands does not have any UW doctrine per se; however, the Defence Doctrine provides that for SOF doctrine, The Netherlands will adhere to NATO’s SOF doctrine. As the United States’ lead service for UW, the U.S. Army is the main source for UW doctrine within the United States.³³ To define UW, this study uses both the United States’ and NATO’s Joint Publications’ most comprehensive definitions. If there is a significant dissimilarity between the United States’ and NATO’s definitions, the difference is clarified.

The U.S. Joint Publication 3-05 defines UW as “operations and activities conducted to enable a resistance movement or insurgency to coerce, disrupt, or overthrow a

³¹ Kilcullen.

³² Kilcullen.

³³ United States Army Special Operations Command, *Unconventional Warfare Pocket Guide v1.0* (Fort Bragg, N.C.: United States Army Special Operations Command, 2016), https://www.soc.mil/ARIS/books/pdf/Unconventional%20Warfare%20Pocket%20Guide_v1%200_Final_6%20April%202016.pdf.

government or occupying power by operating through or with an underground, auxiliary, and guerilla force in a denied area.”³⁴ (Emphasis added.)

Although NATO does not have any doctrine on UW, it has an almost identical definition of UW as that of the United States. It defines UW as: “*Military* activities conducted through or with underground, auxiliary *or* guerilla forces to enable a resistance movement or insurgency to coerce, disrupt, or overthrow a government or occupying power.”³⁵ Both definitions appear similar, but they do vary from each other.

When we break down both definitions, they both state that UW is “an activity conducted with or through a third-party force to enable a resistance movement or insurgency to coerce, disrupt, or overthrow an occupying power or government.” The difference between these two definitions is that the United States’ definition does not specify that UW is a *military* activity, but it does state that UW *is conducted in a denied area*. This implies that United States’ non-military agencies could conduct UW operations in a denied area; this does not seem viable for NATO. Another difference is that the NATO definition articulates that the third party is underground, auxiliary, *or* guerilla forces, where the U.S. definition states that the third party is underground, auxiliary, *and* guerilla forces. This implies that United States’ UW operations should involve all three elements of a resistance movement or insurgency, where NATO UW operations only need one of the three elements. The different definitions also imply that NATO conducts UW operations only with military forces, and that these operations can be conducted outside of denied areas.

The Netherlands’ armed forces do not have a doctrine or a specific definition for Unconventional Warfare; it follows NATO’s definition to describe UW. Since The Netherlands follows the NATO definition and this analysis focuses on The Netherlands, this study uses the NATO definition. Consequently, The Netherlands respects NATO’s definition of UW operations; this study therefore can conclude that Netherlands’ UW

³⁴ Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Joint Publication 3-05: Special Operations* (Washington, D.C.: Joint Chiefs of Staff, 2014), http://edocs.nps.edu/2014/July/jp3_05.pdf.

³⁵ NATO Standardization Agency, “AAP-06 Edition 2013 NATO Glossary of Terms and Definitions” (NATO, 2013), https://www.jcs.mil/Portals/36/Documents/Doctrine/Other_Pubs/aap6.pdf.

operations, like NATO's, would need fewer elements of the resistance movement or insurgency, but NATO conducts these operations with military forces and can conduct these operations outside of denied areas.

Besides the formal definitions, academics and UW specialists have more general descriptions of Unconventional Warfare. A more general description of UW is Kilcullen's, which is the "state sponsorship of irregulars."³⁶ Mark Grdovic, a retired U.S. Army Special Forces officer and author of *A Leader's Handbook to Unconventional Warfare*, defines UW as the "means to significantly degrade an adversary's capabilities, by promoting insurrection or resistance within his area of control, thereby making him more vulnerable to a conventional military attack or more susceptible to political coercion."³⁷ Will Irwin, also a retired U.S. Army Special Forces officer and Resident Senior Fellow at the Joint Special Operations University (JSOU) Department of Strategic Studies, and author of *The Jedburghs: The Secret History of the Allied Special Forces, France 1944*, uses a more broad description of UW as "Support To Resistance (STR)."³⁸ This last and broader description, which is closely related to UW, is often used outside of the Department of Defense.³⁹

D. TERMS USED IN UW DEFINITIONS

To unwrap the UW definition, the next paragraphs define the terms used within NATO's Unconventional Warfare definition. Some terms are not covered in the NATO glossary of terms and definitions (AAP-06) and are, therefore, taken from United States' Joint Publications.

³⁶ Kilcullen, "The Evolution of Unconventional Warfare."

³⁷ Grdovic, *A Leader's Handbook to Unconventional Warfare*.

³⁸ Will Irwin, *Support to Resistance: Strategic Purpose and Effectiveness*, 2nd ed. (Tampa, FL: Joint Special Operations University, 2019), https://jsou.libguides.com/ld.php?content_id=48094050.

³⁹ Irwin.

A *resistance movement* is “an organized effort by some portion of the civil population of a country to resist the legally established government or an occupying power and to disrupt civil order and stability.”⁴⁰

NATO defines an *insurgency* as “actions of an organized, often ideologically motivated, group or movement that seeks to effect or prevent political change or to overthrow a governing authority within a country or a region, focused on persuading or coercing the population through the use of violence and subversion.”⁴¹

United States’ Special Operations Command describes *coercion* as “an organized effort to convince a regime or occupying power to change behavior due to the threat or use of protest, civil disobedience, or political violence.”⁴² It states that “*disruption*” refers to interrupting the normal activities of a regime or occupying power through protest, civil disobedience, or political violence.”⁴³ In addition, it defines *overthrow* as “removing the existing regime or occupying power from governance through protest, civil disobedience, or political power.”⁴⁴

Furthermore, United States’ Special Operations Command defines the *underground*, *auxiliary*, and *guerilla* force as follows:

The *underground* is a cellular organization within the resistance that has the ability to conduct operations in areas that are inaccessible to guerrillas, such as urban areas under the control of the local security forces.

The *auxiliary* refers to that portion of the population that provides active clandestine support to the guerrilla force or the underground.

⁴⁰ Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Joint Publication 3-05*.

⁴¹ NATO, *AAP-06: NATO Glossary of Terms and Definitions* (Brussels: NATO, 2020), <https://nso.nato.int/nso/nsdd/main/standards?search=AAP-06>.

⁴² Department of Defense, *Joint Publication 3-05.1: Unconventional Warfare* (Washington D.C.: Department of Defense, 2014).

⁴³ NATO AAP-06 does present a definition for disrupt; however, the U.S. JP 3-05.1 UW definition of disruption is more relevant for this study (AAP-06; Disrupt: To negatively affect a hostile entity’s formation, tempo, and/or timetable.)

⁴⁴ Department of Defense, *Joint Publication 3-05.1*.

Guerrillas are the overt military component of a resistance movement or an insurgency.⁴⁵

Other terms not in NATO's definition for Unconventional Warfare, but which are relevant to this study are presented in the following paragraphs. First, is the definition of a *denied area*, which is "an area under enemy or unfriendly control in which friendly forces cannot expect to operate successfully within existing operational constraints and force capabilities."⁴⁶

A second term that is not stated within the NATO definition, but one this study will use, is *sponsor*. A *sponsor* is a foreign government that supports, in diverse ways, the resistance movement to overthrow a government or occupying power. For example, in 2001, the United States was the Northern Alliance's sponsor to overthrow the Taliban government in Afghanistan.

Another term that appears in this study is *pilot team*, which according to United States' Special Forces Unconventional Warfare Training Circular 18-01 is "a deliberately structured composite organization comprised of Special Operations Forces, with likely augmentation by interagency or other skilled personnel, designed to infiltrate a designated area to conduct sensitive preparation of the environment activities and assess the potential to conduct unconventional warfare in support of sponsor's objectives."⁴⁷

This chapter continues by explaining the different phases of Unconventional Warfare. There are seven phases involved in the conduct of a UW campaign. The following section of this chapter describe these seven phases.

E. THE SEVEN PHASES OF UNCONVENTIONAL WARFARE

Even before a government makes a foreign policy decision to support a resistance movement, the government should already have observed the "target" nation. For different

⁴⁵ Department of Defense.

⁴⁶ NATO, *AAP-06*.

⁴⁷ Department of Defense, *Special Forces Unconventional Warfare* (Washington, D.C.: Department of Defense, 2011).

reasons, a government might have future intentions to overthrow another government or occupying power and could therefore be proactive.

SOF typically conducts the shaping or preparation of the environment before an initial foreign policy decision to support a resistance movement; this period is referred to as *Phase 0*, or Steady State.⁴⁸ In addition, the United States' Army Special Operations Command (USASOC) describes a *Steady State* as:

The status quo between nation states as established and maintained by the instruments of national power, regional, and international relations. This state establishes the conditional norm, or default setting which, left unchanged, will predictably continue in the future. During this Steady State the sponsor conducts Joint or multinational operations or interagency activities to deter potential adversaries and assure relationships with friends and allies.⁴⁹

This process could take years before UW can be seen as a feasible strategic option.

When a foreign sponsor decides to support a resistance movement, its SOF will enter the seven doctrinal phases of UW, which the USASOC describes as: Preparation, Initial Contact, Infiltration, Organization, Buildup, Employment, and Transition.⁵⁰ Figure 1 shows the seven phases.

⁴⁸ United States Army Special Operations Command, *Unconventional Warfare Pocket Guide v1.0*.

⁴⁹ United States Army Special Operations Command.

⁵⁰ United States Army Special Operations Command.

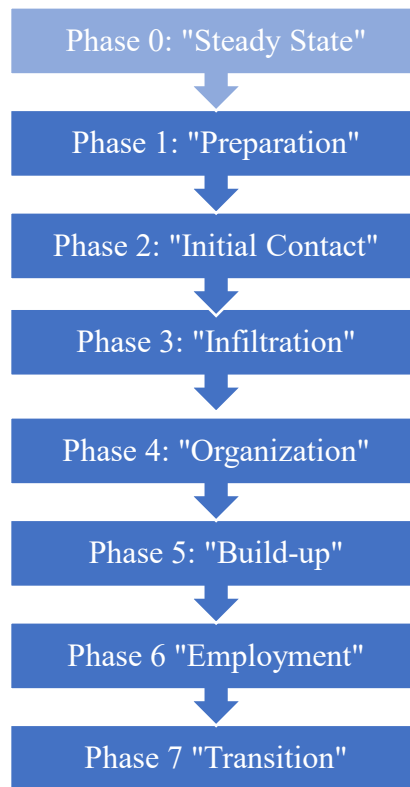


Figure 1. Seven phases of UW. Adapted from USASOC⁵¹

According to the United States' Army Special Operations Command, UW Phase I, *Preparation*, begins with “intelligence preparation of the environment (IPOE) to understand the dynamics within the populace.”⁵² Moreover, it requires a comprehensive target area study and planning to revert authority to civil governance. This also includes contingency planning for a sudden victory by the resistance force.

The Unconventional Warfare Pocket Guide describes the UW Phase II: *Initial Contact*, as “the phase where the sponsor establishes contact with the representatives of the resistance organization to assess the compatibility of the sponsor and the resistance organization’s interest and objectives.”⁵³ Furthermore, the Pocket Guide states that “a

⁵¹ United States Army Special Operations Command.

⁵² United States Army Special Operations Command.

⁵³ United States Army Special Operations Command.

resistance representative may be exfiltrated to help a pilot team during its planning phase, and to accompany them during their infiltration.”⁵⁴

During UW Phase III: *Infiltration*, the USASOC’s Pocket Guide describes infiltration as when “a pilot team clandestinely infiltrates the operational area to link up with the resistance force to conduct or confirm a feasibility assessment.”⁵⁵ If the assessment is satisfactory, follow-on SOF-teams, supplies, and Military Information Support Operations (MISO) personnel will infiltrate the operational area.

The next phase is UW Phase IV: *Organization*, in which, according to USASOC, the sponsor’s advisors and the resistance leadership “agree to a plan to organize the resistance for expanded operations.”⁵⁶ The resistance movement’s leadership correspondingly needs to establish an organization that can hold up during combat and counter attacks. This is also a period in which to build trust and confidence between the two parties.

Throughout Phase V: *Buildup*, the SOF teams support the resistance cadre “to improve the organization’s clandestine supporting infrastructure to prepare for and sustain for expanded offensive operations.”⁵⁷ Limited offensive operations may be conducted, as the emphasis remains on development.

During Phase VI: *Employment*, the resistance movement initiates multiple offensive operations to achieve the desired effect.⁵⁸ This effect could be to achieve the resistance forces’ strategic goals. The key activities in this phase are disruption and Military Information Support Operations (MISO).

According to the Pocket Guide, the last Phase VII: *Transition*, consists of SOF conducting UW until “the resistance movement successfully removes the hostile power,

⁵⁴ United States Army Special Operations Command.

⁵⁵ United States Army Special Operations Command.

⁵⁶ United States Army Special Operations Command.

⁵⁷ United States Army Special Operations Command.

⁵⁸ United States Army Special Operations Command.

and the indigenous population installs their new government.”⁵⁹ Additionally, in this phase “the mindset changes from defeating the adversary to protecting the newly installed government.”⁶⁰

Thus far, this chapter has described why a government conducts Unconventional Warfare, what UW is, which definition this study uses, and what types and phases encompass UW. The following section of this chapter describes which units typically conduct UW.

F. WHICH MILITARY ORGANIZATIONS TYPICALLY CONDUCT UW?

Historically, specialized forces have conducted UW operations. In 1944 and 1945, the OSS and SOE inserted multiple Jedburgh teams into occupied Europe to coordinate and support the resistance forces for an Allied invasion.⁶¹ The Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) operated in Iran to overthrow Mohammed Mossadeq’s regime in 1953.⁶² United States’ SOF, in close coordination with the CIA, conducted UW operations in Afghanistan in support of the Northern Alliance to overthrow the Taliban regime in 2001.⁶³

As UW operations are typically highly sensitive, with high risks, and normally conducted with a relatively small footprint, these operations are assigned to SOF. These forces do not operate alone but are supported by or operate in support of other services or agencies.⁶⁴ For this study, the focus is on SOF, specifically The Netherlands’ SOF they are central to the research question.

Unconventional Warfare is part of the Irregular Warfare construct and is one of the United States’ Special Operations Command’s core activities, as shown in Figure 2.⁶⁵

⁵⁹ United States Army Special Operations Command.

⁶⁰ United States Army Special Operations Command.

⁶¹ Hooiveld, *Dutch Courage: Special Forces in The Netherlands 1944–45*.

⁶² William J. Daugherty, *Executive Secrets: Covert Action & The Presidency* (Lexington, KY: The University Press of Kentucky, 2004).

⁶³ Joseph L. Votel et al., “Unconventional Warfare in the Gray Zone,” *Joint Force Quarterly*, no. 80 (January 1, 2016): 101–9.

⁶⁴ Department of Defense, *Joint Publication 3-05.1*, 3051.

⁶⁵ United States Army Special Operations Command, *Unconventional Warfare Pocket Guide v1.0*.

USSOCOM directs USASOC as the Lead Component for UW.⁶⁶ Army Special Forces have been specifically designed to conduct UW Operations.⁶⁷

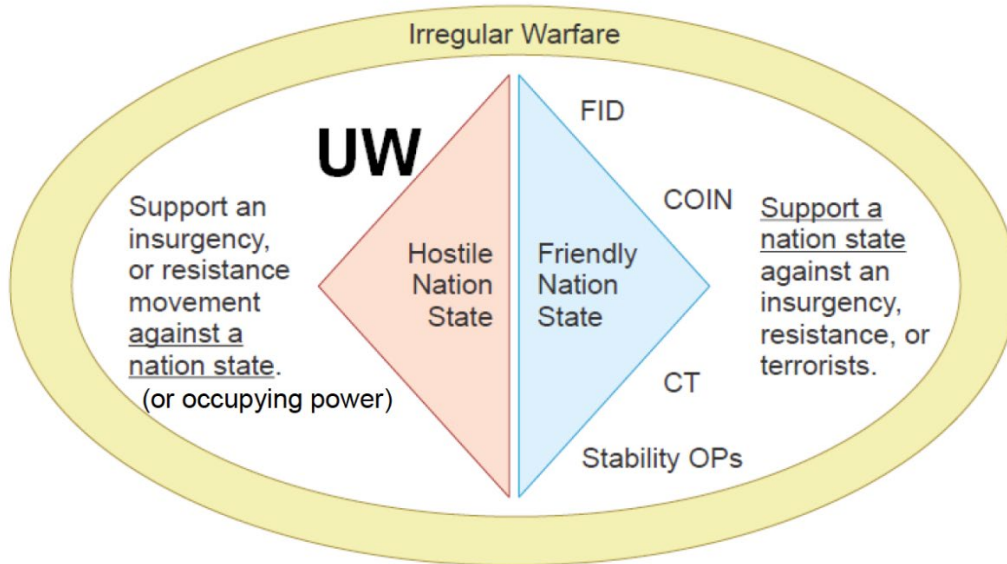


Figure 2. USSOCOM Irregular Warfare activities.⁶⁸

United States' Army Special Operations Command, as the lead component for UW, trains specific parts of their units as Jedburghs, similar to the World War II Jedburghs. They define a three-man Special Forces Operation Detachment-Golf (SFOD-G), also known as a Jedburgh Team, as “a team that executes persistent and clandestine Unconventional Warfare (UW) campaigns in denied areas, at the earliest stages of competition, to provide USG policy makers Special Warfare (SW) options.”⁶⁹ The Office of Special Warfare presentation additionally notes that Jedburghs are “specifically trained to assess and develop resistance organizations at the earliest stages of U.S. engagement.”

⁶⁶ As per USSOCOM directives 10–1 cc (U)

⁶⁷ Susan L. Marquis, *Unconventional Warfare: Rebuilding U.S. Special Operations Forces* (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 1997).

⁶⁸ United States Army Special Operations Command, *Unconventional Warfare Pocket Guide v1.0*.

⁶⁹ USASOC Office of Special Warfare, “Jedburgh Individual Training Course (JITC)” (presentation, Naval Postgraduate School, Monterey, CA, January 25, 2021).

So, in the United States SOF, and specifically the U.S. Army Special Forces “Green Berets,” conduct UW operations, and consequently, UW is a SOF activity.

This second chapter has looked at why governments conduct UW, what defines UW, and which units typically conduct UW operations. The following chapter focuses on the capabilities of The Netherlands SOF and answers a part of the research question: to what extent are The Netherlands SOF units capable of conducting UW operations?

III. ARE THE NETHERLANDS' SOF UNITS CAPABLE OF CONDUCTING UW OPERATIONS?

This chapter describes The Netherlands' SOF units, their tasks, and activities. This chapter also analyzes to what extent The Netherlands' SOF units are capable of conducting UW operations by comparing their selection, education, and training with that of the United States Army Special Forces, whose most essential task is UW. This chapter ends with a chapter summary in which a part of the research question is answered.

Before this study examines The Netherlands' SOF units, it is important to state that the United States Department of Defense (DOD) characterizes UW in its doctrine as a task for United States' SOF. NATO, on the other hand, does not portray UW in its doctrine. NATO defines UW only as a term, not as a doctrinal task. According to *The Netherlands Defence Doctrine*, NATO's doctrine is leading in The Netherlands thinking of employing its military instrument of power.⁷⁰ The Netherlands' Defence Doctrine notes that The Netherlands places the NATO doctrine in The Netherlands' context and highlights specific national accents for employing Dutch military forces. Correspondingly, UW is not in the NATO doctrine, and it is not in the Dutch doctrine; therefore, UW is not a formal tasking for any military force in The Netherlands. However, if The Netherlands government decides to conduct UW operations, it should, like the United States, deploy SOF for this mission type.

According to the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the United States' SOF perform two types of activities: "First, they perform tasks that no other force within the United States' Department of Defense conducts, and second, they perform tasks that are conducted by the United States' Department of Defense forces but which feature a unique set of conditions and standards, equipment and tactics, techniques, and procedures not utilized by conventional forces."⁷¹ These tasks include special reconnaissance (SR), direct action (DA), foreign internal defense, counterterrorism (CT), counterproliferation of weapons of mass destruction, military information support operations (MISO), civil affairs operations, security force assistance,

⁷⁰ Ministry of Defence, *Netherlands Defence Doctrine*.

⁷¹ Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Joint Publication 3-05.1: Joint Special Operations Task Force Operations* (Department of Defense, 2007), https://fas.org/irp/doddir/dod/jp3_05_01.pdf.

hostage rescue and recovery, counterinsurgency (COIN), foreign humanitarian assistance, and unconventional warfare.⁷² UW is specifically mentioned as a U.S. SOF task. The aforementioned U.S. SOF tasks are slightly different from the NATO SOF tasks and activities. NATO does not include UW, MISO, and civil affairs operations as SOF activities.

As *The Netherlands' Defence Doctrine* states, The Netherlands follows NATO's doctrine; this study, therefore, looks at NATO's SOF tasks and activities, which should be the basic set of tasks and activities that The Netherlands' SOF should be able to execute at minimum. NATO differentiates within SOF tasks and SOF activities. The tasks are SR, DA, and military assistance (MA). NATO SOF activities resemble most of the U.S. SOF activities: COIN, CT, counterproliferation of weapons of mass destruction, counterproliferation of chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear materials, and hostage release operations, but lack UW, MISO, and civil affairs operations as SOF activities.⁷³ Countering hybrid threats and faction liaison are additional SOF activities for NATO SOF but are not an activity for U.S. SOF. Within the NATO tasks and activities, UW is not explicitly mentioned. Military Assistance, countering hybrid threats, and faction liaison as NATO SOF activities come the closest to U.S. SOF UW operations, as all these tasks and activities are in support of a better information position to assist an indigenous force to counter an opponent. Training a resistance force against insurgents or terrorists is not a UW activity; that activity falls under COIN and CT.⁷⁴

As mentioned earlier, UW is becoming more important within the competition continuum as a low-cost, viable option for governments to change a status quo. Rob de Wijk, founder of the Hague Center for Strategic Studies and co-author of the HCSS report *The Future of The Netherlands' SOF: Towards an All-Domain Force*, states in the report that The Netherlands SOF should also prepare for UW operations, as a critical activity for future

⁷² Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Joint Publication 3-05*.

⁷³ NATO Special Operations Headquarters, *NATO AJP-3.5*.

⁷⁴ Mark Grdovic, "Enabling the Fifth Column and the Relevancy of Unconventional Warfare," *Small Wars Journal*, August 3, 2021, <https://smallwarsjournal.com/jrnl/art/enabling-fifth-column-and-relevancy-unconventional-warfare>.

SOF missions by The Netherlands.⁷⁵ Furthermore, The Netherlands should be more responsive to new threats like subversion and sabotage.⁷⁶ So, if Dutch government should decide to conduct UW operations, The Netherlands' SOF are the units to conduct these types of missions.

A. THE NETHERLANDS SOF UNITS

The Netherlands' SOF consist of two operational units: *Korps Commandotroepen* (KCT) as part of The Netherlands Army and The Netherlands' Maritime Special Operations Force (MARSOF) as part of The Netherlands' Marine Corps within the Royal Netherlands Navy. The Army's Commandos originated in World War II at Camp Achnacarry in Scotland as No. 2 (Dutch) Troop as part of No. 10 (Interallied) Commando; the KCT was formally established in 1950.⁷⁷ Its naval counterpart, on the other hand, trained the first Dutch frogmen in 1959. The formal creation of a comprehensive maritime special operations unit within The Netherlands' Marine Corps had to wait for another 50 years. In 2013, The Netherlands' MARSOF originated from three Special Operations Forces within The Netherlands Marine Corps.

Until 2001, the missions of these two special units consisted predominantly of land oriented long-range reconnaissance and direct action missions for the Army Commandos, and advance force operations, maritime boarding operations, and counter terrorism operations for the Marine Corps equivalent.^{78,79} After the 9/11 terrorist attacks, these missions changed to fighting what was known as the Global War on Terror, which was led by the United States and carried with its allies and partners in Afghanistan, Iraq, Mali, and

⁷⁵ De Wijk et al., *The Future of NLD SOF*.

⁷⁶ Ministry of Defence, *Future Operating Environment*.

⁷⁷ Koninklijke Landmacht, "Factbook Korps Commandotroepen: Past - Present - Future" (Koninklijke Landmacht, 2014), <https://www.korpscommandotroepen.nl/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/Factbook-KCT-2014.pdf>.

⁷⁸ Koninklijke Landmacht.

⁷⁹ Staff NLMARSOF, "CDS bezoek NLMARSOF [CHOD visit NLMARSOF]" (presentation, Doorn, March 16, 2022).

with the *Dienst Speciale Interventies* of The Netherlands National Police in The Netherlands.,⁸⁰⁸¹

B. KORPS COMMANDOTROEPEN

The *Korps Commandotroepen* (KCT) is the oldest Netherlands SOF unit. Established in 1950, the KCT grew from primarily a long-range reconnaissance unit for The Netherlands Army to become a full-grown special operations unit in 1997, which can deploy immediately for special operations anywhere in the world today.⁸²

The *Korps Commandotroepen* recruits from military units within The Netherlands Army, but civilians can also apply for a position.⁸³ The civilian applicants undergo the Basic Airmobile Training of seventeen weeks before they start their introductory training.⁸⁴ The KCT factbook notes that the KCT Selection and Qualification course (Q-course) focuses on the SOF taskings of SR and DA with a land orientation; MA has less focus in their Q-course.⁸⁵ When the Green Berets finish their advanced commando course, they are operationally capable to conduct operations within NATO's three principal SOF tasks. UW is not an activity for KCT; therefore, the unit does not educate or train their operators in UW operations, according to one KCT commander. On February 7, 2022, the author spoke with a commander of the KCT regarding UW. The commander stated that, in 2021, a part of the KCT participated in a UW training within a U.S. Army Special Operations Task Group at the Joint Readiness Training Center at Fort Polk, Louisiana. So, although UW is not a formal tasking for the KCT, the KCT does occasionally train to perform UW.

⁸⁰ Staff NLMARSOF.

⁸¹ Koninklijke Landmacht, "Factbook Korps Commandotroepen: Past - Present - Future."

⁸² Koninklijke Landmacht.

⁸³ Koninklijke Landmacht.

⁸⁴ Koninklijke Landmacht.

⁸⁵ Koninklijke Landmacht.

C. THE NETHERLANDS MARITIME SPECIAL OPERATIONS FORCE

The Netherlands' Maritime Special Operations Force (MARSOFF) consists of three former independent special operations units within the Marine Corps. The first combat diver, or frogmen, team was operational in 1963. This evolved over time into the Amphibious Reconnaissance Troop. The first Netherlands Mountain leader was trained in the United Kingdom in 1970, which eventually resulted in the Mountain Leader Reconnaissance Troop in 1990. After the 1972 attack at the Olympic Games in Munich, The Netherlands established a counterterrorism unit within the Marine Corps.⁸⁶ This *Bijzondere Bijstands Eenheid* evolved over time into the Unit Intervention Marines. In 2013, these three units of Frogmen, Mountain Leaders, and Counter Terrorism specialists were integrated within The Netherlands' MARSOFF.

The Netherlands' MARSOFF only recruits from the Marine Corps. Its selection and Q-course also focuses on the SOF taskings of SR and DA, but from a maritime perspective.⁸⁷ Additionally, in The Netherlands' MARSOFF Q-course, MA receives less focus than the other two principal SOF taskings. When the Marines of The Netherlands' MARSOFF finish their Q-course, their team specialization, and their individual specialization, they are fully operational capable within NATO's principal SOF taskings. On February 2, 2022, the author spoke with the commander of The Netherlands' MARSOFF concerning UW. The commander confirmed that UW is also not an activity for The Netherlands' MARSOFF; therefore, the unit does not educate or train their operators in UW operations. However, the commander noted that the unit does conduct Military Assistance operations, which he sees as a significant part of UW.

D. NETHERLANDS SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND

The *Korps Commandotroepen* and The Netherlands' Maritime Special Operations Force are part of their own parent organizations, The Netherlands Army and The Netherlands Marine Corps, respectively. The Army and the Marine Corps are each responsible for the

⁸⁶ "Netherlands Maritime Special Operations Forces (NLMARSOFF)," De Mariniers - Korps Mariniers, accessed May 4, 2022, <http://de-mariniers.korpsmariniers.com>.

⁸⁷ Staff NLMARSOFF, "CDS bezoek NLMARSOFF [CHOD visit NLMARSOFF]."

administration, logistics, education, and training of these units. However, The Netherlands' Special Operations Command (NLD SOCOM) is responsible for the planning, command and control, execution, and evaluation of all Netherlands' special and secret operations.⁸⁸ The NLD SOCOM was established in 2018 and Commander of NLD SOCOM is the SOF advisor for The Netherlands' Chief of Defense (CHOD) and reports directly to the CHOD.⁸⁹

The Netherlands' SOF operations are almost always joint in nature.,⁹⁰⁹¹ Therefore, The Netherlands' SOF units have typically conducted the same mission sets, with some exceptions. The two units have conducted SR, MA, and DA operations in the last 30 years, but have not conducted any UW operations, according to both unit commanders. So, The Netherlands' SOF is not experienced in conducting UW operations. But, to what extent are they capable of conducting UW operations?

E. TO WHAT EXTENT CAN THE NETHERLANDS SOF CONDUCT UW OPERATIONS?

As explained in Chapter II, Unconventional Warfare can be broken down in two groups, support for a general war and in support of a limited war; it also can be divided into seven phases: preparation, initial contact, infiltration, organization, build-up, employment, and transition. Neither of The Netherlands' SOF units can conduct UW operations in all seven phases and perhaps not in both groups, according to both unit commanders. However, there are some phases that The Netherlands' SOF units could conduct (in parts) of UW operations.

⁸⁸ Ministry of Defence, "Special Operations Command," Ministry of Defence, 2018, <https://www.defensie.nl/organisatie/bestuur/staf/eenheden/socom>.

⁸⁹ Timmermans, "Special Operations Forces: een nieuw commando [: a new command]."

⁹⁰ Koninklijke Landmacht, "Factbook Korps Commandotroepen: Past - Present - Future."

⁹¹ Staff NLMARSO, "CDS bezoek NLMARSO [CHOD visit NLMARSO]."
(presentation, Briefing room NLMARSO, Doorn, March 16, 2022.)

United States' Army Special Forces, the "Green Berets," have their qualification course focused on conducting UW.⁹² After completing their selection and assessment, candidates will be assigned to an SFG, according to Kyle, an Army Special Forces officer, with whom the author spoke on February 1, 2022. Parts of the Q-course are specifically designed for their Military Occupational Specialty and SFG operating global region.⁹³ U.S. Army Special Forces have the following topics incorporated in their Q-course: mission planning, cultural awareness, parachute training, Survival, Evasion, Resistance, and Escape (SERE) training, their individual Military Occupational Specialty, tactical skills, and language skills.⁹⁴ According to Kyle, the U.S. Army Special Forces final exercise "Robin Sage," is a UW scenario in which the students must show how capable they are in conducting all seven phases of UW. The Robin Sage exercise is conducted in a fictitious "denied area" in North Carolina. The U.S. Army Special Forces Q-course is fifty-six weeks long, of which twenty-five weeks are language training.

To make a comparison with other small European nations, this research compared The Netherlands' Special Operations Forces Qualification courses with the Norwegian, German, and Belgian qualification courses; specifically, to what extent those countries focus on UW in their qualification courses. Therefore, the author spoke to Stian, a Norwegian SOF officer⁹⁵; Matthias, a German SOF officer;⁹⁶ and Cedric, a Belgian SOF officer.⁹⁷ The Norwegian SOF does not have a specific focus or module on UW in their Q-courses. On the other hand, the Norwegian *Forsvarets Spesialkommando* does work with the Norwegian Homeguard on a two-week Guerilla Warfare course, but this course is still under construction and based on the U.S. Army TC 18-01. The German SOF do not have any UW focus in their

⁹² U.S. Army John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School, *U.S. Army John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School FY 2021 Academic Handbook* (Fort Bragg, N.C.: U.S. Army John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School, 2021), https://www.soc.mil/SWCS/_pdf/SWCS_FY21_AcademicHandbook_web.pdf.

⁹³ U.S. Army John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School.

⁹⁴ U.S. Army John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School.

⁹⁵ March 28, 2022.

⁹⁶ April 8, 2022.

⁹⁷ April 22, 2022.

Q-courses. However, the German *Kommando Special Kräfte* (KSK) sometimes send an individual NCO to observe the Robin Sage exercise in Fort Bragg. In 2021, the KSK planned to participate in the Robin Sage exercise with a small unit; due to the COVID-19 pandemic, this participation was canceled. The Belgian SOF do not have a focus on UW in their Q-course, yet. However, the Belgian Special Forces Group has aspirations to create a training module on UW within the next few years, as SFG assesses UW to become an important mission profile for future SOF operations. Due to the scale of the small nations' SOF and the responsibility for the full range of special operations, these small nations' SOF units have no continuous specific regional focus, but they focus, and shift focus, on areas where there is interest for their respective governments.

In addition to Norway, Germany, and Belgium, the author exchanged e-mail between May 11 and 16, 2022, with Special Operations Forces liaison officers from the United Kingdom, France, Spain, Italy, and Denmark at the United States' Special Operations Command in Tampa, Florida. Spain and Italy do not conduct any UW training. However, the United Kingdom Special Forces (UKSF) and the Danish SOF do conduct UW training during their operational readiness training sequence. The UKSF had some international observers attend their training, while the Danish forces also have a UW planning course that is open to international allies. Moreover, the French SOF conduct UW training in their Q-course, which is, by contrast, not open to international allies.

The Dutch qualification courses include mission planning, parachute training, SERE training, individual Military Occupational Specialty, and tactical skills. Unlike U.S. Army SF, KCT and MARSOF have no specific focus on SOF tasking or SOF activity in their Q-course.⁹⁸ Therefore, the KCT and MARSOF Q-courses have no focus on UW. Moreover, The Netherlands' SOF Q-courses do not cover language skills and cultural awareness.

What The Netherlands' SOF units lack for "Unconventional Warfare" in their education, they gain during their training and operational deployments. By conducting pre-deployment training and Military Assistance deployments, The Netherlands' SOF units gain experience in training indigenous forces, being culturally aware, and learning new languages.

⁹⁸ Staff NLMARSO, "CDS bezoek NLMARSO [CHOD visit NLMARSO]."

Nevertheless, The Netherlands' SOF is small and, therefore, does not have any specific regional focus, nor language skills for specific regions.

Both commanders of The Netherlands' Special Operations Forces units, however, do assess that The Netherlands' SOF units are capable of conducting parts of the seven phases of UW. They assess that within all phases, The Netherlands' SOF can conduct parts of the phases, but are not specifically educated and trained for UW; therefore, The Netherlands' SOF units are not adequately prepared and equipped to conduct these missions.

The Netherlands' SOF units' leadership does not agree on the answer to the question of whether The Netherlands' SOF units are capable to conduct operations in a denied area against a peer-competitor. One commander thinks they ought to be able to conduct these operations, because it is in the NATO doctrine and, therefore, they should and can conduct these operations. The other commander assesses that the units are not capable to operate in a denied area against a peer-competitor because of the footprint of a present-day SOF operator, the operator's mindset, and the technological evolution of our adversaries. Table 1 shows which Netherlands' SOF units can conduct which parts of the seven phases of UW.

Table 1. Netherlands' SOF units' capabilities within the seven phases of Unconventional Warfare.

Phases of UW	KCT	NLMARSOF	Remarks
1. Organization	X	X	Yes, at a tactical level, but not at operational and strategical levels.
2. Initial Contact	X	X	Yes, at a tactical level, but not at operational and strategical levels.
3. Infiltration	✓	✓	Yes, for <i>initial</i> infiltration, but not for sustainment in a denied area.
4. Organization	✓	✓	Questionable for operations in a denied area.
5. Build-Up	✓	✓	Questionable for operations in a denied area.
6. Employment	✓	✓	Questionable for operations in a denied area.
7. Transition	X	X	Yes, at a tactical level, but not at operational and strategical levels.

✓: Capable

X: Not Capable

The Netherlands' SOF unit commanders do agree on The Netherlands' SOF capabilities to conduct operations in a semi-permissive or permissive environment. They also agree that with the vast expansion of technology and cyber capabilities, operational security is more difficult against a peer-adversary than against an insurgency or a third-world adversary.

F. CHAPTER SUMMARY

The Netherlands' SOF units can conduct operations against a peer-adversary in a semi-permissive or a permissive environment. It is uncertain, however, whether The Netherlands' SOF units can conduct operations against a peer-adversary in a denied area, because The Netherlands' SOF has little experience in this environment.

Furthermore, The Netherlands' SOF can conduct Military Assistance and Faction Liaison missions, in a semi-permissive or permissive environment. The Netherlands' SOF units are not adequately educated, trained, and equipped to conduct UW operations, because UW is not a doctrinal task for The Netherlands' SOF and, therefore, is not taught during The Netherlands' SOF Q-courses. To conduct UW operations, The Netherlands' SOF units need to be educated, trained, and equipped for these types of missions. There has been some small-scale UW training interaction with the U.S. Army Special Forces, which could be a regular training option in the future.

IV. THE NETHERLANDS' POLITICAL-STRATEGIC SETTING

To answer the second part of the research question, this chapter looks at the political-strategic setting of The Netherlands and how this impacts the deployment of its armed forces, specifically SOF, for UW operations. This chapter first provides a short history of The Netherlands and how it evolved into the kingdom it is today. Second, this chapter looks at The Netherlands' armed forces and how they evolved over time to describe what the historical deployments did to the armed forces' organizations. Third, this chapter describes The Netherlands' political-strategic setting and decision-making process to show The Netherlands' policy environment. The fourth section of this chapter looks at the legal framework that applies to The Netherlands' government when it deploys its armed forces. This chapter concludes with a chapter summary and an answer to the second part of the research question, "To what extent can The Netherlands' SOF conduct UW operations given The Netherlands' political-strategic setting?"

A. BRIEF HISTORY OF THE NETHERLANDS

In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the Republic of the Seven United Provinces, also known as the Dutch Republic and what later became The Netherlands, was a global power.⁹⁹ Geographically small, but economically unmatched, the Republic of the Seven United Provinces was continuously in an armed competition with its biggest rivals: Spain, Portugal, France, and England. They fought for power on the European mainland and on the world seas. The seventeenth century and first part of the eighteenth century is known as "The Golden Age." After "The Golden Age" that was marked by Dutch expansions in Asia and South America, the Republic of the Seven United Provinces lost its prominence in the great power competition.¹⁰⁰ How this power was lost has been the subject of much debate, but most scholars agree that the global warfighting against the

⁹⁹ Ministry of Defence, *Netherlands Defence Doctrine*.

¹⁰⁰ Jos Boelen, "The Dutch Republic: A Great Power? Modern Objectivist Perspectives and New Contemporary Social- Constructivist Angles" (master's thesis, Leiden, University of Leiden, 2018), <https://studenttheses.universiteitleiden.nl/access/item%3A2607166/view>.

other great powers became too costly for the republic to sustain a powerful army and navy to defend the Seven United Provinces' global interest.

Much has changed for The Netherlands since “The Golden Age.” The Netherlands, a kingdom since 1815, became an armed but neutral state in 1839.¹⁰¹ It remained neutral during World War I, but after the Nazi occupation during World War II, and the Communist threat from Eastern Europe in 1945, The Netherlands departed from its neutrality and joined the United Nations (UN) and, in 1949, NATO. Subsequently, in 1951, The Netherlands founded, with five other West-European countries,¹⁰² the European Community of Coal and Steel, and in 1957 established, with the same five countries, the European Economic Community (EEC).¹⁰³ The EEC was very important to The Netherlands, as The Netherlands depended heavily on trade, and the EEC opened a free trade area among the EEC member nations.¹⁰⁴ Many European nations joined the EEC in the following years, leading eventually to the establishment of the European Community, which, after the fall of the Soviet Union, in 1992 became the European Union (EU) and has 27 member states today.

The Netherlands is still, as it was during “The Golden Age,” a nation of trade.¹⁰⁵ It capitalized on The Netherlands' highly strategic commercial location and its strong economy to become “one of the top trading nations in the world,” according to the U.S. Department of Commerce.¹⁰⁶ This strategic location makes The Netherlands a hotspot for the transit of goods. The Netherlands' port of Rotterdam, the largest seaport in Europe,

¹⁰¹ Ministry of Defence, *Netherlands Defence Doctrine*.

¹⁰² France, Germany, Italy, Belgium, and Luxembourg.

¹⁰³ Canon van Nederland, “Europa,” accessed February 24, 2022, <https://www.canonvannederland.nl/nl/europa>.

¹⁰⁴ Canon van Nederland.

¹⁰⁵ “Waarom Zijn Handel en Handelsverdragen Belangrijk voor Nederland? [Why Are Commerce and Commerce Agreements Important to The Netherlands?],” Rijksoverheid, accessed March 4, 2022, <https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/onderwerpen/handelsverdragen-europese-unie/vraag-en-antwoord/belang-handel-en-handelsverdragen-voor-nederland>.

¹⁰⁶ “Netherlands - Country Commercial Guide,” Department of Commerce, November 9, 2021, <https://www.trade.gov/country-commercial-guides/netherlands-market-overview>.

connects the Atlantic Ocean via the North Sea to the heart of Europe via the river Rijn.¹⁰⁷ Due to this trade, The Netherlands is strongly intertwined with other countries and therefore dependent on other nations.¹⁰⁸ The Netherlands is an internationally oriented nation. Hence, as an internationally oriented nation of trade, The Netherlands has an interest in a safe world.¹⁰⁹

B. THE EVOLUTION OF THE NETHERLANDS' ARMED FORCES

To contribute to maintaining a safe world, The Netherlands' government can deploy its armed forces as an instrument of national power. Coming from the position of being a great power, fighting their competitors all over the world, and evolving to a neutral country during World War I and towards the beginning of World War II, up to becoming a member of the EU and NATO and participating in multiple peace keeping operations and combat missions in different conflicts, The Netherlands had to evolve its armed forces.

After World War II, The Netherlands departed from neutrality and joined the NATO alliance. Within NATO, The Netherlands is of strategic importance for NATO's military mobility.¹¹⁰ During the Cold War and still today, The Netherlands is a strategic logistical gateway for the United States', Canadian, and British troop transports to the European mainland. During the Cold War, The Netherlands' armed forces were designed to secure these gateways, so The Netherlands' armed forces were a conventional defensive force.

¹⁰⁷ "De Haven Die Je Verder Brengt [The Port That Will Bring You Further]," Port of Rotterdam, accessed February 24, 2022, <https://www.portofrotterdam.com/nl/waarom-rotterdam/de-haven-die-je-verder-brengt>.

¹⁰⁸ Central Bureau of Statistics, "Nederland Handelsland: Export, Import & Investerings 2021 [Netherlands Trade Country: Export, Import & Investments 2021]," Central Bureau of Statistics, accessed February 24, 2022, <https://longreads.cbs.nl/nederland-handelsland-2021/>.

¹⁰⁹ Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Wereldwijd voor een Veilig Nederland: Geïntegreerde Buitenland- en Veiligheidsstrategie 2018–2022 [Worldwide for a Secure Netherlands: Integrated International and Security Strategy 2018–2022]* (The Hague: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2018), <https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/documenten/rapporten/2018/03/19/notitie-geintegreerde-buitenland--en-veiligheidsstrategie-gbvs>.

¹¹⁰ Ministry of Defence, *Kamerstuk 35 570 X: Nationaal Plan Militaire Mobiliteit [National Plan Military Mobility]* (The Hague: Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, 2022), <https://zoek.officielebekendmakingen.nl/kst-35570-X-75.pdf>.

The fall of the Soviet Union and consequently the end of the *Warsaw Pact*, consisting of the Soviet Union and several Eastern European countries, had its influence on The Netherlands' armed forces. After World War II, The Netherlands built its armed forces into a territorial defense force against the communist threat from Eastern Europe.¹¹¹ The Netherlands built a large conventional force with many tanks, naval ships, and fighter jets. In 1990, The Netherlands' armed forces consisted of approximately 260,000 personnel, including conscripts.¹¹² After the Cold War, The Netherlands' armed forces turned from a conventional territorial defense force to a smaller, more flexible, expeditionary force.¹¹³ The Netherlands' government sold its tanks, and reduced the number of naval ships and fighter jets. Conscripted was ended and a professional voluntary military force of 68,000 people serve in The Netherlands' armed forces today.¹¹⁴

After the Cold War, The Netherlands focused on UN peace keeping missions. Some examples of The Netherlands' UN peacekeeping missions took place in Korea, Lebanon, Cambodia, Eritrea and Ethiopia, India, and Pakistan, and the former Yugoslavia.¹¹⁵ These peacekeeping missions had different results. In Srebrenica, Yugoslavia, The Netherlands' peacekeeping forces could not protect the Muslims against an aggressive Bosnian-Serbian attack, which resulted in the biggest genocide in Europe since World War II.¹¹⁶ A thorough investigation by The Netherlands Institute for War Documentation concluded that The Netherlands' UN forces were given an unclear mandate, the troops were not trained for this mission profile, and the decision to deploy forces for this mission was based on a moral

¹¹¹ Ministry of Defence, *Netherlands Defence Doctrine*.

¹¹² "Wat stelt onze krijgsmacht nog voor? [What does our military still have to offer?]," News, NOS, March 14, 2017, <https://nos.nl/collectie/11672/artikel/2163157-wat-stelt-onze-krijgsmacht-nog-voor>.

¹¹³ Ministry of Defence, *Netherlands Defence Doctrine*.

¹¹⁴ "Aantallen Personeel [Number of Personnel]," Ministry of Defence, July 1, 2021, <https://www.defensie.nl/onderwerpen/overdefensie/het-verhaal-van-defensie/aantallen-personeel>.

¹¹⁵ "Verenigde Naties [United Nations]," Nederlands Veteranen Instituut, accessed March 4, 2022, <https://www.nlveteraneninstituut.nl/verenigde-naties/>.

¹¹⁶ "Wat Gebeurde er in Srebrenica? [What Happened in Srebrenica?]," NPO kennis, accessed March 4, 2022, <https://npokennis.nl/longread/7526/wat-gebeurde-er-in-srebrenica>.

political decision.¹¹⁷ After the failed mission in Srebrenica, The Netherlands' government was reluctant to deploy its armed forces for UN peacekeeping missions.¹¹⁸ Nonetheless, The Netherlands' government did deploy troops for UN Missions, for example, in Mali. However, these troops had a clear mandate, and in Mali the forces were tasked to collect intelligence rather than to act as a peacekeeping force. Nevertheless, after Srebrenica, The Netherlands' government had a preference to deploy its armed forces for NATO, the EU, and within a coalition with aligned nations.¹¹⁹

Since the late 1990s, The Netherlands focused more on counter drug trafficking, counter piracy, and counterterrorism missions. The increase of drug trafficking in the Caribbean part of the Kingdom of The Netherlands around Aruba, Bonaire, and Curacao led to the intensification of counter drug trafficking operations in close cooperation with the United States. The piracy activities on the East and West side of Africa resulted in anti-piracy operations for both the EU and NATO. Furthermore, after the 9/11 terrorist attacks on the United States and the terrorist attacks in France, counterterrorism operations became the primary focus of The Netherlands' armed forces, domestically and abroad.

All these operations had one thing in common; the coalition of armed forces on the ground could depend on air supremacy and the adversary was not a near-peer or peer competitor. This advantage could change with the "increased" assertiveness of China and Russia, the increasing frequency of Russian large-scale military exercises at NATO's borders, and the strategic competition among the United States, China, and Russia, in which the future adversary could possibly be a near-peer competitor.

¹¹⁷ Nederlands Instituut voor Oorlogsdocumentatie, *Srebrenica, een 'Veilig Gebied': Reconstructie, Achtergronden, Gevolgen en Analyses van de Val van een Safe Area [Srebrenica, a 'Safe Area': Reconstruction, Backgrounds, Consequences and Analyses of the Fall of a Safe Area]* (Amsterdam: Nederlands Instituut voor Oorlogsdocumentatie, 2002), https://do8mb0ue3h0zp.cloudfront.net/2021-05/srebrenicarapportniod_nl.pdf.

¹¹⁸ "Srebrenica," Canon van Nederland, accessed February 24, 2022, <https://www.canonvannederland.nl/nl/srebrenica>.

¹¹⁹ Ministry of Defence, *Netherlands Defence Doctrine*.

C. CHANGING TASKS FOR THE NETHERLANDS' ARMED FORCES

Since the *Defensienota 2000*, The Netherlands' MoD has stated three main tasks for The Netherlands' armed forces.¹²⁰ These tasks are “1) the protection of national and allied territory, including the Caribbean parts of the Kingdom, 2) the maintenance and promotion of the international legal order and stability, and 3) the support for civil authorities in national law enforcement, disaster relief and humanitarian aid, both nationally and internationally.”¹²¹

After the 9/11 terrorist attacks on the United States, the focus of The Netherlands' armed forces rested with the second main task, “the maintenance and promotion of the international legal order and stability.” Nevertheless, toward the end of the 2010s this focus shifted to the first main task, “the protection of national and allied territory, including the Caribbean parts of the Kingdom,” due to the strategic competition and the Russian assertiveness in Eastern Europe.¹²²

Since Russia annexed Crimea in 2014 and further invaded Ukraine in 2022, the focus of The Netherlands' armed forces has remained with the first main task: specifically, the protection of NATO and the EU's territory. Consequently, The Netherlands' government deployed forces to Lithuania in 2017, and in 2022, lengthened the mission and increased the number of forces.¹²³ This deployment should enhance the deterrence and defense of the NATO territory.¹²⁴ As of this writing, the war between Russia and Ukraine

¹²⁰ Peter L.J. Bos, “De krijgsmacht: een cruciale partner in nationale veiligheid; Civiel-militaire samenwerking op nieuwe leest geschoeid [The armed forces: A crucial partner in national security; Civil-military cooperation redefined],” *Militaire Spectator* 189 (October 27, 2020): 6.

¹²¹ Ministry of Defence, *Defensienota 2000 [Defence Note 2000]* (The Hague: Ministry of Defence, 1999), <https://zoek.officielebekendmakingen.nl/kst-26900-2.html>.

¹²² Ministry of Defence, *Defensienota 2018 [Defence Note 2018]* (The Hague: Ministry of Defence, 2018), <https://www.defensie.nl/downloads/beleidsnota-s/2018/03/26/defensienota-2018>.

¹²³ “Nederland Wil Bijdrage aan NAVO-Troepenmacht in Litouwen met Drie Jaar Verlengen [The Netherlands Wants to Extend its Contribution to NATO Forces in Lithuania for Three Years],” Rijksoverheid, November 5, 2021, <https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/actueel/nieuws/2021/11/05/nederland-wil-bijdrage-aan-navo-troepenmacht-in-litouwen-met-drie-jaar-verlengen>.

¹²⁴ “NATO Allies Send More Ships, Jets to Enhance Deterrence and Defence in Eastern Europe,” NATO, January 24, 2022, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_191040.htm.

is still ongoing and The Netherlands' support to Ukraine continues, however, only in the form of weapons and material. No personnel have been deployed thus far.

Thus, the deployments of The Netherlands' armed forces have evolved over the years, from neutrality to a territorial defense force with conscripts to a professional, but smaller, more flexible expeditionary force. Nonetheless, with the current war in Europe between Russia and Ukraine, The Netherlands' government needs to rethink its defense structure and how to deploy its armed forces, including its SOF, against a possible near-peer or peer competitor like Russia.

As described in Chapter II, a possible mission for The Netherlands' Special Operations Forces can be UW to influence a near-peer or peer competitor from invading a nation. But is UW a feasible option within The Netherlands political-strategic setting? To what extent are UW operations viable within the Dutch political-strategic setting?

D. THE DUTCH POLITICAL-STRATEGIC SETTING

This section attempts to answer the complicated questions just posed, and, for the purpose of this research, this section describes the political-strategic setting of The Netherlands in terms of the following four elements: 1) the political structure, 2) the Dutch Security Strategy, 3) the political decision-making process for deploying armed forces, and 4) the legal framework for deploying SOF. These four elements portray the political structure and its policy documents and the decision-making process and legal framework for deploying The Netherlands' SOF. These elements should give a comprehensive understanding of the hurdles and challenges The Netherlands' government needs to overcome to deploy its SOF for UW operations.

The Netherlands' political structure is characterized as a parliamentary democracy and has a political system in which powers are separated to supervise each other, the *Trias Politica*. The executive power rests in the Dutch government, consisting of the ministers and the king. Though the role of the king is limited, his role is established in the Dutch

Constitution, Article 42.¹²⁵ It states that the king has immunity for any government policy. Therefore, the role of the king within the Dutch government is a ceremonial one. Consequently, the executive power lays with the ministers within the government. The legislative power rests with the parliament, known as the State-General. The courts and the Supreme Court wield the judicial power.

The Netherlands' government consists of multiple parties; it is a coalition government. The current coalition government consists of four center-democratic parties. In 2021, it took 299 days to form this coalition and was the longest formation of The Netherlands' government since World War II. One might think that if reaching an agreement on forming a coalition takes that long, agreeing on important issues like security or when to deploy its armed forces can be a challenge. For example, the biggest party and the second biggest party within the coalition have different views on the defense budget, which could lead to long debates over defense budgets and deployments. Yet, this is not always the case as The Netherlands quickly deployed two F-35 fighter jets to surveille and defend Europe's Eastern borders when Russia invaded Ukraine on February 24, 2022.¹²⁶

The Netherlands' Ministry of Foreign Affairs has formulated its international security strategy in the Dutch *Integrated International Security Strategy* (IISS). The IISS as a policy document poses strategic frameworks for The Netherlands' international security approach on which policy decisions can be made by The Netherlands' government.¹²⁷ The IISS states there are three components for The Netherlands' security strategy: to prevent, to defend, and to strengthen. Within these three components, thirteen goals are identified to protect the interest of the Kingdom and The Netherlands. The following six goals correlate the most with this research's question regarding the viability of conducting UW given The Netherlands' political-strategic setting; Goal 1: conflict

¹²⁵ "The Netherlands' Constitution," accessed September 3, 2021, <https://wetten.overheid.nl/BWBR0001840/2018-12-21#Hoofdstuk>.

¹²⁶ "Defensie Stuur 2 F-35's Naar Oost-Europa [Ministry of Defence Deploys 2 F-35's to Eastern Europe]," Ministry of Defence, February 24, 2022, <https://www.defensie.nl/actueel/nieuws/2022/02/24/defensie-stuurt-2-f-35s-naar-oost-europa>.

¹²⁷ Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Wereldwijd voor een Veilig Nederland [Worldwide for a Secure Netherlands]*.

prevention around Europe and the Kingdom of The Netherlands; Goal 5: modern defense and security of our territory and that of NATO; Goal 8: public resilience against foreign intervention; Goal 9: ensure economic safety; Goal 11: strengthening the international legal order; and Goal 12: strengthening the international security cooperation.

The Dutch constitution describes the guidelines to deploy The Netherlands' armed forces. Within the Kingdom of The Netherlands, the government has the supreme authority over its armed forces as stated within Article 97 of the Dutch Constitution.¹²⁸ Consequently, the armed forces are an instrument of national power for The Netherlands' government.¹²⁹ However, The Netherlands' government needs the approval of the Parliament to declare war.¹³⁰ On the other hand, Article 100 of the Dutch Constitution states that the government only needs to inform the Parliament when it decides to deploy its armed forces for enforcement and promotion of the international legal order.¹³¹

The *Defence Notes*, as policy documents, describe what The Netherlands' government and the Minister of Defence, as the extension of the government, want to accomplish with The Netherlands' military instrument. Since the issuance of *Defence Note 2000*, The Netherlands' MoD has stated three main tasks for The Netherlands' armed forces.¹³² The current *Defence Note 2018* states, like the IISS, that the MoD wants to bring safety and stability within the territory of the Kingdom of The Netherlands and around the borders of Europe. Moreover, the *Defence Note 2018* emphasizes the emergent importance of the first main task, "the protection of national and allied territory, including the Caribbean parts of the Kingdom."¹³³ UW can be interpreted as a task within both the first and second main tasks, as UW can influence an adversary and, therefore, protect the NATO and EU territory as well as maintain the sovereignty of any other nation.

¹²⁸ Article 97, section 2 of The Netherlands' Constitution.

¹²⁹ Ministry of Defence, *Netherlands Defence Doctrine*.

¹³⁰ Article 96, section 1 of The Netherlands' Constitution.

¹³¹ Article 100, section 1 of The Netherlands' Constitution.

¹³² Bos, "De krijgsmacht: een cruciale partner in nationale veiligheid; Civiel-militaire samenwerking op nieuwe leest geschoeid [The armed forces: A crucial partner in national security; Civil-military cooperation redefined]."

¹³³ Ministry of Defence, *Defensienota 2018 [Defence Note 2018]*.

Before The Netherlands' government can deploy its armed forces for any of the three main tasks, the government needs to conduct a decision-making process to determine if the deployment is in The Netherlands' interest, if it meets the assessment criteria for deploying The Netherlands' armed forces, and if the deployment meets the legal framework.

The *Integrated International Security Strategy* poses the strategic frameworks for The Netherlands' international security approach on which policy decisions can be made by The Netherlands' government. Therefore, the IISS should give adequate guidance for the government to analyze whether the intended deployment is in The Netherlands' security interest. The before mentioned six goals derived from the IISS should give The Netherlands' government enough space to agree on deploying The Netherlands' SOF for UW operations for the security interest of the Kingdom.

The Netherlands' government uses an assessment framework in its decision-making process to analyze whether The Netherlands should deploy its armed forces abroad. The assessment framework only applies to deployments for the maintenance of the international law, as stated in the armed forces' second main task.¹³⁴ This implies that the assessment framework is not applicable for the armed forces' first main task to defend the national, EU, and NATO territories. However, the assessment framework also states that "The government applies the assessment framework in *all* [emphasis added] cases in which it notifies parliament of the desirability and possibility of a Dutch military contribution."¹³⁵ Therefore, this study argues that this assessment framework is also applicable for UW missions.

Within the assessment framework there are fourteen assessment points.¹³⁶ The first five points relate to the political relevance for the deployment; the other nine points relate

¹³⁴ Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, *Toetsingskader 2009 [Assessment Framework 2009]*, 2009D34064 (The Hague: Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, 2009), <https://www.tweedekamer.nl/kamerstukken/detail?id=2009D34064&did=2009D34064>.

¹³⁵ Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal.

¹³⁶ Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal.

to the military feasibility of the deployment.¹³⁷ Within these assessment points, the following are the most relevant for this research and the deployment of The Netherlands' armed forces: "1) The deployment of armed forces must be in accordance with international law and is preferably done on the basis of a clear United Nations mandate;"¹³⁸ and 2) There must be appropriate international agreements on the mission and the tasks need to be feasible.

To employ special operations, The Netherlands can use a different decision-making process due to the political risk and secrecy involved with special operations. The government only needs to consider this decision-making process when the special operation is covert or clandestine. When the special operation is overt, all the preceding criteria for deploying armed forces apply for the decision-making process. If the special operation is covert or clandestine, a select group of ministers decides for the employment of The Netherlands' SOF. This group is called the Ministerial Core Group for Special Operations (MCSO).¹³⁹ The MCSO consists of the Prime Minister, the Minister of Defense, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, and additional ministers, one from every branch in the government.¹⁴⁰ According to the letter of the MoD, the MCSO does not need to inform the government or the Parliament before it decides to employ special operations. However, the MCSO does need to inform the government and Parliament afterwards about the deployment of SOF. The time and manner of providing the information varies per special operation. The articles 97 and 100 of The Netherlands' Constitution describe the foundations and information obligations of the government to inform the Dutch Parliament of deploying The Netherlands' armed forces.

¹³⁷ "Besluitvorming Uitzending Militairen [Decision-Making for Deployment of the Armed Forces]," Parlementair Documentatie Centrum, December 15, 2009, https://www.parlement.com/id/vhnnmt7lidzz/besluitvorming_uitzending_militairen.

¹³⁸ Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, *Toetsingskader 2009 [Assessment Framework 2009]*.

¹³⁹ Ministeriële Kerngroep Special Operaties.

¹⁴⁰ Frank H.G. De Grave, *Brief van de Minister van Defensie 26 800 X nr. 46 [Letter from the Minister of Defense, 26 800 X 46]* (The Hague: Ministry of Defence, 2000), <https://www.parlementairemonitor.nl/9353000/1/j9vvij5epmjley0/vi3ai8glukzw>.

To this point, this research shows that there are opportunities to employ The Netherlands' SOF for UW operations. Netherlands' policy documents such as the IISS, the *Defence Notes*, and *The Netherlands' Defence Doctrine* provide interpretation for The Netherlands' government to consider Unconventional Warfare as a viable option for stability and security on the NATO and EU territory. This research goes into more detail in the next section to analyze the legal framework for UW operations.

E. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR UW OPERATIONS

Within international law there is no gray zone between peace and war; there is only peace or war.¹⁴¹ Accordingly, armed conflict is war and everything below the threshold of an armed conflict is peace. Therefore, the competition phase, within legal terms, is peace. For the purpose of this research, the competition phase refers to peace and the conflict phase refers to war.

In a democratic constitutional state such as The Netherlands, the government cannot infringe upon the rights and freedoms of its citizens without a jurisdiction which is democratically legitimized.¹⁴² This means that all government actions, including those of the armed forces, that interfere with (constitutional) rights and citizens' freedoms must have a legal basis. This results from the principle of legality, the constitution, and human rights treaties. Infringement of international law obligations is permitted only when based on international law.

The deployment of the military, as a national instrument of power, outside of The Netherlands' borders should have a legal basis within international law.¹⁴³ According to the National Defence Doctrine, there are two common rules for The Netherlands to uphold when deploying its armed forces abroad. These rules are 1) the non-intervention rule, as part of the sovereignty rule, and 2) Article 2, paragraph 4 of the United Nations' Charter,

¹⁴¹ Directie Juridische Zaken, "Algemene juridische kaders voor activiteiten van de krijgsmacht in de informatieomgeving [General legal frameworks for activities of the armed forces in the information environment]," Nota (The Hague: Ministry of Defence, April 12, 2021).

¹⁴² Directie Juridische Zaken.

¹⁴³ Ministry of Defence, *Netherlands Defence Doctrine*.

which states the prohibition on the use of force.¹⁴⁴ For this research it is important to look at the legal basis on which The Netherlands' government *can* deploy its armed forces abroad, to explore to what extent The Netherlands' SOF can conduct UW operations within The Netherlands political-strategic setting.

There are three legal exceptions to the international rules of law for not intervening in a sovereign nation.¹⁴⁵ These legal bases for deploying armed forces abroad within a sovereign nation are: 1) Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations which states the individual or collective right of self-defense; 2) authorization by the United Nations Security Council based on Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter; and 3) an invitation by the legitimate government of a sovereign nation.

All three legal exceptions could provide The Netherlands' government with a legal basis to deploy The Netherlands' SOF for UW operations. However, in the competition phase of UW, the first two legal bases are not likely to occur. On the other hand, all three legal bases are opportune in the conflict phase.

Although all three legal exceptions could provide The Netherlands' government with a legal basis to deploy The Netherlands' SOF for UW operations, there are more legal constraints for The Netherlands' government to consider if it wants to conduct UW operations. When The Netherlands' SOF educate, train, advise, assist, and/or accompany an underground, auxiliary, or guerilla force, The Netherlands' SOF essentially interact with civilians. Except, civilians are not combatants.

Within an armed conflict one can differentiate between combatants and non-combatants. This research distinguishes the three parties in an armed conflict as follows: civilians (non-combatants), lawful combatants, and unlawful combatants. Civilians, on any side of the conflict, do not participate in an armed conflict; they do not draw weapons. On the other hand, lawful combatants do participate; they are the uniformed armed forces from both sides fighting in the armed conflict. The unlawful combatants are the civilians who do participate in the armed conflict; they do pick-up weapons to fight the other side but are

¹⁴⁴ Ministry of Defence.

¹⁴⁵ Ministry of Defence.

not distinguishable as uniformed combatants. Knut Dörmann, a legal advisor at the Legal Division of the International Committee of the Red Cross, defines unlawful combatants as “all persons taking a direct part in hostilities without being entitled to do so and who therefore cannot be classified as prisoners of war on falling into the power of the enemy.”¹⁴⁶ Tamar Meisels, with a Ph.D. from Oxford University and a professor at the Tel Aviv University, refers to unlawful combatants as irregulars who are “free riders on the prohibitions civilized nations adhere to.”¹⁴⁷ Thus, civilians participating in an armed conflict as members of a resistance force against an occupying power are legally seen as unlawful combatants.

When civilians participate in an armed conflict, they give up some of their protections. Unlawful combatants have no protection under the “Fourth Geneva Convention on civilians” when captured by the occupying force.¹⁴⁸ Unlawful combatants do not have the same rights as Prisoners of War (POW), according to the “Third Geneva Convention on POW” and are therefore not protected against any torment by an adversary.¹⁴⁹

Training civilians to resist an occupying force by becoming unlawful combatants could be a threshold for The Netherlands’ government. The Netherlands assigns high priority to humanitarian international law, as it accommodates the International Criminal Court and the International Court of Justice in The Hague. Supporting unlawful combatants probably will not fit The Netherlands’ image.

¹⁴⁶ Knut Dörmann, “The Legal Situation of ‘Unlawful/Unprivileged Combatants,’” *International Review of the Red Cross* 85, no. 2003–03 (March 2003): 45–74.

¹⁴⁷ Tamar Meisels, “Combatants - Lawful and Unlawful,” *Law and Philosophy* 26, no. 1 (January 2007): 31–65, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10982-005-5917-2>.

¹⁴⁸ International Committee of the Red Cross, “Convention (IV) Relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War” (1949), <https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/applic/ihl/ihl.nsf/Treaty.xsp?documentId=AE2D398352C5B028C12563CD002D6B5C&action=openDocument>.

¹⁴⁹ International Committee of the Red Cross, “Convention (III) Relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War” (1949), <https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/applic/ihl/ihl.nsf/Treaty.xsp?documentId=77CB9983BE01D004C12563CD002D6B3E&action=openDocument>.

There are ways to support a resistance force and still have the protection of the Third Geneva Convention. Article 4A (2) of the Convention states four conditions by which fighting civilians as members of a resistance force can have protection under the Convention. Accordingly, the civilians need to fulfill the following conditions: “1) that of being commanded by a person responsible for his subordinates; 2) that of having a fixed distinctive sign recognizable at a distance; 3) that of carrying arms openly; and 4) that of conducting their operations in accordance with the laws and customs of war.”¹⁵⁰ This would eventually make them lawful combatants and therefore under protection of the Third Geneva Convention. On the other hand, the situation in which a potential adversary is willing to abide by the Geneva Convention Treaty is outside of this research’s scope.

Thus, there are some legal constraints for The Netherlands’ government to conduct UW operations when a civilian resistance force participates in the armed conflict. During peace time this includes the competition phase, where these legal constraints obviously do not apply.

F. CHAPTER SUMMARY

As an internationally oriented nation of trade, The Netherlands has an interest in a safe world. The Netherlands can deploy its armed forces, which significantly evolved during and after the Cold War, as an instrument of national power to contribute to a safe world. Netherlands’ policy documents such as the *Integrated International Security Strategy*, the *Defence Notes*, and *The Netherlands’ Defence Doctrine* provide interpretation for The Netherlands’ government to consider Unconventional Warfare as a viable option for stability and security on NATO and EU territories. These documents and the Dutch Constitution provide a legal basis for the Dutch government to deploy its armed forces for these missions. However, the challenge of educating and training a resistance force of civilians to overthrow an occupying power is that when those civilians take up arms against that occupying force, they become unlawful combatants. That shift in status could complicate, but does not necessarily obstruct, the decision-making process for The

¹⁵⁰ International Committee of the Red Cross.

Netherlands' government. Therefore, the determination of The Netherlands' coalition government and the gains Unconventional Warfare can provide for The Netherlands' security will conceivably decide whether The Netherlands' government will or will not conduct UW operations.

V. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A. CONCLUSION

The purpose of this research has been to answer the following research question: *To what extent can The Netherlands Special Operations Forces conduct Unconventional Warfare operations given The Netherlands' political-strategic setting?* This research question is two-fold, concerning: 1) to what extent The Netherlands' Special Operations Forces can conduct Unconventional Warfare operations, and 2) to what extent The Netherlands' Special Operations Forces can conduct Unconventional Warfare operations given the Netherlands' political-strategic setting. This chapter aims to answer these research questions and offer recommendations.

This study has identified that The Netherlands' SOF units can conduct operations in a semi-permissive or a permissive environment against a peer adversary. It is uncertain, however, whether The Netherlands' SOF units can conduct operations in a denied area with a peer adversary, because The Netherlands' SOF units have little experience in this environment. The Netherlands' SOF can conduct Military Assistance and Faction Liaison missions in a semi-permissive or permissive environment. Nonetheless, The Netherlands' SOF units are not adequately educated, trained, and equipped to conduct full-scale UW operations, as UW is not a doctrinal task for The Netherlands' SOF and therefore is not taught during The Netherlands' SOF Qualification courses. Hence, The Netherlands' SOF units need to train to sustain operations once infiltrated in a denied area. Furthermore, they need to be educated and trained specifically on the seven phases of UW at the tactical level. Meanwhile, with the Military Assistance and Faction Liaison missions, The Netherlands' SOF units should be capable of conducting at least some parts of the UW mission profiles.

This research has also identified that The Netherlands' policy documents provide interpretation for The Netherlands' government to consider UW as a viable option to ensure stability and security in NATO and EU territories. These policy documents and the Dutch Constitution also provide a legal basis for The Netherlands' government to deploy its armed forces for these missions. From a legal perspective, however, there is one challenge

with training a resistance force of civilians to remove an occupying power. That is, unless they meet the criteria for lawful combatants, once the trained civilians take up arms against the occupying force, they could be considered unlawful combatants. This consideration could complicate, but not necessarily obstruct, the decision-making process for The Netherlands' government.

B. RECOMMENDATIONS

As stated in Chapter I, this study offers an academic, rather than a political, perspective relating to The Netherlands' armed forces conducting UW operations. If at some point The Netherlands' SOF units need to prepare for UW operations, The Netherlands' government will need to issue a directive for The Netherlands' SOF to undertake that preparation. As implied by The Netherlands' policy documents, UW can be a tasking for The Netherlands' SOF. Therefore, this study recommends The Netherlands' SOCOM write a Netherlands' SOF doctrine which includes UW as a tasking. This doctrine would be the starting point for The Netherlands' SOF units to initiate thinking about the implications of this tasking.

To conduct UW operations, The Netherlands' SOF units need to be appropriately educated, trained, and equipped for these types of missions. To date, there have been some small-scale UW training interactions with the U.S. Army Special Forces. These experiences, connections, and the training facilities could be used as a training option in the future. At the same time, The Netherlands' SOF units need to identify any current gaps in education, training, and equipment needed to conduct UW operations. The units can request to observe or actively participate in UW training programs with allies such as the United Kingdom and Denmark or start a UW training with Germany. Additionally, The Netherlands' SOF units must make a distinction between UW in the competition phase and UW in the conflict phase.

For both the competition and the conflict phase, a protocol for consultation by The Netherlands' government must be established before the conduct of UW operations can be considered. This protocol should have a checklist of considerations for The Netherlands' government to address during the decision-making process. It is not entirely clear whether

the current assessment framework used by The Netherlands' government for deploying its armed forces is useful for the decision-making process for UW operations.

During the decision-making process, the government's legal advisors would have an important role, as the legal considerations are vital during UW operations. The Netherlands' government should specifically consider the legal status of the supported guerilla force. The force should be recognized and authorized by the supported government to conduct fighting operations. The force should also be educated in the international law of armed conflict to avoid unlawful activities or crimes against humanity being committed by this Netherlands' trained guerilla force.

Thus, this research concludes that it is permissible for The Netherlands' SOF to conduct UW operations within The Netherlands' political-strategic setting. To ensure their capability to do so successfully, however, The Netherlands' SOF units need to be adequately educated, trained, and equipped specifically for conducting such operations. Moreover, there needs to be a political will to conduct UW operations, as there are some legal and decision-making hurdles for The Netherlands' government to overcome before deciding to conduct UW operations. This research shows that UW is a viable and even desirable option for The Netherlands' government to have in the armed forces' toolbox; therefore, The Netherlands' government should have a UW capability centered in its Netherlands' SOF. This capability will provide The Netherlands' government with options to respond to threats to the Kingdom of The Netherlands', its allies, and The Netherlands' interest.

THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

LIST OF REFERENCES

- Boelen, Jos. "The Dutch Republic: A Great Power? Modern Objectivist Perspectives and New Contemporary Social- Constructivist Angles." Master's thesis, University of Leiden, 2018. <https://studenttheses.universiteitleiden.nl/access/item%3A2607166/view>.
- Bos, Peter L.J. "De krijgsmacht: een cruciale partner in nationale veiligheid; Civiel-militaire samenwerking op nieuwe leest geschoeid [The armed forces: A crucial partner in national security; Civil-military cooperation redefined]." *Militaire Spectator* 189 (October 27, 2020): 6.
- Canon van Nederland. "Europa." Canon van Nederland. Accessed February 24, 2022. <https://www.canonvannederland.nl/nl/europa>.
- Canon van Nederland. "Srebrenica." Canon van Nederland. Accessed February 24, 2022. <https://www.canonvannederland.nl/nl/srebrenica>.
- Central Bureau of Statistics. "Nederland Handelsland: Export, Import & Investeringsen 2021 [Netherlands Trade Country: Export, Import & Investments 2021]." Central Bureau of Statistics. Accessed February 24, 2022. <https://longreads.cbs.nl/nederland-handelsland-2021/>.
- Daugherty, William J. *Executive Secrets: Covert Action & The Presidency*. Lexington, KY: The University Press of Kentucky, 2004.
- David A. Shlapak, and Michael W. Johnson. *Reinforcing Deterrence on NATO's Eastern Flank: Wargaming the Defense of the Baltics*. Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2016. <http://www.rand.org/t/rr1253>.
- De Grave, Frank H.G. *Brief van de Minister van Defensie 26 800 X nr. 46 [Letter from the Minister of Defense. 26 800 X 46]*. The Hague: Ministry of Defence, 2000. <https://www.parlementairemonitor.nl/9353000/1/j9vvij5epmj1ey0/vi3ai8glukzw>.
- De Mariniers - Korps Mariniers. "Netherlands Maritime Special Operations Forces (NLMARSOF)." Accessed May 4, 2022. <http://de-mariniers.korpsmariniers.com>.
- De Wijk, Rob, Frank Bekkers, Tim Sweijjs, Stephan De Spiegeleire, and Dorith Kool. *The Future of NLD SOF: Towards an All-Domain Force*. The Hague: The Hague Centre for Strategic Studies, 2021. <https://hcss.nl/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/Future-of-NLD-SOF-july-2021.pdf>.
- Department of Commerce. "Netherlands - Country Commercial Guide." Department of Commerce, November 9, 2021. <https://www.trade.gov/country-commercial-guides/netherlands-market-overview>.

Department of Defense. *Joint Publication 3-05.1: Unconventional Warfare*. Washington D.C.: Department of Defense, 2014.

Department of Defense. *Special Forces Unconventional Warfare*. Washington, D.C.: Department of Defense, 2011.

Directie Juridische Zaken. “Algemene juridische kaders voor activiteiten van de krijgsmacht in de informatieomgeving [General legal frameworks for activities of the armed forces in the information environment].” Nota. The Hague: Ministry of Defence, April 12, 2021.

Dörmann, Knut. “The Legal Situation of ‘Unlawful/Unprivileged Combatants.’” *International Review of the Red Cross* 85, no. 2003–03 (March 2003): 45–74.

Fabian, Sandor. “Total Defense, Revisited: An Unconventional Solution to the Problem of Conventional Forces.” *Modern War Institute*, October 6, 2020. <https://mwi.usma.edu/total-defense-revisited-unconventional-solution-problem-conventional-forces/>.

Grdovic, Mark. *A Leader’s Handbook to Unconventional Warfare*. 09–1st ed. Fort Bragg, N.C.: U.S. Army John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School, 2009. <https://info.publicintelligence.net/USArmy-LeadersUW.pdf>.

Grdovic, Mark. “Enabling the Fifth Column and the Relevancy of Unconventional Warfare.” *Small Wars Journal*, August 3, 2021. <https://smallwarsjournal.com/jrnl/art/enabling-fifth-column-and-relevancy-unconventional-warfare>.

Hooiveld, Jelle. *Dutch Courage: Special Forces in the Netherlands 1944–45*. Gloucestershire: Amberley Publishing, 2016.

International Committee of the Red Cross. Convention (III) relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War (1949). <https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/applic/ihl/ihl.nsf/Treaty.xsp?documentId=77CB9983BE01D004C12563CD002D6B3E&action=openDocument>.

International Committee of the Red Cross. Convention (IV) relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War (1949). <https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/applic/ihl/ihl.nsf/Treaty.xsp?documentId=AE2D398352C5B028C12563CD002D6B5C&action=openDocument>.

Irwin, Will. *Support to Resistance: Strategic Purpose and Effectiveness*. 19th–2nd ed. Tampa, FL: Joint Special Operations University, 2019. https://jsou.libguides.com/ld.php?content_id=48094050.

Joint Chiefs of Staff. *Joint Publication 3-05: Special Operations*. Washington, D.C.: Joint Chiefs of Staff, 2014. http://edocs.nps.edu/2014/July/jp3_05.pdf.

- Joint Chiefs of Staff. *Joint Publication 3-05.1: Joint Special Operations Task Force Operations*. Department of Defense, 2007. https://fas.org/irp/doddir/dod/jp3_05_01.pdf.
- Kilcullen, David. “The Evolution of Unconventional Warfare.” *Scandinavian Journal of Military Studies* 2, no. 1 (June 20, 2019): 61–71. <https://doi.org/10.31374/sjms.35>.
- Koninklijke Landmacht. “Factbook Korps Commandotroepen: Past - Present - Future.” Koninklijke Landmacht, 2014. <https://www.korpscommandotroepen.nl/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/Factbook-KCT-2014.pdf>.
- Kremlin. “Joint Statement of the Russian Federation and the People’s Republic of China on the International Relations Entering a New Era and the Global Sustainable Development.” Official Internet Resources of the President of Russia, February 4, 2022. <http://en.kremlin.ru/supplement/5770>.
- Kroeber, Arthur R. *China’s Economy: What Everyone Needs to Know*. Second Edition. New York: Oxford University Press, 2020.
- Marquis, Susan L. *Unconventional Warfare: Rebuilding U.S. Special Operations Forces*. Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 1997.
- Meisels, Tamar. “Combatants - Lawful and Unlawful.” *Law and Philosophy* 26, no. 1 (January 2007): 31–65. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10982-005-5917-2>.
- Ministry of Defence. “Aantallen Personeel [Number of Personnel].” Ministry of Defence, July 1, 2021. <https://www.defensie.nl/onderwerpen/overdefensie/het-verhaal-van-defensie/aantallen-personeel>.
- Ministry of Defence. “Defensie Stuurt 2 F-35’s Naar Oost-Europa [Ministry of Defence Deploys 2 F-35’s to Eastern Europe].” Ministry of Defence, February 24, 2022. <https://www.defensie.nl/actueel/nieuws/2022/02/24/defensie-stuurt-2-f-35s-naar-oost-europa>.
- Ministry of Defence. *Defensienota 2000 [Defence Note 2000]*. The Hague: Ministry of Defence, 1999. <https://zoek.officielebekendmakingen.nl/kst-26900-2.html>.
- Ministry of Defence. *Defensienota 2018 [Defence Note 2018]*. The Hague: Ministry of Defence, 2018. <https://www.defensie.nl/downloads/beleidsnota-s/2018/03/26/defensienota-2018>.
- Ministry of Defence. *Future Operating Environment*. The Hague: Ministry of Defence, 2021.
- Ministry of Defence. *Kamerstuk 35 570 X: Nationaal Plan Militaire Mobiliteit [National Plan Military Mobility]*. The Hague: Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, 2022. <https://zoek.officielebekendmakingen.nl/kst-35570-X-75.pdf>.

- Ministry of Defence. *Netherlands Defence Doctrine*. The Hague: Ministry of Defence, 2019. <https://english.defensie.nl/downloads/publications/2019/06/27/netherlands-defence-doctrine>.
- Ministry of Defence. “Special Operations Command.” Ministry of Defence, 2018. <https://www.defensie.nl/organisatie/bestuur/staf/eenheden/socom>.
- Ministry of Defence. *UK Planning and Execution Handbook*. AC72099. London: Ministry of Defence, 2018. <https://www.scribd.com/document/465225621/AC72099-PEHB-2018-1-pdf>.
- Ministry of Defence. *Defensievisie 2035: Vechten voor een veilige toekomst [Defence Vision 2035: Fighting for a Safe Future]*. The Hague: Ministry of Defence, 2020. <https://www.defensie.nl/downloads/publicaties/2020/10/15/defensievisie-2035>.
- Ministry of Foreign Affairs. *Wereldwijd voor een Veilig Nederland: Geïntegreerde Buitenland- en Veiligheidsstrategie 2018–2022 [Worldwide for a Secure Netherlands: Integrated International and Security Strategy 2018–2022]*. The Hague: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2018. <https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/documenten/rapporten/2018/03/19/notitie-geintegreerde-buitenland--en-veiligheidsstrategie-gbvs>.
- NATO. *AAP-06: NATO Glossary of Terms and Definitions*. 2020th ed. Brussels: NATO, 2020. <https://nso.nato.int/nso/nsdd/main/standards?search=AAP-06>.
- NATO. “NATO Allies Send More Ships, Jets to Enhance Deterrence and Defence in Eastern Europe.” NATO, January 24, 2022. https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_191040.htm.
- NATO Special Operations Headquarters. *NATO Standard AJP-3.5: Allied Joint Doctrine for Special Operations*. Mons: NATO Special Operations Headquarters, 2019.
- NATO Standardization Agency. “AAP-06 Edition 2013 NATO Glossary of Terms and Definitions.” NATO, 2013. https://www.jcs.mil/Portals/36/Documents/Doctrine/Other_Pubs/aap6.pdf.
- Nederlands Instituut voor Oorlogsdocumentatie. *Srebrenica, een ‘Veilig Gebied’: Reconstructie, Achtergronden, Gevolgen en Analyses van de Val van een Safe Area [Srebrenica, a ‘Safe Area’: Reconstruction, Backgrounds, Consequences and Analyses of the Fall of a Safe Area]*. Amsterdam: Nederlands Instituut voor Oorlogsdocumentatie, 2002. https://do8mb0ue3h0zp.cloudfront.net/2021-05/srebrenicarapportniod_nl.pdf.
- Nederlands Veteranen Instituut. “Verenigde Naties [United Nations].” Nederlands Veteranen Instituut. Accessed March 4, 2022. <https://www.nlveteraneninstituut.nl/verenigde-naties/>.

The Netherlands' Constitution. Accessed September 3, 2021. <https://wetten.overheid.nl/BWBR0001840/2018-12-21#Hoofdstuk>.

NOS. "Wat stelt onze krijgsmacht nog voor? [What does our military still have to offer?]." News. NOS, March 14, 2017. <https://nos.nl/collectie/11672/artikel/2163157-wat-stelt-onze-krijgsmacht-nog-voor>.

NPO kennis. "Wat Gebeurde er in Srebrenica? [What Happened in Srebrenica?]." NPO kennis. Accessed March 4, 2022. <https://npokennis.nl/longread/7526/wat-gebeurde-er-in-srebrenica>.

Paddock, Alfred H. Jr. *U.S. Army Special Warfare: Its Origins; Psychological and Unconventional Warfare, 1941–1952*. Washington, D.C.: National Defense University Press, 1982. <https://www.hsdl.org/?view&did=712060>.

Parlementair Documentatie Centrum. "Besluitvorming Uitzending Militairen [Decision-Making for Deployment of the Armed Forces]." Parlementair Documentatie Centrum, December 15, 2009. https://www.parlement.com/id/vhnnmt7lidzz/besluitvorming_uitzending_militairen.

Port of Rotterdam. "De Haven Die Je Verder Brengt [The Port That Will Bring You Further]." Port of Rotterdam. Accessed February 24, 2022. <https://www.portofrotterdam.com/nl/waarom-rotterdam/de-haven-die-je-verder-brengt>.

Rijksoverheid. "Lijst van internationale organisaties in Nederland [List of International Organizations in The Netherlands]." Rijksoverheid. Accessed April 16, 2022. <https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/onderwerpen/internationale-organisaties-in-nederland/lijt-van-internationale-organisaties-in-nederland>.

Rijksoverheid. "Nederland Wil Bijdrage aan NAVO-Troepenmacht in Litouwen met Drie Jaar Verlengen [The Netherlands Wants to Extend its Contribution to NATO Forces in Lithuania for Three Years]." Rijksoverheid, November 5, 2021. <https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/actueel/nieuws/2021/11/05/nederland-wil-bijdrage-aan-navo-troepenmacht-in-litouwen-met-drie-jaar-verlengen>.

Rijksoverheid "Waarom Zijn Handel en Handelsverdragen Belangrijk voor Nederland? [Why are Commerce and Commerce Agreements Important to The Netherlands?]." Rijksoverheid. Accessed March 4, 2022. <https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/onderwerpen/handelsverdragen-europese-unie/vraag-en-antwoord/belang-handel-en-handelsverdragen-voor-nederland>.

Staff NLMARSOFF. "CDS bezoek NLMARSOFF [CHOD visit NLMARSOFF]." Presentation, Doorn, March 16, 2022.

Timmermans, Maurice P.P. "Special Operations Forces: een nieuw commando [: a new command]." *Militaire Spectator* 188, no. 11 (November 19, 2019): 520–29.

- Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal. *Toetsingskader 2009 [Assessment Framework 2009]*. 2009D34064. The Hague: Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, 2009. <https://www.tweedekamer.nl/kamerstukken/detail?id=2009D34064&did=2009D34064>.
- United States Army Special Operations Command. *Unconventional Warfare Pocket Guide v1.0*. Fort Bragg, N.C.: United States Army Special Operations Command, 2016. https://www.soc.mil/ARIS/books/pdf/Unconventional%20Warfare%20Pocket%20Guide_v1%20_Final_6%20April%202016.pdf.
- U.S. Army John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School. *U.S. Army John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School FY 2021 Academic Handbook*. Fort Bragg, N.C.: U.S. Army John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School, 2021. https://www.soc.mil/SWCS/_pdf/SWCS_FY21_AcademicHandbook_web.pdf.
- USASOC Office of Special Warfare. “Jedburgh Individual Training Course (JITC).” Presentation, Naval Postgraduate School, Monterey, U.S., January 25, 2021.
- Vandenbroucke, Lucien S. *Perilous Options: Special Operations as an Instrument of U.S. Foreign Policy*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1993.
- Votel, Joseph L., Charles T. Cleveland, Charles T. Connet, and Irwin, Will. “Unconventional Warfare in the Gray Zone.” *Joint Force Quarterly*, no. 80 (January 1, 2016): 101–9.
- White House. *United States Interim National Security Strategic Guidance*. Washington, DC: White House, 2021. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/NSC-1v2.pdf>.

INITIAL DISTRIBUTION LIST

1. Defense Technical Information Center
Ft. Belvoir, Virginia
2. Dudley Knox Library
Naval Postgraduate School
Monterey, California