

RELEVANCE AND FUNCTIONALITY OF SPECIAL
OPERATIONS COMMAND IN INDIA

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by

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ABSTRACT

RELEVANCE AND FUNCTIONALITY OF SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND IN INDIA, by MAJ Anand Nashikkar, 104 pages.

India has a large number of varied types of Special Forces (SF) units. In the absence of a centralized organization for command and control, these units are not employed to optimally exploit their potential. This study proposed a reorganization of SF in India with the overall aim of elevating the status of SF by placing it at the right level of chain of command.

The author utilized qualitative research methodology and studied the special operations command structures of USA, Russia, and China to understand how these countries organize their SF. The analysis revealed that India cannot singularly follow any of these countries and lessons can be learnt from all three organizations. The most important recommendation is the creation of a functional tri services Indian Special Operations Command (ISOC). ISOC will be the sole organization responsible for executing special operation missions in support of national and theater strategic objectives. It will have service like authorities and responsibilities and will be responsible for training and administration of Indian Special Operations Forces.

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ACRONYMS

AFSOD	Armed Forces Special Operations Division
C2	Command and Control
COCOM	Combatant Command (Command Authority)
ITC	Integrated Theater Command
KSO	<i>Komandovanie Sil Spetsialnykh Operatsiy</i>
MARCOS	Marine Commandos
OPCON	Operational Control
PARA(SF)	Parachute Regiment (Special Forces)
SF	Special Forces
SOF	Special Operations Forces
SOCOM	Special Operations Command
SSO	<i>Sil Spetsialnykh Operatsiy</i>
TACON	Tactical Control

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

A small Army consisting of chosen troops is far better than a vast body chiefly composed of rabble.

—The Hitopadesha, quoted in Mihai Floca,
“Elite Forces—The Army of the Future”

Background

The 1965 India-Pakistan war saw the employment of a makeshift force by India to conduct unconventional operations behind enemy lines. This force named as Meghdoot Force, after its founder Lieutenant Colonel (then Major) Megh Singh, an infantryman, laid the bedrock for the creation of Special Forces (SF) in India. The first SF (then Commando) unit was subsequently raised on 01 July 1966. Over the last 55 years, the Indian Army raised nine SF battalions known as Parachute Regiment (SF) or PARA(SF), while Navy raised the Indian Marine Special Force known as Marine Commandos or MARCOS, and Air Force created their own SF known as Garud Commando Force or simply Garuds. In addition, there are certain other units like National Security Guard (NSG) which is federal police force under the Ministry of Home Affairs, Special Frontier Force (SFF) a paramilitary force under the Cabinet Secretariat, and Rashtriya Rifles (RR) battalion that do not form part of regular Army and perform non-conventional tasks. These units, however, take some or all of their manpower from the armed forces (including SF) on deputation. The issue, however, is that despite continuously adding SF units to its inventory, India and its armed forces, in particular, paid very little attention in organizing them under a single umbrella.

In its effort to reform and overhaul the national security system, the Indian government, in July 2011, constituted a task force on national security, popularly known as the Naresh Chandra Committee (since it was chaired by former Cabinet Secretary Naresh Chandra).¹ This committee submitted its report to Prime Minister Manmohan Singh at the end of May 2012. One of the recommendations of the committee was the creation of three new tri-services commands, namely, Special Operations Command, Aerospace Command, and Cyber Command.² However, as of March 2022, these recommendations have not been implemented entirely.

Joint Doctrine of Indian Armed Forces was published in 2017.³ It laid the foundation for creation of Armed Forces Special Operations Division (AFSOD),⁴ which was subsequently raised in 2018. AFSOD is a tri-services formation under Headquarters Integrated Defence Staff (IDS). It is an intermediate organization that commands a small number of SF elements of Army, Navy, and Air Force. It does not exercise any command and control (C2) over NSG, SFF and RR. The formation also does not include elements

¹ Manoj Joshi, *The Unending Quest to Reform India's National Security System: Policy Report March 2014* (Singapore: S Rajaratnam School of International Studies, 2014), https://www.rsis.edu.sg/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/PR140301_The_Unending_Quest_to_Reform_India_National_Security_System.pdf.

² P. C. Katoch, "Special Operations Command: An Imperative for India," *Journal of the United Service Institution of India* 146, no. 603 (January-March 2016), <https://usiofindia.org/publication/usi-journal/special-operations-command-an-imperative-for-india/>.

³ Headquarters Integrated Defence Staff, Ministry of Defence, Joint Publication 01/2017, *Joint Doctrine Indian Armed Forces* (New Delhi: Directorate of Doctrine, Headquarters Integrated Defence Staff, 2017), https://www.ids.nic.in/IDSAdmin/upload_images/doctrine/JointDoctrineIndianArmedForces2017.pdf.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 48.

like aviation assets, intelligence, and sustainment that would support special operations. The Indian military is undergoing reorganization and is in the process of creating Integrated Theater Commands (ITC) which will be joint structures of all three services.⁵ The present structure of AFSOD is not suitable to provide dedicated SF support to ITCs since the bulk of the special forces are retained by the services.

Special Forces of any country do not only support the fighting formations but are a national asset as certain missions performed by them reflect the national will. Such missions are vital for political signaling and influencing other nations in the global arena. The surgical strikes conducted by India's SF in June 2015 to neutralize two groups of terrorists hiding in jungles of Myanmar was a significant action in recent times that showcased the national will.⁶ This event emboldened India, and its SF conducted another raid, in September 2016, against terrorist launchpads in Pakistan.⁷ Such actions are politically sensitive as their failure may lead to loss of national prestige. India utilized its SF in cross border actions, but it does not place enough emphasis on employing its SF passively to leverage its political clout. A dedicated organization that advises the government on comprehensive use of SF will help India to expand its regional footprint as well as create a global image. This thesis proposes a reorganization of SF in India and

⁵ Press Information Bureau, Government of India, Ministry of Defence, "Strengthening Security," December 03, 2021, <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleaseIframePage.aspx?PRID=1777613>.

⁶ Dhruv C. Katoch, "Joint Operations Capability: Need for a Special Operation Command," *SYNERGY: Journal of the Centre for Joint Warfare Studies* (July 2016): 127.

⁷ "Target terror: India strikes across LoC," *The Hindu*, last updated November 09, 2021, <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/India-carries-out-strikes-on-terror-launchpads/article55928198.ece>.

recommends a suitable tri services organization that manages all the special operation missions and their associated requirements.

Problem Statement

India has a large number of varied types of SF units. However, the operational command and control of all these units is significantly divergent. In the absence of a centralized command structure, SF of the three services are employed for the most part to achieve tactical effects or at best to support the achievement of operational objectives by fighting formations. There is no focus on utilizing SF in support of national objectives. The C2 of the Army SF units rests with Army's operationally and geographically divided commands, and a similar structure exists in Navy and Air Force. Thus, every command is responsible for employing its respective SF units in a manner suited to support achievement of its operational objectives for a conventional war. It thus becomes the prerogative of the General Officers commanding these formations, most of whom do not have previous SF experience, to employ the SF under their command and the concept of employment therefore changes with each commander. There is also a lack of inter service integration between PARA(SF) units, MARCOS, and Garuds to conduct joint operations due to service specific command structures and very limited tri-services training. The existence of units under control of ministries other than the Ministry of Defence creates additional problems because these units have their roles overlapping with SF of the three services, and joint training with them is rarely conducted.

India thus needs a functional Special Operations Command (SOCOM) as recommended by the Naresh Chandra Committee to establish unified command and control over all SF units and their supporting forces. The present structure of AFSOD is

not sufficient to solve this problem. The underlying objective of this proposed formation will be to establish the SF as a national asset and create a centralized command and control structure to conduct special operations that would support the achievement of strategic objectives.

Purpose of the Study

This study aims to reinforce the relevance of SOCOM for India and recommends the right kind of organizational structure for unified command and control over all Indian SF units. The author aims to study the SOCOM structures of some of the developed armed forces of the world, namely, United States of America (USA), Russia, and China, to find out the possible correlation for India. The problem being a lack of an organizational structure, the thesis will be conducted keeping the DOTMLPF-P (Doctrine, Organization, Training, Materiel, Leadership and education, Personnel, Facilities and Policy) construct in mind.

Primary Research Question

What special operations organization best addresses India's problem of establishing unified command and control over its SF to support the achievement of national and strategic objectives?

Secondary Research Questions

The thesis will answer following secondary research questions to elucidate the primary research question.

1. What is the present state of SF in India?

2. What are the anticipated special operations missions and support required for conduct of special operations?
3. What organizations are used by some of the developed armed forces of the world to command and control their SF?

Assumptions

It is assumed that the ongoing re-organization of Indian armed forces will continue, and there will be a policy decision by the Ministry of Defence to authorize creation of SOCOM. It is also assumed that as part of the ongoing reorganization, ITCs will be created. The author assumes that the information about SF and organization structures of USA, Russia, and China are correct, as given out in their doctrine and other literature reviewed. There is also an assumption that the existing SOCOM structures reviewed are effective for the armed forces of respective countries. India is a developing country and so has limited resources for its armed forces. This issue assumes importance in case of allocation of critical assets like aircrafts for SOCOM. It is assumed that this resource insufficiency existing in India with respect to certain material resources is not a hinderance in creation of SOCOM. Although the necessity for establishment of SOCOM was established in 2012, the results were not implemented. Hence, it is assumed that the problem addressed is relevant and current for Indian armed forces. It is possible that a simultaneous effort is underway in India for answering the research questions of this thesis or any related questions.

Definition of Terms

The terms frequently used are defined using the doctrinal publication of the US. A resemblance is made to Indian terminology as applicable.

Armed Forces. A term used to denote collectively all components of the Army, Marine Corps, Navy, Air Force, and Coast Guard (when mobilized under Title 10, United States Code, to augment the Navy).⁸ For India, it means the Army, Navy, and Air Force collectively.

Combatant Command (Command Authority). Nontransferable command authority, which cannot be delegated, of a combatant commander to perform those functions of command over assigned forces involving organizing and employing commands and forces, assigning tasks, designating objectives, and giving authoritative direction over all aspects of military operations, joint training, and logistics necessary to accomplish the missions assigned to the command. Also called COCOM.⁹

Command. The authority that a commander in the armed forces lawfully exercises over subordinates by virtue of rank or assignment.¹⁰ In India, it also refers to an organization at the theater strategic level that has multiple corps subordinated to it; equivalent to combatant commands of the US.

⁸ Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS), *DOD Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms* (Washington, DC: The Joint Staff, 2021), 18, <https://jdeis.js.mil/jdeis/>.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 38.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 40.

Command and Control (C2). The exercise of authority and direction by a properly designated commander over assigned and attached forces in the accomplishment of the mission.¹¹

Conventional Forces. 1. Those forces capable of conducting operations using nonnuclear weapons. 2. Those forces other than designated special operations forces.¹²

Operational Control (OPCON). The authority to perform those functions of command over subordinate forces involving organizing and employing commands and forces, assigning tasks, designating objectives, and giving authoritative direction necessary to accomplish the mission.¹³

Special Forces (SF). United States Army forces organized, trained, and equipped to conduct special operations with an emphasis on unconventional warfare capabilities.¹⁴ In India's context, SF refers to forces of Army, Navy, and Air Force designated for conduct of special operations.

Special Operations Forces (SOF). An umbrella term used for those Active and Reserve Component forces of the Services designated by the Secretary of Defense and specifically organized, trained, and equipped to conduct and support special operations is Special Operations Forces (SOF).¹⁵ The term SOF is not used in India.

¹¹ CJCS, *DOD Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms*, 40.

¹² *Ibid.*, 49.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 160.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 198.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 199.

Special Operations. Activities or actions requiring unique modes of employment, tactical techniques, equipment, and training often conducted in hostile, denied, or politically sensitive environments.¹⁶

Tactical Control (TACON). The authority over forces that is limited to the detailed direction and control of movements or maneuvers within the operational area necessary to accomplish missions or tasks assigned.¹⁷

Unity of Command. The operation of all forces under a single responsible commander who has the requisite authority to direct and employ those forces in pursuit of a common purpose.¹⁸

Scope

This thesis will be unclassified in nature and no sensitive information will be obtained or produced in the work. All the information obtained is unclassified and open source. For the purpose of the thesis, only those special operations units are considered that are either from the regular armed forces or derive manpower from them. Inclusion of special units of Police forces of different states is considered beyond the scope of this study. The study will only recommend the SOCOM structure as found most suitable to satisfy India's security concerns and accomplish the strategic objectives. The integration of present units to form that structure will be left for a subsequent effort. Integration of SF under a unified umbrella will incorporate synchronizing the selection and training

¹⁶ CJCS, *DOD Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms*, 199.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 209.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 225.

procedures; however, this study will only focus on earmarking the authority for conduct of the same. The evolution of a synthesized process of selection and training of personnel for SF as well as SOCOM will be a different study altogether. The creation of SOCOM will influence the employment of SF in Counter Terrorism (CT) operations. For this thesis, the employment of SF in support of ITCs is considered in large scale combat operations in conjunction with CT operations.

Limitations

The most significant limitation was the availability of literature. The author had to rely on US doctrines for the foundational knowledge on subject due to classified nature of Indian armed forces publications. Similarly, as a base structure, the US Special Operations Command was studied due to the literature being relatively easily accessible. The existing organization structure of AFSOD could not be obtained due to the classified nature of organization, and the author had to rely on his individual knowledge. Comprehensive research would have required a study of SOCOM structures of more nations. However, SF being elite forces, much of the information is classified and not available in public domain. Some of the information available is not current and had to be utilized as such.

A notable limitation of this study is the limited experience of the author to have served in a joint services organization. The author's bias towards PARA(SF) is a limitation due to him being a part of it. There is potential of a better proposal by including experiences and knowledge of SF officers of other services.

The condensed timeframe is a limitation. A detailed survey that conducts interviews of senior SF officers to obtain their recommendations for SOCOM may have

given better inputs. However, this would be very time consuming and render the research difficult to be completed in the available timeframe for completing the Master of Military Art and Science degree.

Delimitations

Special Forces exist in many countries for different purposes. This thesis restricts itself to the study of SF organization structures of the US, Russia, and China because the armed forces of these countries have more relevance for India. Another delimitation imposed is to explore only those features of any SOCOM structure that have doctrine, organizational, materiel, and policy impact out of the DOTMLPF-P construct because inclusion of other aspects would have vastly enhanced the scope of study.

Significance of the Study

India has had a fair share of its experiences, in the form of conventional wars and terrorist attacks, when its national security was challenged. Terrorist attacks in Mumbai in November 2008 and Pathankot Air Force base in January 2016 brought to light the void in the efficient employment of SF. A suitable organization, had it existed then, would have better synchronized the SF effort in the conduct of these missions. This study intends to change the perspective of senior military leaders about conduct of special operations and ultimately lead to efficient employment of SF in support of national and theater strategic objectives. The aim is to elevate the status of SF by placing it at the right level of chain of command, and thus use it as a critical national resource. The SOCOM Commander will be the special operations advisor at the highest level of chain of command, possibly the National Security Council. The study recommends an

organizational structure relevant in Indian context. This structure can be utilized as a foundation over which subsequent changes can be made in the future based on the threat scenario and the availability of resources.

Summary

The SF have been in existence in the Indian armed forces for last 55 years; however, a dedicated functional organization that would command the SF troops and advise the hierarchy about special operations is missing. The current practice is to place PARA(SF) units of Army under the direct control of commands, and a similar system exists for the navy and air force. AFSOD was raised in 2018, but it is still awaiting to develop fully and assume command of all SF elements of the three services. It also lacks in possession of supporting forces required for special operations. In addition, with the creation of ITCs, there is a deliberate requirement of a joint organization to direct special operations in support of the theater objectives.

The purpose of the thesis is to reinforce the relevance of SOCOM for India and recommend a suitable organizational structure. The research questions are formulated to find the right construct of SOCOM by studying the existing structures of some of the developed armed forces through the DOTMLPF-P lens and determine how they support their corresponding fighting formations. This study is significant in light of ongoing reforms in Indian armed forces that are aimed at promoting jointness to face the threat of future conflict. The overall aim of the research is to elevate the status of SF, leading to its efficient employment. The next chapter will review the existing literature to find the possible answers of secondary research questions and analyze the sources to draw necessary recommendations.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

The requirement of a tri services Special Operations Command was established by the Naresh Chandra Committee in 2012, however, as of March 2022, the organization has not been created. The purpose of this chapter is to help reinforce the necessity of SOCOM for India. The chapter is organized to give the reader an understanding about the basics of SF and their command structures in India. The author will initially re-iterate the purpose of study and the research questions. The chapter is further organized in different topics that will help to answer the secondary research questions. By the end of this chapter, the reader will get a thorough understanding about the problem, and the manner in which it has been addressed.

Purpose of the Study

This study aims to reinforce the relevance of SOCOM for India and recommends the right kind of organizational structure for unified command and control over all Indian SF units. The author aims to study the SOCOM structures of the US, Russia, and China to find out the possible correlation for India. The problem being a lack of an organizational structure, the thesis will be conducted keeping the DOTMLPF-P construct in mind.

Primary Research Question

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Secondary Research Questions

The thesis will answer following secondary research questions to elucidate the primary research question.

1. What is the present state of SF in India?
2. What are the anticipated special operations missions and support required for conduct of special operations?
3. What organizations are used by some of the developed armed forces of the world to command and control their SF?

Topics 1, 2, and 3 of the literature review will help answer secondary research question # 1. Topics 4 and 5 will correspond with secondary research question # 2. Topic 6 will provide an overview for answering secondary research question # 3. Topic 7 will provide context to answer the primary research question.

Topic 1: Special Forces of India

The information in open domain reveals that India has a plethora of Special Forces. There are the SF of the three services of the armed forces under the Ministry of Defence, and then there are other elite units belonging to Ministry of Home Affairs, and the Cabinet Secretariat. The description of all these entities is given below.

PARA(SF)

These are the Army's SF battalions, the first one of which was raised in 1966. At present, there are nine SF battalions.¹⁹ They have been effectively employed in counter insurgency and counter terrorist operations, have considerable battle experience, and undertake periodic joint training with foreign Special Forces of many countries.²⁰ For command and control, there is no centralized organization, and the current tendency is to divide the entire Special Forces effort by placing them under different Army Commands, whereby they virtually become command troops consequently affecting any planning and deployment at strategic level.²¹ The strategic level tasking is done by the Army Headquarters. A point worth mentioning is the Indian Army is the only exception in the world where SF and airborne battalions are clubbed into the same regiment, which creates difficulty in some cross sections of military as well as other government agencies in differentiating between 'Special Forces' and 'Airborne Forces.'²²

SF units work in small teams and are focused on supporting conventional forces in combat. Their tasks during war include strategic reconnaissance, surveillance, and

¹⁹ Deepak Sinha and Ramesh Balakrishnan, "Employment of India's Special Operations Forces," (ORF Issue Brief no. 150, Observer Research Foundation, Delhi, India, June 2016), 3.

²⁰ P. C. Katoch and Saikat Datta, *India's Special Forces: History and Future of Indian Special Forces* (New Delhi, India: Vij Books India Pvt. Ltd., 2013), 92.

²¹ *Ibid.*, xx.

²² *Ibid.*, 81.

target designation (RSTD) and direct action (DA).²³ In counter insurgency and counter terrorism operations, their tasks are surveillance, hostage rescue, and covert operations, while in peace they are tasked for out of area contingencies.²⁴ Special Forces Training School (SFTS) exists as a center of excellence for Special Forces troops for basic and advanced training.²⁵

MARCOS

In 1983, Indian Naval Headquarters initiated the proposal for creating an Indian Marine Special Force (IMSF) as the ‘marine commando’ arm of the Navy, comprising of officers and sailors who were not only trained divers, but also trained in other skills of special operations forces.²⁶ Finally, in 1987, the IMSF was raised and the acronym was changed to Marine Commando Force (MCF) or simply MARCOS.²⁷ There are three MARCOS units in India. They have considerable battle experience including under the Indian Peacekeeping Force in Sri Lanka, and in counter insurgency and counter terrorism

²³ Sinha and Balakrishnan, “Employment of India’s Special Operations Forces,” 3.

²⁴ Katoch and Datta, *India’s Special Forces*, 120.

²⁵ Army Establishments, Indian Army, “Special Forces Training School,” last updated April 07, 2022, <https://indianarmy.nic.in/Site/FormTemplete/frnTemp1PLargeTC1C.aspx?MnId=Tdpxi4Wdk3E7JAukWfsZNA==&ParentID=3n3pbWWpmwwEQGVxPia6aQ==&flag=8CKP966uzg96kLov0aWdfQ==>.

²⁶ G. M. Hiranandani, *Transition to Eminence: The Indian Navy 1976-1990*, accessed January 04, 2022, chap. 28, <https://www.indiannavy.nic.in/sites/default/files/Transition-to-Eminence-07Apr16.pdf>.

²⁷ Indian Navy, “INS Abhimanyu: Historical Background,” last updated September 11, 2015, <https://www.indiannavy.nic.in/content/ins-abhimanyu>.

operations within India.²⁸ The command and control arrangement of MARCOS is similar to the PARA(SF), and they are also organized under the respective naval commands for their operational taskings while joint services or strategic tasking is done by the Naval Headquarters. INS Abhimanyu has been created as the centre of excellence for MARCOS and all of their training is conducted here since 1990.²⁹

The core taskings of MARCOS include:

1. To conduct clandestine attack against enemy ships, offshore installations, and other vital assets behind enemy lines.
2. To support amphibious operations including pre-assault ops.
3. Conduct of surveillance and recce missions in support of naval operations.
4. Conduct of clandestine diving operations.
5. Combating terrorism in a maritime environment.³⁰

Garuds

In September 2003, the Indian government sanctioned a new Commando Force with the nomenclature “Garud” having a total strength of 1090 personnel.³¹ This force is the SF component of the Indian Air Force. The force is organized into 15 flights, each commanded by an officer of the rank of Squadron Leader/Flight Lieutenant and

²⁸ Katoch and Datta, *India's Special Forces*, 92.

²⁹ Hiranandani, *Transition to Eminence*, chap. 28.

³⁰ Indian Navy, “INS Abhimanyu.”

³¹ Press Information Bureau, Government of India, Ministry of Defence, “Constitution of Commando Force,” December 18, 2003, <http://web.archive.org/web/20110605224056/http://pib.nic.in/newsite/erelease.aspx?relid=262>.

operationally deployed at various Air Force stations.³² One of the press releases by the Ministry of Defence, Government of India gives the following description of Garuds.

Garuds are specially trained to be a Quick Reaction Force at important IAF bases, protect IAF high value assets, conduct search and rescue during the peace and war, and undertake counter-terrorism tasks and special missions. They are regularly tasked to assist civil authorities for disaster relief operations during calamities. Garuds have been effectively employed in Indian missions in support of the UN and during extrication of Indian national from war zones. Garuds were deployed in the Kashmir Valley for direct on-the-job exposure as well.³³

The operational control of Garuds lies with respective air commands they fall under and their strategic tasking is undertaken by the Air Headquarters. They undertake specialist training with other services, paramilitary as well as foreign special forces. During hostilities, some of their tasks overlap with those of their Army counterparts.³⁴ In the aftermath of the 2016 Pathankot Air Force base terror attack, the IAF plans to raise ten additional squadrons of Garud commandos, consisting of about 1,000 personnel to protect its establishments across the country.³⁵

³² V. K. Bhatia, “Special Forces – Garuds for All Reasons,” *SP’s Aviation*, no. 10 (2009), <https://www.sps-aviation.com/story/?id=363>.

³³ Press Information Bureau, Government of India, Ministry of Defence, “Brief: Garuds (IAF Special Forces),” January 15, 2016, <https://pib.gov.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=134524>.

³⁴ Katoch and Datta, *India’s Special Forces*, 92.

³⁵ PTI, “IAF plans to raise 10 more Garud Squadrons,” *The Economic Times*, last updated July 11, 2018, <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/iaf-plans-to-raise-10-more-garud-squadrons/articleshow/50825527.cms>.

Topic 2: Other Elite Units

National Security Guard (NSG)

NSG is Federal Contingency World Class Zero Error Force to deal with anti-terrorist activities in all its manifestation in India.³⁶ It was created under the Ministry of Home Affairs in 1986 in the aftermath of Operation Blue Star, which was to eliminate terrorists from Golden Temple.³⁷ NSG is a task-oriented force and has two complementary elements in the form of the Special Action Groups (SAG) comprising of Army personnel on deputation, and the Special Ranger Groups (SRG), comprising of personnel drawn from the Central Armed Police Forces/State Police Forces.³⁸ NSG hubs have been raised at various locations across the country, and personnel in these hubs, some support units, training centre and headquarters are also on deputation from the Army.³⁹ The Army personnel on deputation to various NSG units includes troops from the PARA(SF) units as well. NSG has played a pivotal role in internal security and have responded effectively in crisis situations like the 2002 Akshardham temple terrorist attack in Gandhinagar Gujarat, 2008 Mumbai terror attacks, and 2016 Pathankot Air Force Base

³⁶ National Security Guard, Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India, “About NSG,” last updated February 11, 2019, <https://nsg.gov.in/about-us/about-nsg>.

³⁷ Katoch and Datta, *India’s Special Forces*, 93.

³⁸ National Security Guard, Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India, “History of NSG,” last updated October 06, 2017, <https://nsg.gov.in/about-us/history-nsg>.

³⁹ Katoch and Datta, *India’s Special Forces*, 93.

terror attack.⁴⁰ They undertake training with police forces from different states as well as with their counterparts from foreign countries. The general superintendence, direction, and control of the NSG is exercised by the Central Government through an Indian Police Services (IPS) officer appointed by the Central Government as the Director-General of the NSG.⁴¹ The NSG is primarily tasked for counterterrorism and anti-hijack, with other tasks being bomb disposal (search, detection and neutralizing bombs/IEDs), post blast investigation and hostage rescue.⁴²

Special Frontier Force (SFF)

The SFF is a paramilitary force which was conceived after 1962 India-China war as a guerilla force composed mainly of Tibetan refugees for behind enemy lines activities in the event of China launching another invasion, and is, in effect, the first SF of independent India.⁴³ Conboy and Morrison claimed that this force was raised with the assistance of the US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), and an initial training was also provided by US Special Forces.⁴⁴ SFF has been employed in the past by India during the

⁴⁰ National Security Guard, Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India, “Operational Achievements,” last updated April 08, 2022, <https://nsg.gov.in/more-links/achievements/operational-achievements>.

⁴¹ Republic of India, “Constitution of the Security Guard and conditions of service of the members of the Security Guard - Control, direction, etc.,” in *The National Security Guard Act 1986*, Ministry of Home Affairs, September 22, 1986, para. 5, https://www.mha.gov.in/sites/default/files/NSGAct1986_0.pdf.

⁴² Katoch and Datta, *India’s Special Forces*, 93.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 4, 94.

⁴⁴ Kenneth Conboy and James Morrison, *The CIA’s Secret War in Tibet* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2002), 175, 181.

large-scale wars with Pakistan in 1971 and 1999.⁴⁵ With a present strength of around 5,000 personnel, the SFF is comprised of officers from the Army on deputation, while the special groups of SFF draw their majority of the strength from the Army on deputation including the PARA(SF).⁴⁶ The SFF is an adjunct of the Cabinet Secretariat and operates under the overall command of Director General (Security), who is also the chief of the Research & Analysis Wing (RAW), India's external intelligence agency.⁴⁷ SFF units are dominated by the influence of intelligence community but draw personnel from Army on deputation for execution of tasks. Strictly speaking, SFF units are not part of the Army but function under its operational control. SFF is primarily involved in intelligence based special operations.⁴⁸ They are regularly employed in counter terrorism operations as well.

Rashtriya Rifles

The Rashtriya Rifles (RR) battalions were raised in 1990 to counter the rising terrorism in the northern province of Jammu and Kashmir. The units draw their manpower entirely from the Indian Army including the PARA(SF). These units perform counter terrorism tasks, which is the mandate of SF battalions, NSG, and SFF as well.

⁴⁵ Sandeep Unnithan, "The Tibetan Ghost Warriors," *India Today Magazine*, September 5, 2020, <https://www.indiatoday.in/magazine/special-report/story/20200914-the-tibetan-ghost-warriors-1718584-2020-09-05>.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Sinha and Balakrishnan, "Employment of India's Special Operations Forces," 4.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

Topic 3: Existing SF C2 Organization–AFSOD

The Naresh Chandra Task Force recommended the creation of a tri-services Special Operations Command in India.⁴⁹ As an intermediate measure, Armed Forces Special Operations Division (AFSOD) was created in 2018 as a truncated version of the original proposal. AFSOD has a small number of SF elements of the three services, while the bulk is retained by the individual services. In addition, it does not exercise any command and control over NSG, SFF or RR battalions. AFSOD does not possess organic aviation, sustainment, or intelligence assets that are vital for execution of special operations missions. The AFSOD is under the command of Headquarters Integrated Defence Staff and was raised with the initial responsibility for carrying out missions that include striking high value targets, strategic installations and to destroy the war fighting machinery of the enemy and infrastructures of the terrorists.⁵⁰ AFSOD is created with the aim of bringing SF of all three services under a unified command and control structure and also help to reduce costs connected to training, logistics, and administration. The division has been conducting regular exercises since its inception in different kinds of terrain across India to increase interoperability among the SF of three services.

⁴⁹ Katoch, “Special Operations Command.”

⁵⁰ FE Online, “Armed Forces Special Operations Division formed: The best of the Armed Forces,” *Financial Express*, May 15, 2019, <https://www.financialexpress.com/defence/armed-forces-special-operations-division-formed-the-best-of-the-armed-forces/1579236/>.

Topic 4: India's Security Environment

India has been engaged in various forms of conflict post-independence. Four wars with Pakistan, one with China, a series of insurgencies in Northeast India, and Jammu and Kashmir have seen the consistent employment of India's military in various types of operations since independence.⁵¹ India has been engaged in an over 50-years long low-intensity limited conflict along the Line of Control with Pakistan, an ongoing Pakistan sponsored "proxy war" in Jammu and Kashmir and elsewhere in the country, and a vitiated internal security environment.⁵² The violent conflicts along the Line of Actual Control with China in 2020, were an inflection point in the relations between the two neighbors. On the other hand, relations between Pakistan and China have always remained positive, and China has been the solid support for Pakistan in all its crucial times. Chinese support to Pakistan is becoming stronger with her strategic lodgment in Gilgit-Baltistan, China-Pak Economic Corridor (CPEC), and Gwadar as a future Chinese naval base.⁵³

Therefore, India faces a collusive China-Pakistan military threat of a conventional war on its northern and western borders. The withdrawal of the US led coalition from Afghanistan brings a new set of problems with it. India's policy makers have struggled for a long period, visualizing about the dangers of the US leaving Afghanistan to the

⁵¹ Katoch, "Joint Operations Capability," 126.

⁵² Gurmeet Kanwal, "Defence Reforms: CDS and Theatre Commands are an Operational Necessity," *SYNERGY: Journal of the Centre for Joint Warfare Studies* (July 2016): 19.

⁵³ Katoch, "Special Operations Command."

mercy of the Taliban, so assiduously nurtured over the decades by the Pakistan Army, fearing that Taliban-controlled Afghanistan would once again become Pakistan's partner in promoting jihadi terrorism against India.⁵⁴ This danger of the increase in terrorist activities enhances the threat from two fronts to two and a half fronts.⁵⁵

The nature of warfare is also changing tremendously. The domains of space and cyber have been added to the conventional three-dimensional warfare of land, sea, and air. The use of internet and social media to spread disinformation can be done easily by any state or non-state actor. At the same time, enhanced space capabilities can provide early warning of a large-scale troop buildup in real time. The situation becomes further critical for India as both its adversaries, China and Pakistan are nuclear armed nations. A suitably organized SF supporting the regular conventional forces will be a key to counter these multi domain threats.

Topic 5: Anticipated Special Operations Missions and Support Required

In 2005, while addressing a prestigious seminar in New Delhi, the then Union Defence Minister, Pranab Mukherjee, had pointed out that India's strategic requirements stretched from the Horn of Africa in the west to the Malacca Straits in the east with the Central Asian Republics and China to the north.⁵⁶ With asymmetric fourth generation warfare emerging as an essential feature of present and future conflicts, India's SF would

⁵⁴ C. Raja Mohan, "Post-American Afghanistan and India's geopolitics," *Foreign Policy*, August 18, 2021, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2021/08/18/afghanistan-withdrawal-india-china-russia-pakistan-geopolitics-indo-pacific/>.

⁵⁵ Katoch and Datta, *India's Special Forces*, xix.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 141.

be increasingly relied upon to safeguard the country's strategic interests in its immediate and extended neighborhood.⁵⁷ India is in the process of creating Integrated Theater Commands (ITC) that would be joint structures of the three services. SF are a potent weapon to assist these ITCs in achieving their theater strategic/operational objectives. Sinha and Balakrishnan in their article on "Employment of India's Special Operations Forces," anticipate the following SF missions in support of achieving national and strategic objectives:

1. Strategic reconnaissance.
2. Direct Actions.
3. Information support operations.
4. Unconventional and sub-conventional warfare, covert and clandestine operations.
5. Counter terrorism and counter insurgency, anti-hijack and hostage rescue.
6. Protection of strategic and economic assets.
7. Out of Area Contingencies to support airborne/conventional forces.
8. Humanitarian missions.
9. Combat search and rescue.
10. Foreign internal defence.⁵⁸

In their book, Katoch and Datta mention that Indian SF would be required to undertake variety of tasks, viz., surveillance and target designation in areas of strategic

⁵⁷ Sinha and Balakrishnan, "Employment of India's Special Operations Forces," 5.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 5, 6.

interest including maritime environment, psychological operations, NBC warfare, building partner capabilities of friendly foreign countries, and providing cutting edge for strategic force projection.⁵⁹ Although some of these missions are presently being undertaken by the Indian SF, however, a comprehensive review of the role of SF is necessary to utilize their optimum potential.

In 2008, HQ Integrated Defence Staff released a joint doctrine for Special Forces that emphasized the need for accurate intelligence in real time, aerial fire support, naval gunfire, artillery, precision guided munitions, and rockets for the conduct of special operations.⁶⁰ The Indian Air Force must look at specifically designating and training air elements for the conduct of special operations.⁶¹ The air assets of Army Aviation and the Navy must also be incorporated to support the special operations, as required. The existing organization of the SF units has limited integral sustainment support and they depend on supported formations for further requirements.

Topic 6: SOCOM Structures of Other Countries

The author studied the special operations organizations of the US, Russia, and China as case studies for this thesis. A brief overview of the organization of SOCOM structures of these countries is provided below. A detailed study is done as part of case study presentation in Chapter 4: Analysis.

⁵⁹ Katoch and Datta, *India's Special Forces*, 124.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 120.

⁶¹ Sinha and Balakrishnan, "Employment of India's Special Operations Forces," 8.

United States Special Operations Command (USSOCOM)

USSOCOM is a unified command comprising of active duty and reserve personnel of Special Forces of all four services of USA. Active duty Special Operations Forces (SOF) elements assigned to USSOCOM are organized into four service component commands and eight sub-unified commands (see Figure 1).⁶² The service component commands are responsible for generating and sustaining SOF elements of their respective services. The subordinate unified commands consist of Theater Special Operations Commands (TSOC) and Joint Special Operations Command (JSOC). TSOCs are created to provide SOF support to the Geographic Combatant Commands (GCC). JSOC is a joint headquarters designed to study special operations requirements and techniques, ensure interoperability and equipment standardization, plan and conduct joint special operations exercises and training, and develop joint special operations tactics.⁶³ All subordinate unified commands less JSOC remain under the operational control (OPCON) to the GCCs.⁶⁴

⁶² Joint Special Operations University (JSOU), *Special Operations Forces Reference Manual*, 4th ed. (MacDill AFB, Florida: The JSOU Press, June 2015), 2-12.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 2-12.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 2-1.

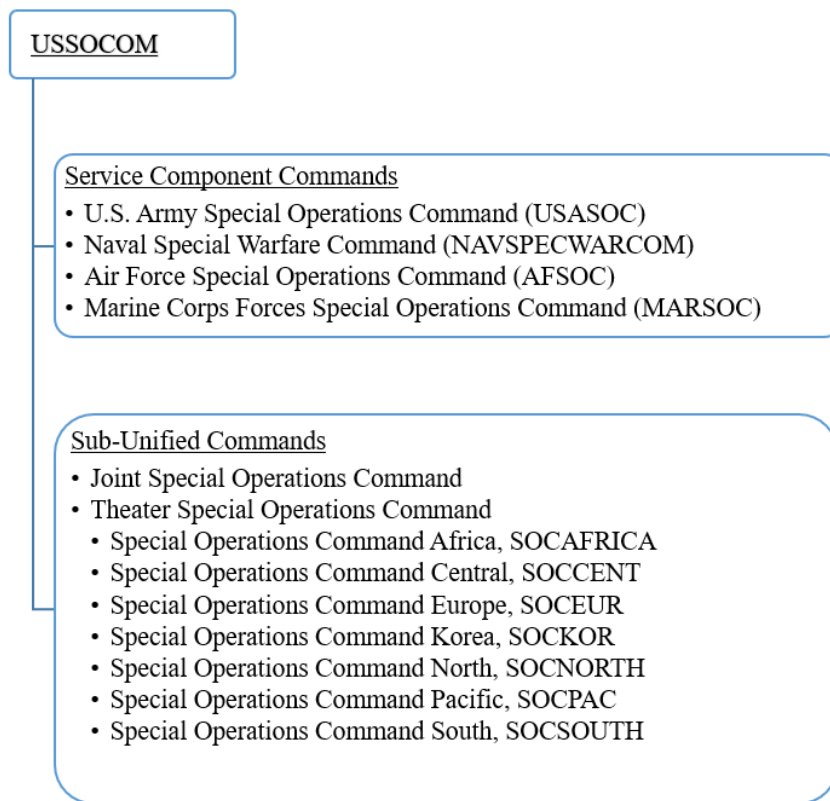


Figure 1. Organization of USSOCOM

Source: Created by author based on information from Joint Special Operations University (JSOU), *Special Operations Forces Reference Manual*, 4th ed., (MacDill AFB, Florida: The JSOU Press, June 2015), 2-12, 2-13.

Russian Special Operations Command

SOF in the Russian equivalent is *Sil Spetsialnykh Operatsiy*, a literal translation. Abbreviated as SSO, these refer only to the soldiers assigned to the Russian Special Operations Command, *Komandovanie Sil Spetsialnykh Operatsiy*, or KSO (sometimes KSSO). SSO are all volunteer forces in a conscript Russian Army.⁶⁵ At Senezh, Unit

⁶⁵ Mark Galeotti, “Spetsnaz: Operational Intelligence, Political Warfare, and Battlefield Role,” (Marshall Center Security Insight no. 046, Garmisch-Partenkirchen, Germany, February 2020, <https://www.marshallcenter.org/en/publications/security-insights/spetsnaz-operational-intelligence-political-warfare-and-battlefield-role-0>).

99450 currently serves as the KSO headquarters (see Figure 2). The number of soldiers within the command is unknown but estimates range from 500 to 2500 soldiers.⁶⁶ Based on procurement documents, Unit 92154 appears to be collocated with the KSO headquarters at Senezh, while Unit 43292, also at Senezh, currently appears to be the training division responsible for operational training as well as the selection and assessment pipeline.⁶⁷ A suspected task organization of KSO including some additional units is depicted in Figure 2 below. (Some unit names are unknown and represented as xxx).

⁶⁶ Bret P. Woellner, “The Advent of the Russian Special Operations Command,” (School of Advanced Military Studies Monograph, US Army Command and General Staff College, 2019), 31.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

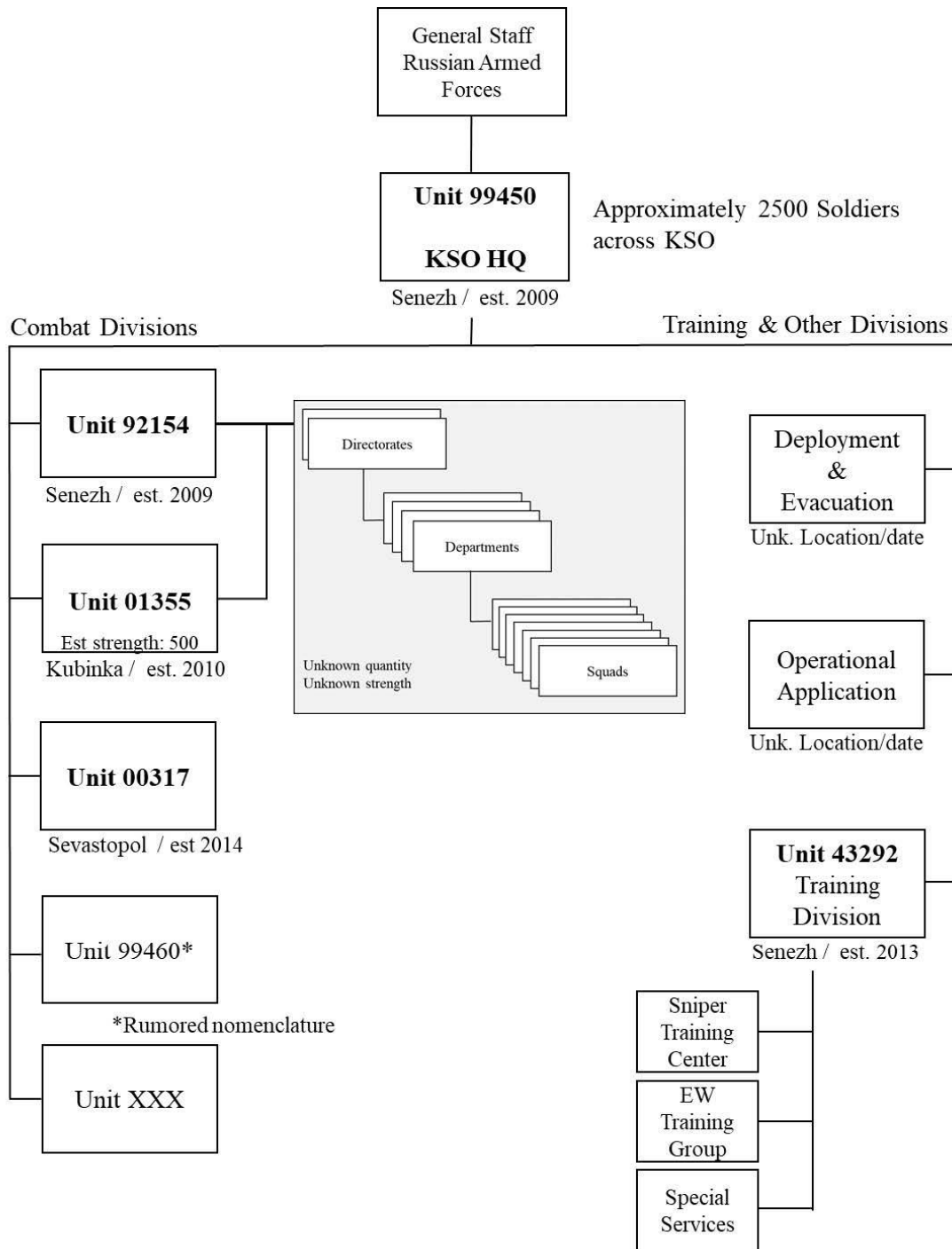


Figure 2. Suspected Task Organization of KSO

Source: Bret P. Woellner, "The Advent of the Russian Special Operations Command," (School of Advanced Military Studies Monograph, Command and General Staff College, Fort Leavenworth, KS, 2019), 47.

China's Special Operations Command

China's Special Operations Forces (SOF) represent the best-trained and best-equipped light ground forces in every People's Liberation Army (PLA) service.⁶⁸ Most of the PLA SOF are organized into brigades assigned to each of its five Theater Commands.⁶⁹ There is one SOF brigade in each of the Group Armies of PLA Army (PLAA), and one each in PLA Air Force (PLAAF) Airborne Corps, PLA Navy (PLAN) Marine Corps and PLA Rocket Force (see Figure 3).⁷⁰

⁶⁸ Headquarters Department of the Army (HQDA), Army Techniques Publication (ATP) 7-100.3, *Chinese Tactics* (Washington, DC: Army Publishing Directorate, August 2021), G-1.

⁶⁹ John Chen and Joel Wuthnow, *China Maritime Report No. 18: Chinese Special Operations in a Large-Scale Island Landing* (Newport, RI: China Maritime Studies Institute, US Naval War College, January 2022), 6, <https://digital-commons.usnwc.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1017&context=cmsi-maritime-reports>.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

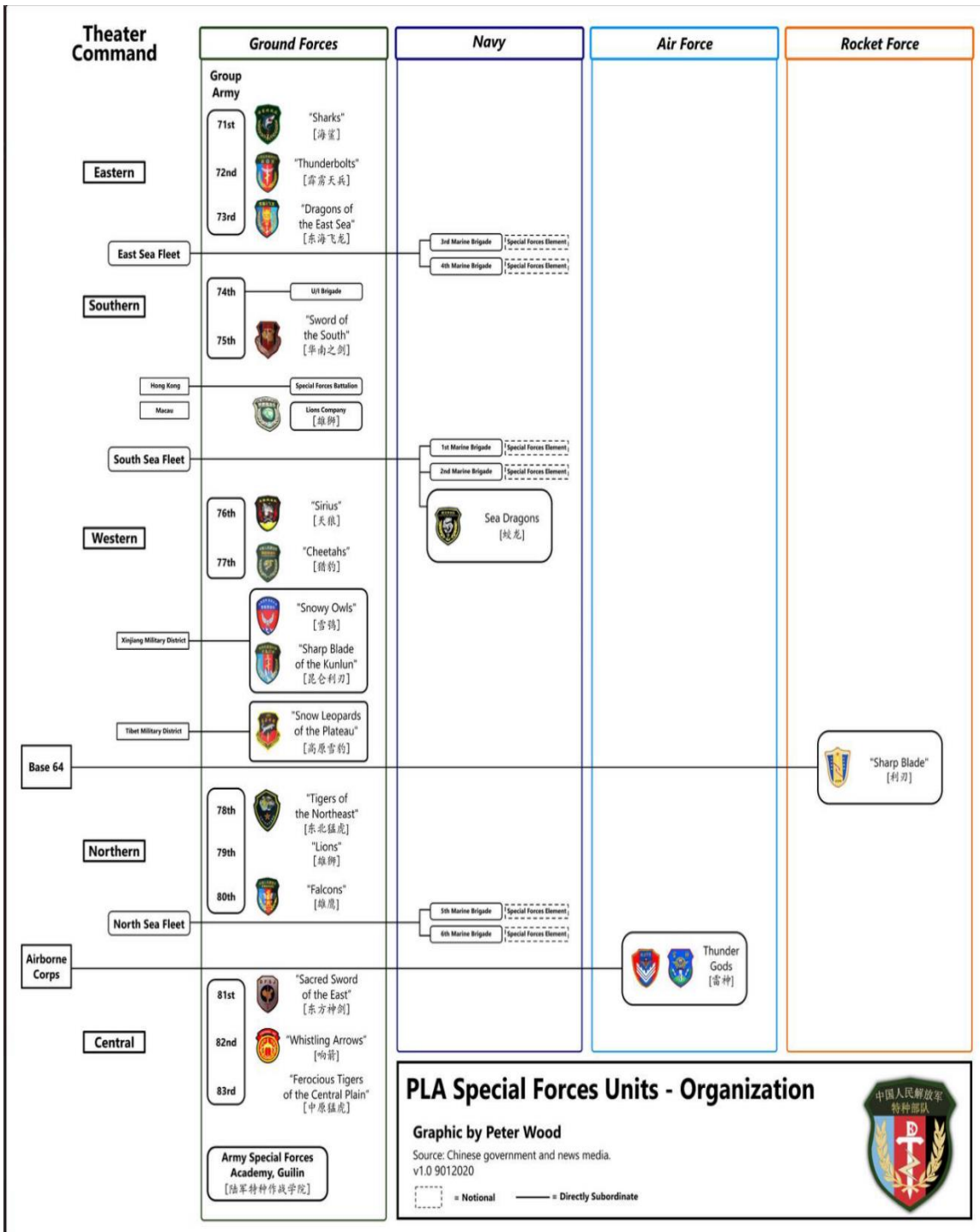


Figure 3. Organization of PLA SOF

Source: John Chen and Joel Wuthnow, *China Maritime Report No. 18: Chinese Special Operations in a Large-Scale Island Landing* (Newport, RI: China Maritime Studies Institute, US Naval War College, January 2022), 18, <https://digital-commons.usnwc.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1017&context=cmsi-maritime-reports>.

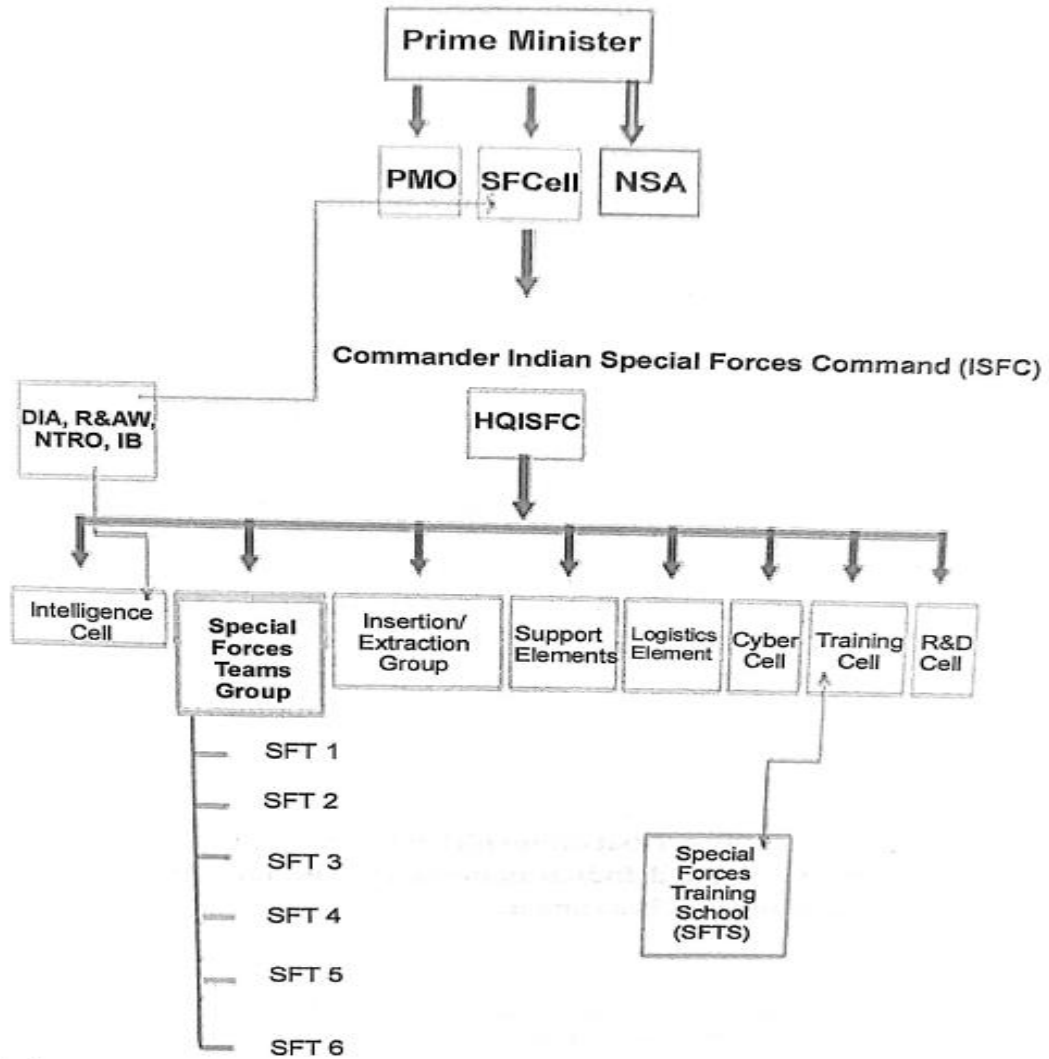
Topic 7: Recommendations by Other Writers on SOCOM Structure for India

What India needs for coping with irregular/unconventional threats and power projection is a set up as follows: *Special Forces*—for strategic tasks including as deterrent against irregular and asymmetric warfare; *Commando Forces*—for cross border tactical tasks and within border tasks beyond capabilities of regular infantry; and *Airborne Forces*—for rapid reaction and force projection within and outside India. Special Forces though primarily tasked for strategic tasks throughout the conflict spectrum will also act as force multipliers to Commando Forces and Airborne Forces during conventional conflict.⁷¹

Based on the above argument, Lieutenant General P. C. Katoch (Retired) claims that India should have an Indian Special Forces Command or ISFC (see Figure 4) as well as an Integrated Commando Command or ICC (see Figure 5). ISFC will be a smaller force comprising of Special Forces Teams (SFT) focused on different regions/countries of interest to India, while ICC will consist of the remaining SF units of India.

⁷¹ Katoch and Datta, *India's Special Forces*, 129.

Outline Organization: Indian Special Forces Command (ISFC)



Note: Number of SFTs and Composition of Individual SFT not sacrosanct.

Figure 4. ISFC Structure Recommended by Lieutenant General P. C. Katoch (Retired)

Source: P. C. Katoch and Saikat Datta, *India's Special Forces: History and Future of Indian Special Forces* (New Delhi, India: Vij Books India Pvt. Ltd., 2013), 133.

Outline Organization of Intergrated Commando Command (ICC)

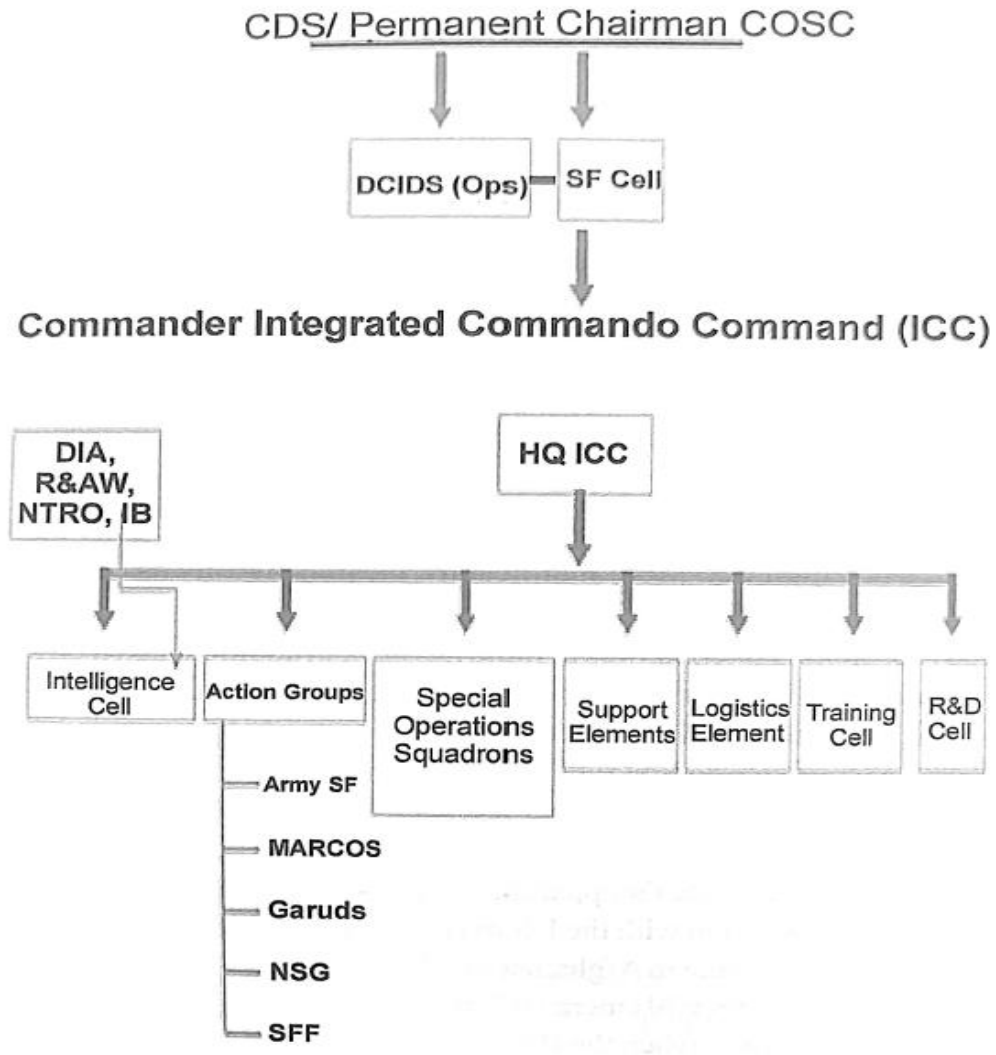


Figure 5. ICC Structure Recommended by Lieutenant General P. C. Katoch (Retired)

Source: P. C. Katoch and Saikat Datta, *India's Special Forces: History and Future of Indian Special Forces* (New Delhi, India: Vij Books India Pvt. Ltd., 2013), 135.

Brigadier Deepak Sinha (Retired) suggested an organization that included airborne brigade as part of Special Operations Command. He organized forces in various

SF Groups that were joint structures (see Figure 6). These SF Groups provided dedicated special operations support to different theaters.

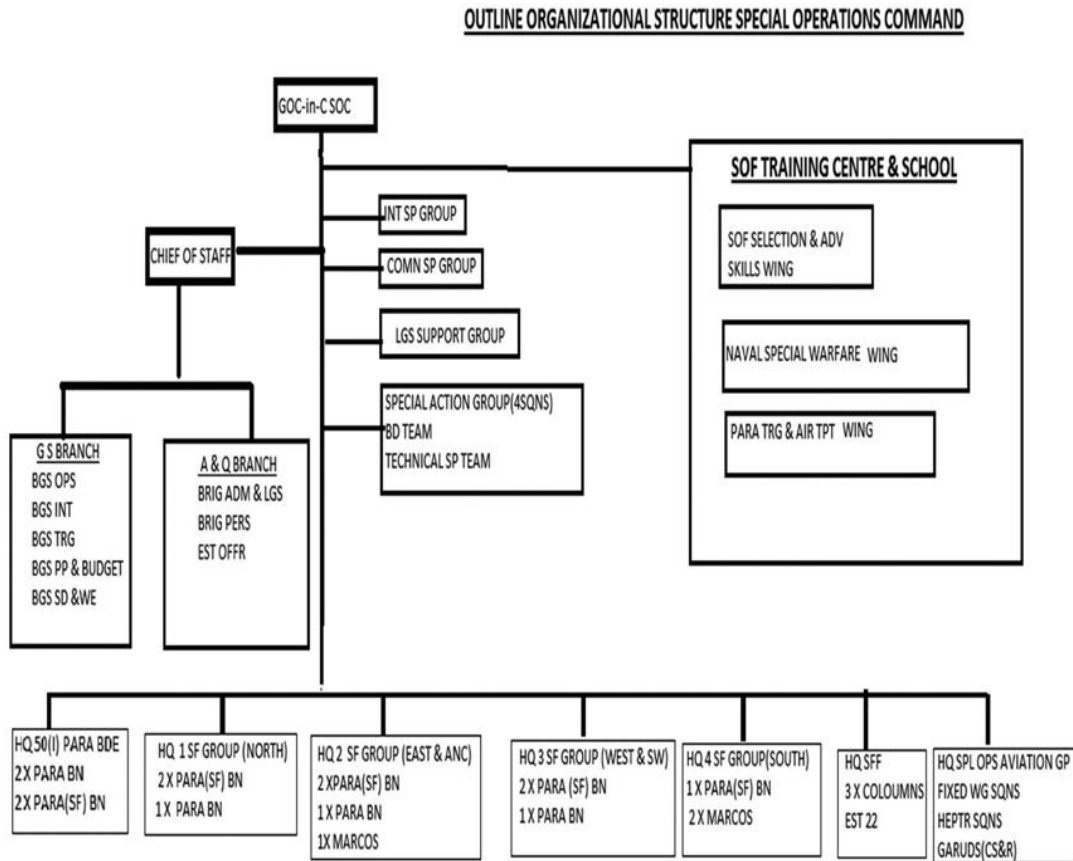


Figure 6. SOCOM Structure Recommended by Brigadier Deepak Sinha (Retired)

Source: Deepak Sinha, “Special Operations Command: Conceptual Framework, Architecture and Force Structure,” *SYNERGY: Journal of the Centre for Joint Warfare Studies* (July 2016), 35.

Both the writers recommended changes that require a complete overhaul of SF organization in India rather than incremental changes. Lieutenant General P. C. Katoch (Retired) recommended two organizations to fulfill the requirement of SF undertaking national missions as well as being utilized for supporting conventional forces in combat.

He even suggested including paramilitary forces as well as police forces in ISFC. However, he did not speak about the policy changes required to be done in Ministry of Defence and Ministry of Home Affairs for causing such a restructuring. Additionally, it is unclear as to how the ICC will be utilized to provide dedicated SF support to individual theaters. On the other hand, Brigadier Deepak Sinha (Retired) considered inclusion of airborne forces as part of SOF in India and employed them piecemeal as part of different SF groups. This creates the dilemma about utilization of airborne forces as a whole for coup de main tasks. Additionally, he did not make a mention of any force that would be designated for carrying out national missions. However, both the writers recommended subordinate organizations to provide organic materiel support for executing special operations.

Summary

This chapter reviewed the existing literature to provide a foundation to answer the research questions. It was essential for the reader to understand the basics of SF in India and their existing status before any recommendation on structure can be made. India's security situation was discussed in order to reinforce the requirement of a centralized organization to undertake successful special operations in Indian context. The knowledge of existing organization structure and the proposed SOCOM structure in India given by different writers helps to understand the knowledge gap that leads into Data Analysis. The literature review provided context to answer the secondary research questions and helped to establish necessary evaluation criteria to analyze the case studies. In chapter 3, a detailed understanding of the research methodology used will be presented.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Introduction

Chapter 2 provided an insight on the available literature on Special Forces and their organization structure in India, their genesis, and how they support the fighting formations. The chapter also gave an overview of India's security situation and thus the anticipated missions of SF in existing geopolitical and multi domain threat scenario. This chapter will explain the research methodology applied by the author to answer the research questions. It is organized to first revisit the purpose of study. Thereafter, the chapter will explain the rationale for the chosen methodology, the elements of data collection and data analysis. The purpose of this chapter is to provide a clear and convincing argument for using the selected research design.

Purpose of Study

This study aims to reinforce the relevance of SOCOM for India and recommend the right kind of organizational structure for unified command and control over all Indian SF units. The author aims to study the SOCOM structures of some of the developed armed forces to find out the possible correlation for India. The problem being a lack of an organizational structure, the thesis will be conducted keeping the DOTMLPF-P construct in mind.

Method

The author applied qualitative research methodology to carry out this study. The purpose of the study determined the method chosen. In their book, Merriam and Tisdell

claim that there are four characteristics of qualitative research: “the focus is on process, understanding, and meaning; the researcher is the primary instrument of data collection and analysis; the process is inductive; and the product is richly descriptive.”⁷²

The first characteristic refers to the most prominent attribute of a qualitative research. Qualitative research is a descriptive process marked by detailed analysis of the problem and the focus is to understand the process to arrive at an unbiased solution. The researcher conducts the process as an insider rather than quantitative research where the statistical data determines the results.

The researcher is the primary instrument of collecting and analyzing data for this research because he can apply his own understanding of the subject to clarify the material and find the voids that need to be filled. However, the human instrument has shortcomings and biases that can have an impact on the study.⁷³ For this research, the author has attempted to remain unbiased by studying SF of different nations that have their peculiar security structures and requirements. The author has tried to find how these SF organizations are supporting their field formations and what inferences can be drawn out of these structures for India.

The lack of a suitable special operations organization structure provoked an inductive reasoning process to study the existing structures of other countries and subjectively analyze them. This required a deeper understanding of special operations organizations of specific countries that have large militaries like India rather than

⁷² Sharan B. Merriam and Elizabeth J. Tisdell, *Qualitative Research: A Guide to Design and Implementation*, 4th ed. (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2016), 15.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 16.

exploring a wide spectrum. Moreover, the existing data can only provide guidance and necessary correlations. A generalization cannot be made that an existing organization structure in a different country will be applicable in India.

The output of this research is largely descriptive rather than a particular inference. The author will ultimately produce a recommended special operations organization as an outcome of this study. The structure may not be a perfect solution and there might be a scope of improvement in the future based on changes in operational environment. An analysis of a large amount of data about the SF of different nations will be conducted to support the recommendations.

Approach

The author will conduct a qualitative study to understand what organization India needs to effectively conduct special operations. The author conducted a Capability Based Assessment of needs analysis, gap analysis and solutions analysis to conduct this research (see Figure 7). The employment pattern of SF in India prompted the author to conduct this research and laid the foundation for formulating the primary research question that corresponds with the needs analysis portion of Capability Based Assessment. Although, the need was already established by the Naresh Chandra Committee, a partial action on its recommendations reinforces the need. The primary research question could not be answered without a basic understanding of how existing SF organizations look like in India and other armed forces under consideration. This formed the basis of secondary research questions that in turn guided the literature review. The scope of this literature review provided context to answer the secondary research questions. The literature review also helped to identify the gaps existing in the structure that prompt the need. This

led to an understanding of the voids that India needs to fulfill. This corresponds with gaps analysis part of Capability Based Assessment. The gaps identified in the literature review are presented and analyzed in Chapter 4: Analysis, which corresponds to the solutions analysis part of Capability Based Assessment. This process involved studying multiple case studies in detail and identified a range of possible inferences that the Indian armed forces can consider. The author will analyze these case studies in detail, through the lens of evaluation criteria, to understand the relevance of these organizations and their functioning to support national and strategic objectives. The solutions analysis will help in reaching at an understanding where a SOCOM structure for India can be recommended.⁷⁴

⁷⁴ The idea for writing this paragraph is taken from Sarah M. Gerstein, “Retaining Talent: Lessons from Australia, Norway and Sister Services,” (Master of Military Art and Science Thesis, US Army Command and General Staff College, Fort Leavenworth, USA, 2020), 31.


Input		Output
<u>Established Need</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Naresh Chandra committee recommendations • Joint doctrine • AFSOD • Security scenario compels the need. 	Needs Analysis	<u>Required Capability</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tri services organization to effectively execute special operations.
<u>Current state</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Current C2 of units with respective commands • Existence of units other than in ministry of defence • AFSOD commands small number of SF elements of Army, Navy and Air Force 	Gap Analysis	<u>Capability gaps</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of unified C2 • Inefficient employment of SF • Lack of organic support elements • Overlapping tasks leading to lack of economy of force • Absence of dedicated HQ for special operations support to fighting formations
<u>Approach</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analysis of existing gaps • Case studies of USA, China and Russia • Within case and cross case analysis 	Solution Analysis	<u>DOTMLPF-P Solution</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organizational solution - Functional SOCOM

Figure 7. Logic Chart for Research: Capability Based Assessment

Source: Created by author.

Case Study Analysis

A case study is an in-depth description and analysis of a bounded system.⁷⁵ The case study technique of research provides a structured approach to answer the research

⁷⁵ Merriam and Tisdell, *Qualitative Research*, 37.

questions. This thesis will consider three case studies, viz., the SOCOM structures of the US, Russia, and China. Although many more countries have SOCOM structures and their organizations could be studied, it was necessary to consider those cases that have better relevance to India. The US, Russia, and China were chosen as cases because these countries have large armed forces, and a significant strength of SOF which is analogous to India. In addition, China was selected because India shares a disputed land border with China, which has been the reason for violent conflicts in the past between the two neighbors. Each of the three countries under consideration utilizes its SF in a different manner. All these countries have different security requirements and thus an analysis of these countries leads to a fair study free of biases. Moreover, SOF of the three countries under consideration have demonstrated effectiveness in combat and thus an assumption can be made that the SOCOM structures of these countries are relevant to them. These cases are bound in this study by discussing how they are designed to support their national aims and the fighting formations in combat. The study primarily focuses on the organization of SF and not on the training of personnel or combat efficiency of troops.

Data Collection

Qualitative data consists of “direct quotations from people about their experiences, opinions, feelings and knowledge” obtained through interviews; detailed descriptions of “people’s activities, behaviors, actions” recorded in observations; and “excerpts, quotations or entire passages” extracted from various types of documents.⁷⁶

⁷⁶ M. Q. Patton, *Qualitative Research and Evaluation Methods*, 4th ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2015), 14.

The primary resources of data collection for this study are various kinds of documents. Many of the documents used during the research are from government websites, scholarly journals, and other news websites. Government documents included national security documents, military regulations, and published statements made by government officials. The author also collected data from relevant books written by subject matter experts, and theses and monographs written by students of the Command and General Staff College on similar topics earlier. A considerable amount of information was obtained through newspaper and journal articles. A combination of literature from the Combined Arms Research Library and the internet provided a wide range of information to help answer the primary and secondary research questions. SF, being elite forces, much of the information is classified and not available in public domain. Some of the information available is not current and had to be utilized as such. The author however, ensured that all the data collected was unclassified in nature.

Data Analysis

Qualitative research is not a linear step by step process; data collection and analysis are simultaneous activities in qualitative research.⁷⁷ This means that the researcher needs to decide in earlier stages as to what type of data he needs to collect, and for this research the author restricted himself to data in the form of documents. A preliminary analysis of the data is done while it is collected to check for its relevance to the topic. A thorough analysis of the data collected is presented in Chapter 4 of the study. The author utilized this constant comparison method to continue to analyze data along

⁷⁷ Merriam and Tisdell, *Qualitative Research*, 191.

with collection. The purpose of the data analysis is to address the voids in existing Indian SF organization structure. The author will analyze multiple case studies of SOCOM of the US, Russia and China to determine outputs that hold relevance for Indian armed forces, specifically for the SF in India. This case study analysis will be done through the lens of evaluation criteria already established, keeping the DOTMLPF-P construct in mind. This will lead to a better understanding of the way the countries under consideration command and control their SF, which will further contribute to recommending the possible answer to the primary research question. The author will present the recommendation in the form of a task organization chart depicting the comprehensive picture of SOCOM assessed in Indian context.

The desired end state of the research is defining a SOCOM structure for India. Throughout the research process, the author will keep his constructivist epistemological framework in mind to achieve this end state. In multiple case study research, there are two stages of analysis; the within-case analysis and the cross-case analysis.⁷⁸ The author will first conduct within-case analysis to find out the gaps in Indian SF organization structure and what other countries have done to conduct special operations. Thereafter, the cross-case analysis will be utilized to compare these case studies to determine merits and demerits of each SOCOM structure to draw the relevant results for India.

Evaluation Criteria

The weaknesses in Indian SF structure as observed from the literature review can be summarized as follows:

⁷⁸ Merriam and Tisdell, *Qualitative Research*, 234.

1. There is no centralized structure to establish unified command over all SF.
2. They are frequently employed to achieve tactical effects.
3. There is a lack of integral special operations support like intelligence assets, airlift, and sustainment.
4. Units have overlapping roles leading to lack of economy of force.

This leads to ineffective employment of SF. Additionally, with the advent of theater commands, the absence of an SF echelon higher than battalion will cause turf battles between the units under a particular theater. At the highest level, there is a void in advising the senior hierarchy about conduct of special operations to achieve national strategic or politico-military tasks. The existence of elite troops not part of the Army but drawing manpower on deputation causes additional confusion. The individual cases of special operations organizations of the US, Russia, and China would thus be evaluated on a relative scale of 'Good, Better, and Best' based on the criteria explained in the following sections.

Criterion 1: Unified Command over all Forces Conducting/Supporting Special Missions

The countries under consideration have SF belonging to different services, analogous to India. A C2 mechanism organized under a single commander yields better synchronization in the execution of special operations, as well as the administration of SOF. The individual cases would be studied to ascertain if the C2 within their SF organizations is exercised by a single commander, or the SF of different services have their distinct chain of command.

Criterion 2: SF Support to Achieve National as well as Theater Strategic Objectives

SF are a critical asset for any nation. They can be utilized independently for executing politico-military missions, and for supporting conventional forces in combat situations. The case studies would be analyzed to determine the manner in which SF of the countries under consideration are utilized for executing national missions that are politically sensitive in nature as well as supporting the conventional forces in accomplishing the theater strategic objectives.

Criterion 3: Inter-services Integration

The different services have their distinct selection and training standards. Standardization of training and synchronization among SF of different services is essential for successful execution of special operation missions. A dedicated effort is required to achieve the same. The case studies will be analyzed to assess the procedure adopted by the countries under consideration to improve the coordination and integration among the SF of different services, as well as inter service integration of SF with conventional forces.

Criterion 4: Integral Supporting Elements

Special operations require dedicated support from other branches for execution of special operation missions. SF have limited organic sustainment capability and require dedicated combat support and combat service support when operating for longer durations. The case studies would be analyzed to ascertain the quantum of supporting elements assigned as organic to SF of these countries and the authorities to provision additional support as required.

Each evaluation criteria will be individually applied to the case studies and on a relative scale, the country that qualifies the criteria most appropriately will be judged *Best*, and in this order reducing the rank to *Better* and *Good*. A country that does not follow a certain criterion will be marked as *Unsuitable* for that particular head. The assessment of analysis will be presented in the form of a table and a consolidated table will be created to present the overall assessment.

Summary

This chapter dealt with the 'How' component of study and described the approach taken by author to conduct his research and find the answers to the research questions. The author's approach is based on capability based assessment concept. The chapter described the rationale as to why the author applied case study technique of qualitative research methodology to conduct this thesis. The basis of research process was document analysis using multiple case studies. The next chapter will deal with the data analysis.

CHAPTER 4

ANALYSIS

Introduction

The previous chapter explained the methodology adopted by the author to conduct this research. The aim of this chapter is to answer the secondary research questions that would, in turn, lay the foundation to answer primary research question in next chapter. Keeping this aim in mind, the chapter is organized corresponding with the secondary research questions. The author will analyze the literature review topics to answer secondary research questions #1 and #2. The three case studies of special operations command organizations of the US, Russia, and China will then be presented and analyzed through the lens of evaluation criteria to answer secondary research question #3.

Secondary Research Question #1

The question is what is the present state of SF in India? Topics 1 to 3 of the literature review correspond with secondary research question #1. An analysis of the literature is done corresponding with the chosen elements of Organization, Doctrine and Policy, and Materiel out of DOTMLPF-P.

Organization

The existing literature reveals that India has SF in all three of its military services. These are PARA (SF) of Army, MARCOS of Navy, and Garuds of Air Force. In addition, there is NSG and SFF which are also elite units that do not belong to the Ministry of Defence unlike their military counterparts. RR battalions exist as the counterinsurgency force of the Army. All these units have different task organizations.

A significant issue worth mentioning is that NSG, SFF and RR do not have their own manpower and are manned by personnel selected from the regular Army units including PARA (SF). It is a peculiar situation wherein personnel undergo selection and training for these units and then serve only for a limited duration of two to three years, after which they revert to their parent units. Thus, a significant amount of time, manpower and resources are utilized regularly for selection and training in these units. The situation gets further complicated considering the deputation of PARA (SF) personnel including officers. PARA (SF) are elite forces that have rigorous selection and training standards. It seems abnormal that these selected and specially trained personnel undergo further selection and training to serve in units that have the same mandated tasks like PARA (SF).

Another issue pertinent here is the existence of PARA (SF) and Airborne forces in the same Parachute Regiment. The infantry regiments in Indian Army are a group of battalions that are identical and all of which can undertake similar tasks. The basic training of personnel before getting enlisted is conducted at their respective regimental centers. Although the grouping of battalions in regiment does not have any tactical implications, it matters in the case of Parachute Regiment. As a consequence, airborne units too consist of all volunteers, and their selection process is also very similar to SF units.

Airborne forces have very different organization, role, and tasks than the PARA (SF). Although, it is true that all PARA (SF) personnel are paratroopers, it is a fact that parachuting is only one of the means of insertion for SF. Other than this similarity of being airborne qualified, PARA (SF) and airborne forces are entirely different. Airborne

forces are the rapid reaction forces of the country and they have proved this in the past. On the contrary, SF are military units that are raised for performing tasks that are not undertaken by conventional forces. Thus, considering them part of the same regiment, and undergoing same selection and basic training is incorrect. This also distracts the airborne forces from focusing on their primary task. This situation sometimes becomes complex when non-SF officers are posted in appointments concerning with SF, and vice versa, due to them being from the same regiment.

AFSOD is the only joint SF organization that exists in India. Presently, it commands small number of SF elements of the three services. It, however, does not possess any organic unit for aerial or maritime surface mobility, and neither a unit for conducting intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) required for execution of the special operations. There is a dedicated special operations rotary wing squadron in Army Aviation, but it is not subordinated to AFSOD. A similar transport carrier squadron exists in Air Force too, but it is also not commanded by AFSOD.

Doctrine and Policy

The SF units of different services in India have similar C2 arrangements. They are all subordinated to different geographic commands of their respective services. Due to service specific C2 arrangements, there is an overlap of responsibility amongst the SF in a particular area. In case of Army, sometimes when there is more than one SF battalion in a particular theater, they get further pushed down to be controlled by corps headquarters subordinate to that command. The C2 mechanism of elite units belonging to other ministries is different.

There is no echelon higher than battalion other than AFSOD. A formal doctrine explaining the composition, tasking, command and control, and concept of employment of AFSOD is yet to be developed. The small number of SF elements that it commands are not permanently subordinated to it and the services retain the bulk of their SF. Additionally, it does not exercise any control over NSG, SFF, and RR.

SF in India are primarily employed to support the conventional forces in battle. There is no organization that advises the commanders at higher levels about the conduct of special operations to support national aims. The units are primarily deployed within Indian borders. The control of battalions at operational levels impedes them from undertaking any national level tasks.

SF units of different services have overlapping tasks and missions, with counterterrorism being the common task for all of the SF. It is understood that all SF have to be proficient in urban combat, but it becomes a turf battle when no unit is earmarked for it formally. Additionally, it leads to lack of training on the primary task. This also leads to the problem of sufficient equipping when a particular role is mandated by all of the forces. On the contrary, there are tasks like vital installation security (mandated for Garuds) that can be undertaken by a force that is not labeled as SF, and so assist in freeing up those troops for better employment.

India does not follow the concept of Special Operations Forces (SOF). There are no organic Intelligence or aviation units to support the conduct of special operation missions. The only unit that enjoys better intelligence support are the SFF units that work in coordination with RAW.

Materiel

The only SF organization larger than a battalion in India is AFSOD. This causes major restrictions in terms of provisioning of materiel support to SF. The battalions have adequate assets to execute tactical actions. However, assets like unmanned aerial vehicles required for ISR, aircraft required for aerial mobility of troops, and maritime surface mobility crafts belong to different branches of service. AFSOD does not have organic assets to support the battalions for executing special operations. Thus, a cumbersome chain of command has to be followed for provisioning the materiel support to SF even for training purposes.

Secondary Research Question #2

The question is what are the anticipated special operations missions and support required for conduct of special operations? Topic 4 of literature review explained India's security environment and the threats that are anticipated in the future, while Topic 5 explained the anticipated special operation missions and support required for their execution.

The threat scenario of India is very peculiar. It shares land border disputes with two of its neighbors, Pakistan and China. The disputes have led to major wars in the past and an unfriendly relationship in the present. To add to the complexity, both Pakistan and China are nuclear armed and share a very strong bond between them. India thus faces a two-front threat of a conventional war from a joint China-Pakistan effort. India continues to fight terrorism in its northern and eastern border states, which expands the threat from two fronts to two and a half fronts.

The future security scenario does not look very promising. India has trouble brewing across its neighborhood. In the recent past, Myanmar underwent a military coup; economic crisis exists in Sri Lanka; Afghanistan is controlled by Taliban; Pakistan is going through a political turmoil; and China continues its aggressive actions in South China Sea as well as against India. Further, the future will be marked by multi-domain threats. These conditions call for an active security posture by India well supported by SF.

The security situation existing in India determines the anticipated special operation missions. The missions that hold primary importance are direct action, strategic reconnaissance, counter terrorism and counterinsurgency, information support operations, and unconventional warfare. SF in India may be employed for foreign internal defense, out of area contingencies and foreign security forces assistance as well.

Special missions inherently require dedicated combat support and combat service support for their successful execution. The supporting functions that have to be incorporated for successful execution of special missions are intelligence, fires, mobility, communication, and sustainment. Organic intelligence, airlift capability, and sustainment are vital for executing special operations. Indirect fires including aerial support and communication with supported forces must be incorporated during planning. In the future multi domain threat scenario, additional support in the form of cyber, space, and electromagnetic spectrum operations may be required that can be provided from case-to-case basis. In India, the situation deserves particular attention because the size of the armed forces is large and there are only limited resources to exploit.

Secondary Research Question #3

The question is what organizations are used by some of the developed armed forces of the world to command and control their SF? The author has considered special operations command organizations of the US, Russia, and China as the case studies to answer this question. A basic outline of SF organization structures of these countries is provided in Topic 6 of literature review. The individual cases would be presented here and analyzed in the framework of the chosen elements of Organization, Doctrine and Policy, and Materiel out of DOTMLPF-P. A cross case analysis will subsequently be done through the lens of evaluation criteria described in research methodology.

Case Study: US

The United States Special Operations Command (USSOCOM) was established on April 16, 1987.⁷⁹ The role and mission of USSOCOM are stated below:

Role - Organize, train, equip and provide fully capable special operations forces to defend the United States and its interests.⁸⁰

Mission - USSOCOM develops and employs fully capable special operations forces to conduct global special operations and activities as part of the joint force to support persistent, networked and distributed combatant command operations and campaigns against state and non-state actors to protect and advance U.S. policies and objectives.⁸¹

⁷⁹ United States Special Operations Command (USSOCOM), *2022 Factbook* (MacDill AFB, FL: USSOCOM Office of Communication, 2022), 12, <https://www.socom.mil/latest-factbook>.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 12.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 14.

Organization

A broad outline of the organization of USSOCOM is mentioned in literature review. The various service components are responsible for providing manned, trained and equipped SOF of their respective services to USSOCOM. USASOC consists of 1st Special Forces Command (Airborne), 75th Ranger Regiment, US Army Special Operations Aviation Command, 4th and 8th Psychological Operations Groups, 95th Civil Affairs Brigade and 528th Special Operations Sustainment Brigade along with the training and medical groups. NAVSPECWARCOM consists of eight SEAL teams along with its organic mobility and supporting elements. AFSOC consists of fixed wing and tilt rotor squadrons, special warfare teams, and combat aviation advisors. MARSOC consists of the Marine Raider Regiment, its support group and training center. These SOF units are organized in TSOCs to provide dedicated SOF support to the supported Combatant Commands. In addition, there are designated SOF units to conduct and coordinate nationally directed missions. Not much information exists on these 'elitest of the elite' units, but these units enjoy permissions higher than other SF units and conduct missions of national and global significance such as Operation Neptune Spear, which was a raid to kill Osama bin Laden.

Doctrine and Policy

USSOCOM performs Service-like functions and has Military Department-like responsibilities and authorities. These unique functions, responsibilities, and authorities include performing the functions to program, budget, acquire, organize, train, equip, and provide combat ready SOF for employment by the

Combatant Commanders and develop strategy, doctrine, tactics, and procedures for SOF.⁸²

USSOCOM is commanded by a four-star flag or general officer with the title as Commander, USSOCOM (CDRUSSOCOM). CDRUSSOCOM exercises combatant command (command authority) (COCOM) for SOF unless otherwise directed by Secretary of Defense.⁸³ The Combatant Commanders command special operations activities in their area of responsibility and thus exercise OPCON over the SOF in their area through TSOCs. The command and control structure of SOF units becomes very different when they deploy. In an operational theater, SOF units from individual service components form into Special Operation Task Forces (SOTF) and where more than one service component joins a SOTF, the organization becomes a Joint SOTF (JSOTF).⁸⁴

US SOF collectively apply certain operationally significant, unique capabilities that are termed as Core Activities. While some of these may be performed by conventional forces too, SOF conducts all of them using specialized tactics, techniques, and procedures. These core activities are as under:

1. Direct action
2. Special reconnaissance
3. Countering weapons of mass destruction

⁸² Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS), Joint Publication (JP) 3-05, *Joint Doctrine for Special Operations* (Washington, DC: Joint Chiefs of Staff, September 2020), I-3.

⁸³ CJCS, JP 3-05, I-3.

⁸⁴ Robert Davis, "Optimization within United States Special Operations Command," (Master of Military Art and Science Thesis, US Army Command and General Staff College, Fort Leavenworth, KS, 2019), 40.

4. Counterterrorism
5. Unconventional warfare
6. Foreign internal defense
7. Security force assistance
8. Hostage rescue and recovery
9. Counterinsurgency
10. Foreign humanitarian assistance
11. Military information support operations
12. Civil affairs operations⁸⁵

Additionally, SOF can also perform collateral activities such as counterdrug operations, support and advise multinational forces, personnel recovery, and noncombatant evacuation operations.⁸⁶

SOF core activities integrate with conventional forces in a unique manner depending on the type of operation to be undertaken. These operations are as follows:

1. SOF Specific Operations, that require little to no augmentation or support from conventional forces. An example is direct actions like strikes and raids.
2. SOF Centric Operations that require significant conventional forces augmentation and support. An example is information support operations.
3. Conventional Forces Specific Operations, in which SOF play a supporting role, but to a lesser extent than conventional forces centric. An example is special reconnaissance.

⁸⁵ CJCS, JP 3-05, II-4.

⁸⁶ JSOU, *Special Operations Forces Reference Manual*, I-6.

4. Conventional Forces Centric, where conventional forces are clearly in the lead and SOF play a significant supporting role.⁸⁷

Materiel

The service component commands of USSOCOM possess organic assets that provide combat services support in the form of supply, force health protection, maintenance, transportation, etc. to SOF of their respective services. USASOC has integral airlift capability through its Special Operations Aviation Regiment. SEALs possess different maritime surface tactical mobility crafts to insert and extract the SOF. The AFSOC has assets to provide ISR, and aerial fire support to deployed SOF. All the service components also possess limited organic intelligence support capability. The materiel support required in excess of the organic, or specific to mission like cyber or electronic warfare support is incorporated during special operation mission planning and provided by the respective branches.

Case Study: Russia

Russia began to emulate Western SOF structures during its “New Look” military reforms in the late 2000s.⁸⁸ On March 6, 2013, General Valery Gerasimov, Chief of the

⁸⁷ US Army Command and General Staff College (CGSC), “Special Operations Forces (SOF) Integration in Large Scale Combat Operations (LSCO),” (M156 Lecture, CGSC, Fort Leavenworth, KS, January 2022).

⁸⁸ Woellner, “The Advent of the Russian Special operations Command,” 14.

Russian General Staff, announced the creation of Russia's own SOCOM, the KSO and SOF, termed as SSO.⁸⁹

Organization

The roots of Russia's SOF rest with the Soviet *Spetsnaz* (meaning special purpose troops) units. A broad task organization of KSO is described in the literature review. An important consideration here is to understand the difference between *Spetsnaz* and SSO.

Grau and Bartles in their book, *The Russian Way of War*, say that “the word ‘special’ [in *Spetsnaz*] is used in a very broad way that can indicate that the unit has a very narrow area of specialization, such as signals intelligence, engineering, reconnaissance, etc.; or the unit is experimental or temporary in nature; or the unit conducts tasks of special importance such as sensitive political or clandestine operations.”⁹⁰ *Spetsnaz* serves as an umbrella term that includes elite soldiers across the security services. Their mandates and organization range from elite police elements, to elite light infantry, to clandestine elements working with indigenous forces.⁹¹ *Spetsnaz* units form part of the Ministry of Interior (FSB) and the Committee of State Security (KGB) as well.⁹²

⁸⁹ Christopher Marsh, *Developments in Russian Special Operations: Russia's Spetsnaz, SOF and Special Operations Forces Command* (Ontario, Canada: CANSOFCOM Education and Research Centre, 2017), 1.

⁹⁰ Lester W. Grau and Charles K. Bartles, *The Russian Way of War: Force Structure, Tactics and Modernization of the Russian Ground Forces* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: Foreign Military Studies Office, 2016), 279.

⁹¹ Woellner, “The Advent of the Russian Special operations Command,” 4.

⁹² Marsh, *Developments in Russian Special Operations*, 5.

SSO are the forces that are solely organized in the military chain of command under the KSO. The KSO appears to currently comprise or envision five combat divisions, each with its own specialization, as well as a division each for training, deployment and evacuation, and operational application.⁹³

Doctrine and Policy

The KSO's ability to place its own procurement orders gives it a service-like status.⁹⁴ KSO commands and controls the SSO but not the *Spetsnaz* elements who remain subordinate to the Main Intelligence Directorate (GRU). For unified command over the SSO, the defense ministry established a Deputy Minister of Defense for SSO in 2009, a position typically held by a Major General.⁹⁵ The KSO reports directly to the General Staff of the Russian Federation, and not the GRU as do the *Spetsnaz*.⁹⁶

Spetsnaz units conduct missions such as special reconnaissance, direct action and unconventional warfare for the sole purpose of furthering the movement and maneuver of conventional forces.⁹⁷ By contrast, KSO undertakes these and other missions based on the directions from the Russian national leadership.⁹⁸ This capability enables KSO to execute special missions such as covert operations that envision political sensitivity. Russian SSO

⁹³ Woellner, "The Advent of the Russian Special operations Command," 31.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 29.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 31.

⁹⁶ Grau and Bartles, *The Russian Way of War*, 282.

⁹⁷ Marsh, *Developments in Russian Special Operations*, 17.

⁹⁸ Woellner, "The Advent of the Russian Special operations Command," 27.

is an expeditionary force that may be used as a shaping force before the onset of hostilities, as an independent force that wages unconventional warfare, or as a supplement to more conventional operations.⁹⁹ The new SSO has not replaced *Spetsnaz*. Rather, they are a new set of elite special units with distinct roles to play in Russia's current operating environment, ranging from counterinsurgency and counterterrorism operations, both at home and abroad, to training and equipping missions with foreign militaries.¹⁰⁰ Military correspondent Alexander Sladkov articulated the goals and objectives of SSO as the troops intended to achieve political and economic goals in any geographical part of the world of interest to the Russian Federation.¹⁰¹

Materiel

KSO has organic assets that provide for airlift capability. The command has dedicated rotary wing assets of the special aviation brigade at Torzhok, and a squadron of the IL-72 transport carrier at the Migalovo airfield near Tver.¹⁰² However, it is unclear if *Spetsnaz* possesses aircrafts or maritime surface mobility crafts. Russian analyst Aleksey Nikolskiy reports that the Senezh compound has a large helipad that can accommodate up to three Mi-26 heavy transport helicopters.¹⁰³ The command has organic supporting elements that provide combat support and combat service support functions.

⁹⁹ Woellner, "The Advent of the Russian Special operations Command," 36.

¹⁰⁰ Marsh, *Developments in Russian Special Operations*, 4.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 19.

¹⁰² Grau and Bartles, *The Russian Way of War*, 284.

¹⁰³ Marsh, *Developments in Russian Special Operations*, 18.

Case Study: China

The Chinese National Defense University Science of Military Strategy report, 2020 describes SOF as a form of asymmetric warfare that involves reconnaissance, sabotage, strikes, and psychological operations involving all types of technologies and means.¹⁰⁴ The PLA established its first SOF organization in 1988, as a rapid reaction unit, assigned to the Guangzhou Military Region.¹⁰⁵ Presently, the organization has vastly increased in size with a dedicated SOF support to various theater commands.

Organization

An outline organization of PLA SOF is depicted in the literature review. All the services of PLA comprise of SOF elements. In addition, People's Armed Police (PAP) employs two highly specialized SOF groups.¹⁰⁶ Although most of the SOF elements are assigned to the PLA theater commands which are inherently joint structures, some SOF, including those under the PAP and Airborne Corps, remain outside theater purview.¹⁰⁷ Additionally, there are no permanent joint structures below the theater level and like the PLAA combined arms brigades, SOF brigades aspire to operate independently on the

¹⁰⁴ Chen and Wuthnow, *Chinese Special Operations in a Large-Scale Island Landing*, 3.

¹⁰⁵ Darryl J. Lavender, "China's Special Operations Forces Modernization, Professionalization and Regional Implications," (Strategy Research Project, US Army War College, 2013), 5.

¹⁰⁶ HQDA, ATP 7-100.3, G-1.

¹⁰⁷ Chen and Wuthnow, *Chinese Special Operations in a Large-Scale Island Landing*, 5.

battlefield.¹⁰⁸ The SOF brigades follow the traditional brigade-battalion-company organization philosophy.

Doctrine and Policy

PLAA maintains a Special Forces Bureau under the General Staff Department's Operations Department.¹⁰⁹ However, it is unclear if the Special Forces Bureau performs operational oversight of PLAA SOF only, or has evolved to become a joint organization to effectively command and control all the SOF.

The group army is PLAA's basic operational level organization and each of the group army is assigned a SOF brigade. Similarly, in PLAN, SOF brigade is part of the Marine Corps and in PLAAF, it forms part of the Airborne Corps. Thus, it is pertinent to say that SOF in PLA are controlled at the operational level. PLA follows a more centralized command style and hence there is lack of autonomy given to lower commanders. SOF brigades follow a similar philosophy and reportedly do not follow a flexible task-oriented command style, leading to lesser authorizations and permissions.¹¹⁰ This might lead to failure of special operations due to lack of explicit authority.

PLA SOF focus primarily in supporting the conventional military operations. PLA does not possess any expeditionary capability and the SOF too are thus oriented

¹⁰⁸ Chen and Wuthnow, *Chinese Special Operations in a Large-Scale Island Landing*, 8.

¹⁰⁹ Peter Wood, "The PLA Army Tests Its Special Forces Capabilities," *OEWATCH* 8, no. 8 (August 2018): 28, <https://community.apan.org/wg/tradoc-g2/fmso/p/oe-watch-issues>.

¹¹⁰ Chen and Wuthnow, *Chinese Special Operations in a Large-Scale Island Landing*, 8.

domestically. SOF in PLA are assigned three roles, including a primary role in special reconnaissance and secondary roles in strikes/raids on key targets and in information operations.¹¹¹ PLA SOF brigades are highly specialized to operate in their specific theater. Mountainous theaters focus on high altitude warfare training, coastal theaters focus on amphibious operations, and urban theaters focus on urban operations.¹¹² All PLA SOF can undertake airborne and air assault operations.

PAP SOF units, on the other hand, focus more on security, counterterrorism, and hostage rescue missions. Anti-terrorism and riot control are key missions for both PLAA and PAP SOF, and either of these units may assist in maintaining domestic stability in conjunction with police or other security personnel.¹¹³ It is likely that in combat situations PLAA and PAP SOF are employed in such overlapping missions with the PLAA SOF being deployed in forward areas and PAP assuming a rear area security kind of role.¹¹⁴

Materiel

SOF brigades are equipped with organic surveillance unmanned aerial systems (UAS), likely to aid target acquisition in support of heavy artillery and rocket fires.¹¹⁵ Some of the SOF brigades have dedicated UAS battalions that provide long-range

¹¹¹ Chen and Wuthnow, *Chinese Special Operations in a Large-Scale Island Landing*, 1.

¹¹² HQDA, ATP 7-100.3, 2-13.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, G-1.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*

capability. There are dedicated rotary wing platforms of PLAA aviation units that provide PLAA SOF brigades with organic airlift capability.¹¹⁶ The PLAA and PLAAF lack the aviation assets to conduct the deep clandestine insertions necessary for strategic-level direct action or reconnaissance, but they can conduct air insertions of SOF in support of operational units.¹¹⁷ The PLAN SOF possesses organic diver propulsion vehicles, underwater personnel delivery systems, and underwater sensors to undertake special operations.¹¹⁸ The brigaded structure of PLA SOF suggests that they possess limited organic combat services support capabilities.

Cross Case Analysis

In this section, the case studies will be compared and contrasted under the heads of evaluation criteria. A comparison with India is done as applicable.

Criterion 1: Unified Command over all Forces Conducting/Supporting Special Missions

The term SOF represents an overarching category in the US encompassing all the forces that conduct and/or support the conduct of special operations. CDRUSSOCOM exercises unified command over all US SOF. USSOCOM has clearly delineated C2 arrangements wherein the SOF when deployed in the area of responsibility of a combatant command are under OPCON to the combatant commander for the duration of

¹¹⁶ Wood, “The PLA Army Tests Its Special Forces Capabilities,” 28.

¹¹⁷ HQDA, ATP 7-100.3, G-1.

¹¹⁸ Chen and Wuthnow, *Chinese Special Operations in a Large-Scale Island Landing*, 9.

the mission while CDRUSSOCOM exercises COCOM. The Combatant Commander exercises C2 through Commander TSOC.

Russia has a peculiar structure due to the existence of SSO and *Spetsnaz*. Russia realized the importance of elite forces to be in military chain of command and hence created KSO under the unified command of Deputy Minister of Defense for SSO. However, KSO commands only the SSO and has no control over *Spetsnaz*. Consequently, there are distinct chains of command for different SOF in Russia. India's SF structure is somewhat similar to Russia, as India also has forces controlled by different ministries.

There is no credible information that proves that PLA SOF have unified C2 structure. PLAA SOF brigades are organized under group armies, PLAN SOF brigades are under the command of PLAN Marine Corps, while PLAAF SOF are part of PLAAF Airborne Corps. In addition, the existence of SOF as part of PAP gives an impression of structure like Russia, however, the difference is that Chinese military and police forces are part of the same organization, the PLA. There is no clear information if the Special Forces Bureau of PLA exercises unified command over its SOF.

The overall assessment based on the capability of exercising of unified command suggests that USSOCOM has the most organized structure where the entire SOF is commanded by single authority, the CDRUSSOCOM. Russia has distinct chain of command for SSO and *Spetsnaz* with KSO exercising unified command only over SSO. Thus, it can be said that KSO has partial unified command. Russian structure is still better than PLA, which does not possess any unified command and all the SOF are controlled at the operational level by their respective services. The C2 of PLA SOF is identical with India wherein the SF are commanded by their parent services. A distinction

is that PAP is part of PLA, but in India, NSG is part of the Ministry of Home Affairs. A recommendation thus can be made on restructuring of NSG to have its dedicated manpower. The assessment of the special operations command structures of these three countries based on criterion 1 is summarized below (see Table 1).

Table 1. Unified Command over all Forces Conducting/Supporting Special Missions

ORGANIZATION	ASSESSMENT	REMARKS
USSOCOM	Best	
KSO	Better	
PLA SOF	Unsuitable (No credible information)	Lesson learnt for NSG of India.

Source: Created by author.

Criterion 2: SF Support to Achieve National as well as Theater Strategic Objectives

USSOCOM has designated SOF units to execute nationally directed missions. These highly trained units have additional permissions and are provided with dedicated materiel resources to execute such missions. TSOCs are subordinate unified commands of USSOCOM that are aligned with the combatant commands to support the achievement of theater strategic objectives. SOF in the US have developed a unique way of supporting conventional forces by conducting SOF specific/centric or conventional forces specific/centric operations. In addition, the core activities undertaken by the US SOF suggest that they are doctrinally trained to undertake missions that support national as well as theater strategic objectives.

KSO reports directly to the General Staff of the Russian Federation and undertakes the missions assigned by the Russian national leadership through SSO. On the

other hand, *Spetsnaz* are designed to support the conventional forces in the achievement of their objectives. SSO can be utilized to support the achievement of theater strategic objectives as well. The roles and missions undertaken by SSO suggest that they can support the achievement of national objectives while the role of *Spetsnaz* represents their suitability in achieving operational/theater strategic objectives. This structure in Russia is akin to the ISFC and ICC structure recommended by Lieutenant General P. C. Katoch (Retired). He argued that Indian SF should be reorganized in these two structures with the aim to accomplish national as well as theater strategic objectives.

PLA SOF units are controlled at operational level. PLAA and PLAN SOF brigades are trained and organized to support the achievement of objectives of group armies/Marine Corps, that they form part of, and hence, in turn, support the achievement of theater objectives as well. PLA does not have a dedicated SOF assigned for nationally directed missions. However, PLAAF and PAP SOF are outside the theater purview and can be trained to undertake such tasks, as required. The roles of the PLA SOF indicate that they are specifically tasked to support the conventional forces and no mention exists of undertaking politically sensitive or nationally directed missions. Additionally, PLA SOF undertake mission essential training to support their respective theaters. The structural organization and missions undertaken by PLA SOF are identical with India's SF which are regionally oriented, and no forces are specifically designated for nationally directed missions.

The assessment based on the capability of SOF to support national as well as theater strategic missions suggests that both USA and Russia have dedicated forces and supporting structures to undertake such tasks. However, Russia involves both KSO and

Spetsnaz to satisfy this criterion, unlike the USSOCOM which is the single agency that commands the forces that undertake any kind of special mission for the US. PLA does not possess any forces for national missions but has dedicated brigades to support conventional forces in their theater of combat. Indian SF not being expeditionary, a possible recommendation can be made to focus only on their respective theaters, similar to TSOCs and PLA SOF. The assessment of the special operations command structures of these three countries based on criterion 2 is summarized below (see Table 2).

Table 2. SF Support to Achieve National as well as Theater Strategic Objectives

ORGANIZATION	ASSESSMENT	REMARKS
USSOCOM	Best	TSOCs for specific theater.
KSO	Better	
PLA SOF	Good	SOF Brigades focus only on their respective theaters.

Source: Created by author.

Criterion 3: Inter-services Integration

USSOCOM ensures thorough inter services integration within its SOF through Joint Special Operations Command (JSOC). JSOC is a subordinate unified command of USSOCOM and is responsible for all activities related to joint special operations missions. It develops tactics, techniques, and procedures for joint special operations, oversees joint SOF training, and ensures standardization among the SOF. Additionally, regular joint training with conventional forces is managed by TSOCs.

In their book, Grau and Bartles claim that the most striking aspect of KSO is that it appears more of a branch proponent than an actual functional command.¹¹⁹ KSO is inherently created from the *Spetsnaz* units that belonged to the Russian Army. There is no clear information that suggests that the KSO is a joint organization. Moreover, its chain of command does not allow it to have formal authority over *Spetsnaz* units. Thus, the C2 structure of KSO does not incorporate inter services integration to a large extent. However, special operations being inherently joint in nature, it is assumed that a limited inter services training would be carried out for homogeneity and synchronization.

PLA SOF brigades are organized to support their service specific conventional forces. They train predominantly for operations in the theater they are assigned with, and hence may not be responsible to operate with SOF of other theater/services. However, the theaters themselves are joint structures, and hence, joint training between SOF and conventional forces of different services within the theater is highly likely. An assessment is that regular joint training would also be carried out with the PLAAF aircrafts that provide vertical lift capability.

The analysis of inter services integration suggests that USSOCOM ensures the highest level of integration through a designated organization for standardization and synchronization among the SOF of different services. PLA SOF are ranked second out of the three since the brigades are subordinated to respective theaters which are themselves joint organization. KSO is ranked lowest because of the peculiarity of SSO being largely from the ground forces of Russian armed forces. The assessment of the special operations

¹¹⁹ Grau and Bartles, *The Russian Way of War*, 282.

command structures of these three countries based on criterion 3 is summarized below (see Table 3).

Table 3. Inter-services Integration

ORGANIZATION	ASSESSMENT
USSOCOM	Best
KSO	Good
PLA SOF	Better

Source: Created by author.

Criterion 4: Integral Supporting Elements

All of the individual service component commands of USSOCOM possess organic supporting elements. Additionally, USASOC maintains a dedicated aviation regiment to provide airlift capability. The service like status of USSOCOM allows it to undertake its own procurement and thus any additional materiel support required for execution of special operations can be efficiently managed.

KSO possesses organic supporting elements required for the successful execution of special operations. The superior authorities and permissions that KSO enjoys suggest that it maintains dedicated combat service support elements. In addition, its capability to undertake its own procurement allows it to acquire materiel resources faster than the regular units.

PLA SOF brigades have limited materiel support for execution of special operations. An organic airlift and ISR capability though definitely exists in PLA SOF brigades. Being part of a theater, their materiel requirements are assessed to be fulfilled by following the procedures across the chain of command like other regular units.

However, they might have priority access in theater to any modern equipment. It is, however, unclear whether the Special Forces Bureau conducts SOF specific procurement for better equipping.

The overall assessment based on organic supporting elements within the SOF organization of the three case studies suggests that USSOCOM possesses extensive supporting forces across all the service components and is thus ranked ‘Best.’ KSO also enjoys organic supporting elements for execution of special operations but KSO is relatively smaller organization than USSOCOM and hence has lesser quantum of supporting assets. PLA SOF are ranked lowest out of the three because they own the smallest quantum of organic supporting forces. A prominent distinction is that both USSOCOM and KSO can undertake their own procurement while there is no credible evidence that suggests a similar capability for PLA SOF. The assessment of the special operations command structures of these three countries based on criterion 4 is summarized below (see Table 4).

Table 4. Integral Supporting Elements

ORGANIZATION	ASSESSMENT	REMARKS
USSOCOM	Best	Independent Procurement
KSO	Better	Independent Procurement
PLA SOF	Good	

Source: Created by author.

A consolidated matrix depicting the results of analysis of cases against the evaluation criteria is a better measure for determining the relative standing of USSOCOM, KSO and PLA SOF structure (see Table 5). The matrix will include the set

of evaluation criteria on one axis and the cases on the other axis. The bottom row represents the overall ranking of the cases as a sum of their assessment against individual criterion. Although, the table is an effective measure of relative ranking, it does not mean that India can exactly follow the structure of the country that has highest ranking. In fact, some of the aspects of other countries may also provide significant conclusions. The consolidated table is presented below.

Table 5. Consolidated Matrix of Results

CRITERIA	USSOCOM	KSO	PLA SOF
Unified Command	Best	Better	Unsuitable
Achieve National and Theater Strategic Objectives	Best	Better	Good (PLA SOF brigades organization corresponds more with India's regional theater focus)
Inter-services Integration	Best	Good	Better
Integral Supporting Elements	Best	Better	Good
OVERALL ASSESSMENT	Best	Better	Good

Source: Created by author.

Summary

This chapter was designed to analyze the available literature. The chapter corresponded with the gap analysis and solutions analysis part of the capability-based assessment process. The analysis of available literature highlighted the gaps existing in Indian SF organization structure. The gap analysis, in turn, reinforced the established

need. The case studies were presented and analyzed through the lens of evaluation criteria individually and then a consolidated matrix was developed for a better understanding of the reader. Overall, the chapter answered the secondary research questions descriptively. These answers will help formulate the answer to the primary research question. The author will carry forward the gap analysis of Indian SF structure and the cross-case analysis of the case studies to answer the primary research question in next chapter.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

The author conducted a within case and cross case analysis in the previous chapter to answer the secondary research questions. The existing structure of India's SF was analyzed initially to identify the gaps that exist. The case studies of the US, Russia, and China were then individually presented and analyzed for their strengths and weaknesses. A cross-case analysis of the case studies was subsequently conducted to relatively rank the special operations organizations of these countries. In this chapter, the author will utilize the cross-case analysis to determine suitable recommendations for India and answer the primary research question. The chapter begins with conclusions drawn corresponding with the secondary research questions and finally recommend a suitable answer to the primary research question. A set of recommendations will be made towards the end for conducting any further study related to this thesis.

Conclusions

Secondary Research Question #1

India maintains SF in all three services of armed forces and certain elite units in other ministries. All these units have distinct organizations and chains of command. Some units do not have permanent authorized manpower. Airborne forces and SF exist in same regiment in the Army. AFSOD is the only joint organization that commands small number of SF elements from PARA (SF), MARCOS and Garuds.

Units have overlapping roles leading to lack of economy of force. There is no unit/organization that executes nationally directed or politically sensitive missions. SF are frequently employed to achieve tactical effects.

India does not follow the concept of SOF. There are no intelligence or aviation units organic with the SF organization.

Secondary Research Question #2

The special operation missions of primary importance with respect to India's security situation are direct action, strategic reconnaissance, counter terrorism, counter insurgency, information support operations, and unconventional warfare. The secondary missions can be foreign internal defence, out of area contingencies and foreign security forces assistance.

The organic support required for successful execution of special operations is intelligence, airlift capability, and sustainment. Indirect fire including aerial fire support and communication is incorporated during planning, while additional support like cyber, space, and electromagnetic spectrum operations is required on situation basis.

Secondary Research Question #3

The first case study was of the US. The analysis reveals that USSOCOM has the most evolved organization structure out of the three countries. It ranks 'Best' to satisfy the evaluation criteria. The biggest takeaway for India is the unified structure of USSOCOM under the authority of a single commander. USSOCOM has service like authorities and can carry out independent procurement. A key strength of USSOCOM is

the existence of designated units for undertaking national missions, and TSOCs to support the combatant commands.

Russia has unique structure due to co-existence of KSO and *Spetsnaz* and is ranked second out of the three countries considered for this research. The most vital takeaway is the authorities enjoyed by KSO to undertake national missions and to carry out independent procurement.

PLA SOF structure is ranked the lowest among the three countries under consideration. An important takeaway is the organization of PLA SOF in brigades that support operational and theater strategic objectives. The existence of PAP SOF as units with dedicated manpower recommends possible reorganization of NSG in India.

Recommendations

In this section, the author will answer the primary research question: What special operations organization best addresses India's problem of establishing unified command and control over its SF to support the achievement of national and strategic objectives? This thesis proposes reorganization of SF in India. Accordingly, the author will present a set of recommendations suggesting this reorganization before answering the primary research question.

An initial assessment reveals that USSOCOM structure is 'Best' and it should be followed by India. However, the security requirements of the US are very different than India. Indian SF are not expeditionary like US SOF, as Indian armed forces are primarily responsible for the defence of the homeland. Consequently, India cannot follow the structure of USSOCOM entirely and necessary recommendations from other structures will also be incorporated.

Transition from SF to SOF

Presently, India uses the term SF for its elite forces that restricts the involvement of supporting forces required for successful execution of special operations. The case studies reveal that all three organizations under consideration have integral supporting elements. Thus, a primary recommendation for India is to incorporate supporting forces in the same organization as SF and assign them all under the common terminology of SOF. A fact to keep in mind is that airborne forces should not be labeled as SOF, as recommended by Brigadier Deepak Sinha (Retired). Airborne forces should be utilized as first responders to any threat. All three countries under consideration utilizes its airborne forces as rapid reaction forces, and none places it as part of SOF. Accordingly, SOF in India must include all the elements that are exclusively utilized for conducting or supporting special missions.

All SOF under the Ministry of Defence

NSG and SFF are elite units not part of Ministry of Defence. NSG is primarily involved in fighting domestic counterterrorism, while SFF undertakes military operations. In India, regular armed forces units are responsible for defence of the borders and are deployed domestically only in places declared as disturbed areas, or when specifically called for by civil authorities. On this pretext, it is recommended that SFF be integrated in the Ministry of Defence, while NSG should continue to be part of the Ministry of Home Affairs with an organizational restructuring as explained in next section.

Deputation of Manpower

The deputation of personnel from SF units to NSG, SFF, and RR leads to a lack of economy of effort. PAP SOF is an elite unit of PLA that has dedicated manpower to fight domestic counterterrorism and can be utilized in combat situations to support PLAA. The restriction of domestic deployment of armed forces prohibits deputation of military personnel to NSG. Thus, it is recommended that NSG must be manned only by personnel from central armed police forces and state police forces. Many states in India have developed their own elite components in police and volunteers from these police forces must be recruited to create a permanent manpower for NSG.

Similarly, RR is utilized for counterterrorism tasks in the disturbed state of Jammu and Kashmir only. The deputation of highly trained SF personnel to a force that is created only to fight in a particular disturbed area is an underutilization. Moreover, there are a number of RR battalions composed of personnel on deputation from regular army units. Thus, it is recommended that SF troops should not be placed on deputation in RR and NSG. They can be called upon when a contingency arises.

SFF units are in OPCON with the Army and so it is recommended that SFF must be integrated in the Ministry of Defence. In this manner, they will have authorized manpower and regular army personnel including SF will not be placed on deputation to SFF.

Dedicated Unit for National Missions

The case study analysis reveals that the US and Russia have designated forces for undertaking national missions. Presently, the SF units in India are regionally oriented and there is no unit specifically earmarked for undertaking national missions. SF are a critical

asset in projecting national power. It is recommended that one of the special operations units in India must be dedicated to undertake such missions of national importance. The author recommends that Special Group (SG) of SFF must be assigned for this task because this unit has already established procedures with India's external intelligence agency. This group must have personnel selected from the existing SF units of all three services on permanent basis. SG will thus resemble the most elite units of USA and Russia that also select personnel from existing SF units.

Integral Supporting Elements

The analysis of case studies reveals that a certain amount of support is required for successful execution of special operations. All three countries had dedicated aviation platforms to provide vertical lift capability and detachments to provide organic sustainment capability. The US has intelligence units integral to its organization. Thus, it is recommended that the proposed organization in India must incorporate organic aviation, sustainment, intelligence, and signals battalion.

The special operations aviation component must include a fixed wing and a rotary wing aircraft squadron for airlift, and an Unmanned Aerial Vehicle squadron for ISR. The aviation assets of all three services must be utilized for undertaking these missions. The sustainment battalion will incorporate supply, maintenance, and medical support. Intelligence and Signals battalion will be utilized to facilitate ISR and communication requirements. The personnel manning these supporting units will be on deputation from their parent branches.

Special Operations Organization for India

The author will answer the primary research question in this section. The author studied the special operations structure for India recommended by other writers as well as the structures of USA, Russia, and China. The author has incorporated the recommendations made in previous sections to frame the organizational structure for India (see Figure 8).

The recommended organization for India's SF is termed here as Indian Special Operations Command (ISOC). ISOC will be a tri services functional command directly under the command of Chief of Defence Staff (CDS). The existing organization of AFSOD will be utilized as a foundation to create ISOC. ISOC will have service like authorities and responsibilities. Commander ISOC will be the special operations advisor to CDS and will establish unified command over all the forces subordinated to ISOC.

All the forces part of ISOC will be termed as SOF. PARA (SF) battalions will be de-linked from Parachute Regiment and are renamed here as Army SF battalions. SOF will thus comprise of Army SF battalions, MARCOS, Garuds, SG, and supporting forces. The existing SF training organizations of the three services will be combined to create a SOF Tri Services Training Center and School (STTCS). This school will be responsible for basic and advanced training of enlisted personnel of all three services, as well as selection and training of all ranks volunteering from other arms and services.

The Headquarters ISOC will directly command the SG, STTCS, and the supporting forces while the Army SF battalions, MARCOS, and Garuds will be organized in SF Brigades, akin to PLA SOF. It is assumed that ITCs will be created before the creation of ISOC and the SF Brigades will thus be regionally aligned with each ITC. The

command authorities exercised will be similar to USSOCOM. Commander ISOC will establish COCOM, while the Commander ITC will exercise OPCON over SF Brigades through the Brigade Commander. SF Brigade Commander will be the special operations advisor to Commander ITC. All SF Brigades will not have same composition and the quantum of individual service components would vary as per theater. SF Brigades will train and deploy in support of their particular theater.

The supporting forces will be controlled directly by Headquarters ISOC. The aviation assets will be held centrally and allotted to subordinate brigades, as required. The kind of aerial platforms are purposefully not mentioned because it depends on the availability and professional requirements with Air Force, Army, and Naval Aviation units. The Sustainment battalion, Signals battalion, and Intelligence battalion will assign their subordinate detachments with individual brigades.

The rank of the Commander ISOC is purposefully not mentioned. He will be the senior most serving SF officer out of the three services. The SF Brigade Commanders will be Brigadier or equivalent ranking officers from the other services.

The personnel in ISOC will be on authorized manpower strength. There will be no deputation to NSG or RR. The deputation to NSG would gradually reduce as the selection and training of personnel from police organizations occurs, while the deputation to RR must end immediately.

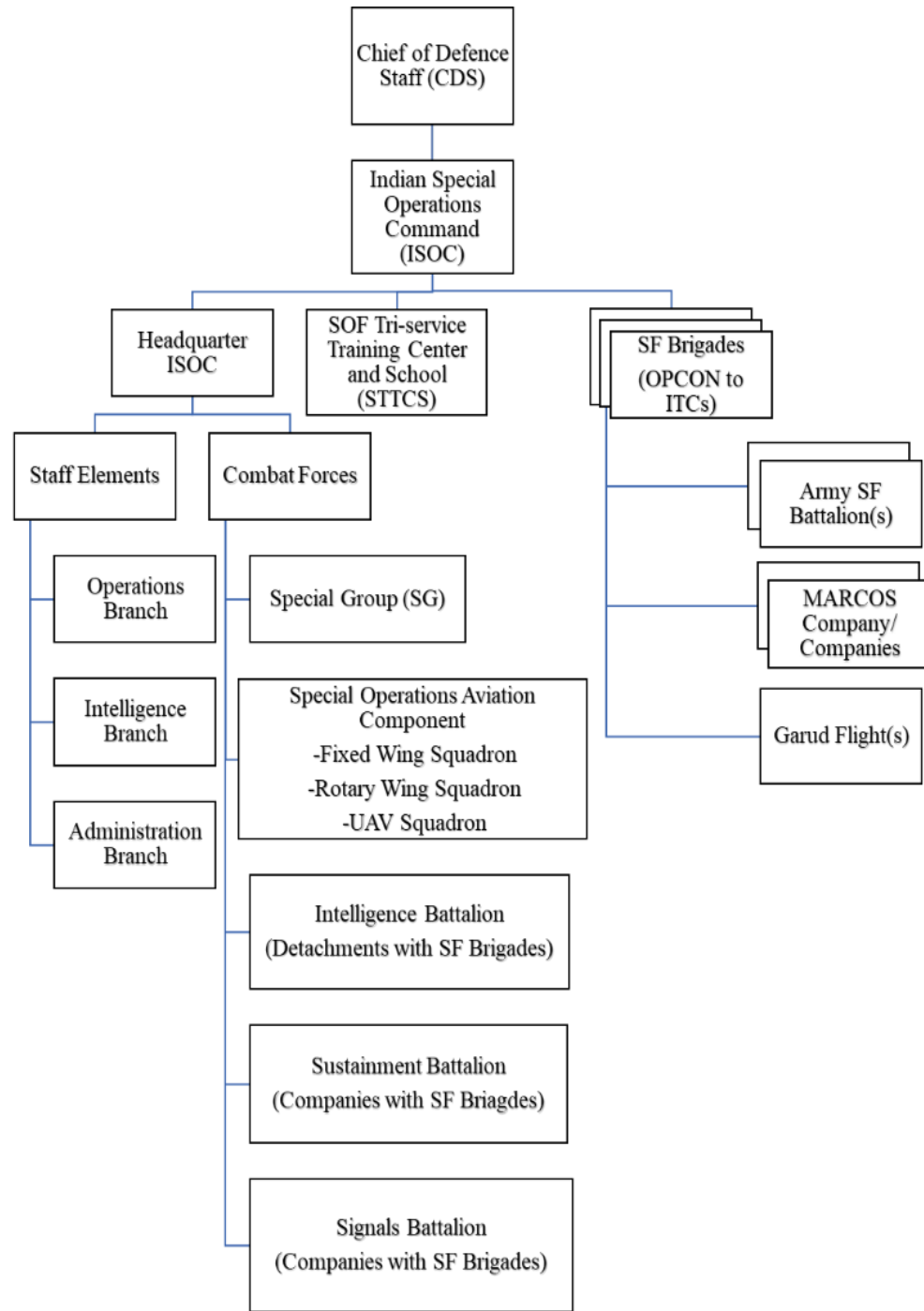


Figure 8. Recommended Organization of Indian Special Operations Command (ISOC)

Source: Created by author.

Proposed Role

A proposed role of ISOC is to train, man, and equip the SOF to successfully execute independent operations, as well as joint operations with conventional forces to support the achievement of national and theater strategic objectives.

Proposed Tasks

The author is of the opinion that the SOF in India will have different tasks based on their service specific qualifications. The separation of responsibility will assist in developing core competencies and lead to better training and execution of tasks.

The author recommends SG to perform politically sensitive and nationally directed special operation missions, and unconventional warfare. Army SF will perform strategic reconnaissance, direct action, and foreign security forces assistance tasks in support of theater. Army SF units will also prepare for counter terrorism tasks, to be performed if called upon by civil authorities in their respective theaters. MARCOS will perform strategic reconnaissance, direct action, and non-combatant evacuation operations in maritime domain. Garuds will be responsible for special reconnaissance in support of airborne/air assault operations, non-combatant evacuation operations, and combat search and rescue of stranded personnel in warzone.

Recommendations for Further Study

This study is done with the overall aim of reorganizing the SF in India under a unified command. The study did not incorporate the aspects of reorganization of existing units in different theaters and the composition of the brigades based on theaters. The mechanism of expansion of AFSOD to create ISOC was not discussed and is left for

further study. The employment of personnel to create the headquarters of ISOC and the brigades, as well as the STTCS is not discussed.

An important subject for further study is the financial implications of creation of ISOC on the Ministry of Defence. The study recommended ISOC to have service like authorities and undertake own procurement. However, the aspects of budgeting and simplification of procurement procedures is in itself a different study.

ISOC is recommended as a functional tri services command. However, the study did not include aspects of standardization of selection and training procedures for the SOF. This also includes the aspects of joint training within the SOF of different services as well as with the conventional forces. Additionally, the procedure involved in inclusion of supporting forces from different branches of services was not deliberated.

The study has recommended that NSG should be manned by troops from police forces. The training and equipment standards of the different police organizations are unknown. This aspect might lead to a continuation of personnel deputation to NSG for a long duration. Additionally, SFF was recommended to be incorporated in Ministry of Defence, with SG as part of ISOC. The bureaucratic hurdles to be crossed for these repositioning were not discussed and were left pending for further research.

Summary

The purpose of this research was to reinforce the relevance of SOCOM for India and recommend the right kind of organizational structure for unified command and control over all Indian SF units. The thesis proposed a reorganization of SF in India with the overall aim of elevating the status of SF by placing it at the right level of chain of command. The author utilized qualitative research methodology and referred to the

special operations command structures of USA, Russia, and China as case studies for this research. A capability-based assessment consisting of the need analysis, gaps analysis, and solutions analysis was executed to find the suitable solution to primary research question. The existing state of SF in India, and of the case studies was presented in the framework of chosen factors of DOTMLPF-P. A within case and cross case analysis was subsequently done through the lens of evaluation criteria established.

A set of recommendations is finally made based on the analysis. The SF in India are proposed to be organized under a functional tri services Indian Special Operations Command (ISOC). ISOC will be the sole organization responsible for executing special operation missions in support of national and theater strategic objectives. It will have service like authorities and responsibilities and will be responsible for complete administration and training of SOF in India.

The author imposed certain delimitations on himself for conducting this research. The inclusion of these aspects would have vastly enhanced the scope of study. A detailed study including these aspects will produce further refinement and the recommendations of this research may be used as a foundation for such work.

GLOSSARY

Counter Terrorism (CT). Activities and operations taken to neutralize terrorists and their organizations and networks to render them incapable of using violence to instill fear and coerce governments or societies to achieve their goals.¹²⁰

Direct Action. Short-duration strikes and other small-scale offensive actions conducted as a special operation in hostile, denied, or diplomatically sensitive environments and which employ specialized military capabilities to seize, destroy, capture, exploit, recover, or damage designated targets.¹²¹

Foreign Internal Defense Participation by civilian agencies and military forces of a government or international organizations in any of the programs and activities undertaken by a host nation government to free and protect its society from subversion, lawlessness, insurgency, terrorism, and other threats to its security.¹²² The term is equivalent to Out Of Area Contingency operations in India which are carried out outside the area of geographic responsibility/limits of India, mainly in neighboring states at the request of host nation.

Military Information Support Operations. Planned operations to convey selected information and indicators to foreign audiences to influence their emotions, motives, objective reasoning, and ultimately the behavior of foreign governments, organizations, groups, and individuals in a manner favorable to the originator's objectives.¹²³

Non Combatant Evacuation Operations. An operation whereby noncombatant evacuees are evacuated from a threatened area abroad, which includes areas facing actual or potential danger from natural or manmade disaster, civil unrest, imminent or actual terrorist activities, hostilities, and similar circumstances, that is carried out with the assistance of the Department of Defense.¹²⁴

¹²⁰ CJCS, *DOD Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms*, 52.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, 63.

¹²² *Ibid.*, 87.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 142.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, 154.

Security Forces Assistance. The Department of Defense activities that support the development of the capacity and capability of foreign security forces and their supporting institutions.¹²⁵

Special Reconnaissance. Reconnaissance and surveillance actions conducted as a special operation in hostile, denied, or diplomatically and/or politically sensitive environments to collect or verify information of strategic or operational significance, employing military capabilities not normally found in conventional forces.¹²⁶ The mission is also referred as strategic reconnaissance sometimes in India.

Unconventional Warfare. Activities conducted to enable a resistance movement or insurgency to coerce, disrupt, or overthrow a government or occupying power by operating through or with an underground, auxiliary, and guerrilla force in a denied area.¹²⁷

¹²⁵ CJCS, *DOD Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms*, 192.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 200.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, 223.

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