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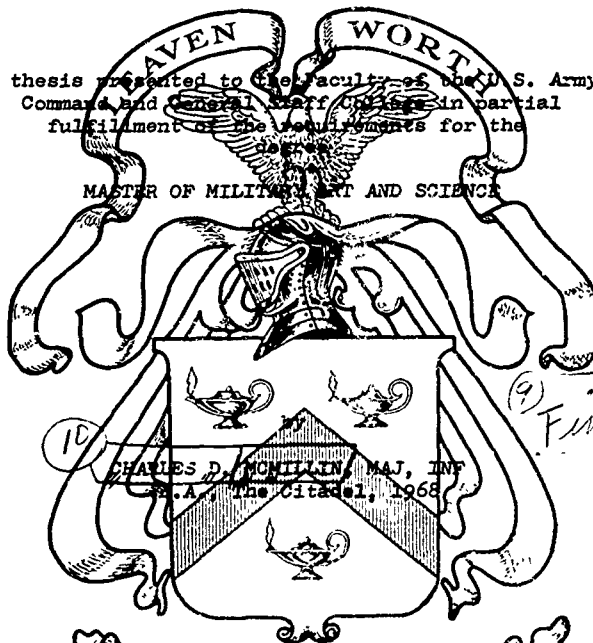
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ROLES AND MISSIONS OF AIRBORNE, RANGER, AND
SPECIAL FORCES IN CONTINGENCY OPERATIONS.

A thesis presented to the faculty of the U. S. Army
Command and General Staff College in partial
fulfillment of the requirements for the

MASTER OF MILITARY ART AND SCIENCE



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ROLES AND MISSIONS OF AIRBORNE, RANGER, AND SPECIAL FORCES
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ABSTRACT

This thesis addresses the roles and missions of U.S. Army airborne, ranger, and special forces in rapid reaction contingency operations. The study focuses on the requirements for and the missions appropriate for each of these elite units within the context of the more likely "half war" contingency of the nation's "one-and-a-half war" strategy. Specifically examined are historical perspectives, current organization, mission, and capabilities, as well as deployment and employment concepts.

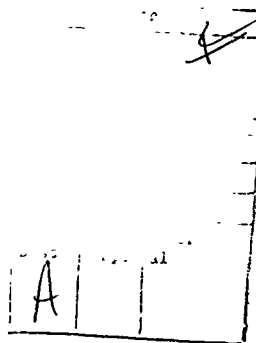


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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

. . . we must continue to maintain a defense posture that permits us to respond effectively and simultaneously to a relatively minor as well as to a major contingency.¹

Harold Brown
Secretary of Defense

The United States is a global power whose interests can be threatened at many points around the globe To meet this wide range of contingencies, ready and highly capable combat . . . forces are required²

General George S. Brown
Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff

Flexibility must be the hallmark of an Army which can exclude no continent from its plan for dealing with aggression.³

The Department of the Army

The Army's "primary objective," as delineated in its capstone doctrinal publication, FM 100-5, Operations, "is to win the land battle." This manual, which sets the tone for an entire series of "How-to-Fight" field manuals, further elaborates on the land battle as "large or small, against whatever foe, wherever we may be sent to war." The manual then proceeds to focus on "the realities" of operations in Central Europe, as "the most demanding mission," for which the Army is primarily structured. While stating that the principles set forth in the manual apply worldwide, and that the

Army maintains a substantial capability in its "light forces"⁴ for just such eventualities,⁵ the manual itself gives scant attention to the "realities" of operations outside of Central Europe.

Thusly, the Army focuses its doctrine on winning the "first battle" in Central Europe, as it is no doubt the battle it can least afford to lose. Nevertheless, contingency operations elsewhere in the world may present a more likely possibility as the Army's next "first battle." This view was recently reinforced by Army Chief-of-Staff, General Bernard W. Rogers, in an address to the 24th Annual Meeting of the Association of the United States Army. As summarized in Army, the association's monthly magazine:

General Rogers noted that the chances of a military contingency outside of Europe are 'more probable' than a NATO conflict and said the Army had given its world-wide 'quick' reaction forces top priority for the resources we have available.

The Chief-of-Staff further noted that these "quick reaction forces" could range from a platoon to a three division corps, and that they had been afforded a priority equal to those forces earmarked for early deployment to Europe. He also remarked that such operations were "likely to present a new set of challenges" and that due to the ambiguity of the threat, a decision to use military force will come quickly and the Army's response must be equally rapid.⁶ Hence, while the majority of the Army trains to fight "the one war" in Central Europe, another, smaller yet significant part of the

Army, must be trained and ready to fight, on short notice, "another half war" somewhere else.⁷

Among the forces earmarked for these short notice "half-war" contingency operations are those units generally regarded as the elite units⁸ of the American Army: airborne, ranger, and special forces. These units are "light," capable of air transport to any location in the world, have unique capabilities allowing them to fight immediately on arrival, and are maintained in a quick-response posture. For these reasons, they will certainly be among the first and just possibly the only American ground forces committed in a crisis which develops outside of those areas in which the Army maintains forward deployed forces.

The purpose of this thesis is to examine the roles and missions of these forces in contingency operations in areas of the world in which there is no peace time commitment of United States ground forces. It is not the intent of this thesis to suggest that these forces may not fight in Central Europe, as certainly they may, since such a war may just be a battle for national survival. Under such conditions, however, their unique capabilities will in all likelihood be applied in a supporting and subordinate role to the "heavy forces," which are primarily designed to fight such a battle. Contingency operations, on the other hand, could very well present a variety of situations in which the only military options available are provided by the unique capabilities,

or combination of capabilities these forces offer the military planner. It will, therefore, be within the context of contingency operations that their roles and missions will be examined.

Since, theoretically, military forces are structured to provide certain capabilities in order to accomplish assigned or anticipated missions and hence to fulfill a broader role, an understanding of the roles and missions of existing forces is facilitated by an examination of their capabilities. By such examination not only will present roles and missions be better understood, but possibly, better ways to accomplish them identified, resulting in improved capabilities and perhaps even in expanded roles and missions. Such an improvement or expansion of capabilities not only provides the military decisionmaker a broader range of options, but provides for a more efficient use of ever-shrinking resources.

Therefore, this thesis will examine individual and collective capabilities of rangers, specifically the Army's two ranger battalions, airborne forces, of which the Army maintains in excess of a division, and special forces, of which there are three groups.⁹ The study will focus on units based in the continental United States since they constitute part of the Army's strategic reserve maintained specifically for worldwide contingencies. Smaller airborne and special forces units deployed in overseas theaters will not be specifically addressed although the parameters and findings of this thesis

may certainly be applicable to them.¹⁰

Since each of these elite units have certain capabilities, some of them unique, to place the units in perspective, the capabilities of each must be examined. However, the overall purpose of this study is to determine complementary capabilities and if and how their capabilities can be maximized by tailoring a force for a specific mission to include airborne, ranger, and special forces elements. More importantly, in addition to maximizing individual capabilities, such a mutually supporting relationship or correlation of capabilities would serve to optimize the effectiveness and broaden the capabilities of the force as a whole. This, in turn, would lead to a thesis that rather than planning for the unilateral employment of these forces, the military planner should habitually consider how to best capitalize on their combined capabilities when structuring a contingency force. Concurrently, such a finding would have significant impact on the training, organization, readiness, and command relationships of these units. Likewise, the employment concepts that could emerge from such an examination (for the Army, at least) could potentially fill a capability void noted by a Rand Corporation sponsored, governmental inter-agency conference, which reported:

The United States has no single military unit possessing all the requisite skills to conduct appropriate operations in low-level conflicts. However, highly trained, highly skilled elite units are to be found in our armed forces The existence of these forces, however, does not necessarily equate with the needed capability.¹¹

As might be expected, the literature available on the subject is limited. That which is available, is generally of three types: historical, doctrinal, or contemporary military thought as expressed in periodicals and service school research papers. For the most part, the literature available is limited to addressing the forces separately or in their roles of supporting the operations of more conventional ground forces.

The historical works generally focus on the large-scale airborne operations of World War II--usually in their role as supportive of the operations of other land forces. Nonetheless, some perspectives can be drawn from these operations, and from other small (and less publicized) semi-independent operations in which the talents of airborne, commando or ranger, and special operation units were combined. Additionally, some perspectives can be gained from certain post-war special operations planned and/or conducted by both the United States and other countries.

Current doctrinal publications, such as the Army's new series of "How-to-Fight" field manuals, consciously focus on operations in a European, mechanized warfare environment. FM 100-5, for example, devotes little more than two sentences to airborne forces, stating that "they have extremely long legs" (in reference to their strategic deployability) and that "they are valuable for an initial lodgement" (in reference of how they might support the deployment

of a larger force).¹² Additionally, the proposed "How-to-Fight" manuals on airborne operations (Field Manual 90-12) and ranger operations (Field Manual 7-85) have been cancelled. Such doctrine as does address the forces, does so piecemeal and within a context of how they might be employed to support other operations--not unlike, albeit with improved weaponry, they might have been in World War II. For example, doctrine for airborne division operations is to be consolidated into the field manual covering infantry division operations (Field Manual 71-102) and ranger battalions will be addressed in the manual on the infantry battalion (Field Manual 7-20). Special forces operations, alone, are separately and specifically addressed in a separate field manual (31-20) and a series of training circulars published by the Army's Special Warfare Center.

Likewise, while a limited number of military writings in professional journals (primarily Military Review, Infantry and Army magazines) and military research papers address current and future roles of these forces (particularly airborne forces), little, if any attention, is given to the collective potential they would seem to offer. In short, the subject is one which has received incomplete treatment by history and doctrine writers. As the earlier referenced report by the Rand Corporation concluded with respect to the low-level operations these forces are likely to conduct: "Command and staff schools ignore such operations and thus many doctrinal and perceptive areas remain unexplored."¹³

Therefore, it will by a process of comparing and correlating capabilities, amalgamating existing doctrine, and tempering both with historical perspectives and contemporary military thought that this thesis will examine roles and missions and strive to establish a concept for the combined employment of airborne, ranger and special forces. In succeeding chapters, historical precedents, current organization, missions, and capabilities, as well as employment concepts will be analyzed in detail.

ENDNOTES

¹Harold Brown, Department of Defense Annual Report FY 79 (February 2, 1978), 9.

²General George S. Brown, United States Military Posture for FY 79 (January 20, 1979), 17.

³U.S. Army, The Department of the Army, FM (January 1977), 1-2.

⁴The maneuver forces of the Army are generally classified as "light" or "heavy." Heavy forces include armor, mechanized infantry and armored cavalry. Light forces are essentially infantry formations, including: light infantry, airborne, air assault, and ranger.

⁵U.S. Army, Operations, FM 100-5 (July 1976), 1-1 and 1-2.

⁶"Rogers: U.S. Has 'Force Imbalance' to Overcome," Army, Vol 28, No 11 (November 1978), 45.

⁷"The one and a half war strategy" is a term most commonly used to describe the capability of U.S. general purpose forces. Specifically the capability to fight one major war in Europe and another "half war" contingency operation elsewhere.

⁸Roger A. Beaumont, Military Elites (1974), 2. The author defines elite forces as those having the traits of voluntarism, special selection criterion and training.

⁹The units are specifically the 1st and 2d Battalions (Ranger) 75th Infantry at Forts Stewart and Lewis, respectively; the 82d Airborne Division at Fort Bragg; the 5th and 7th Special Forces Groups also at Fort Bragg; and the 10th Special Forces Group at Fort Devens.

¹⁰In addition to CONJUS based forces, the Army maintains an airborne battalion combat team in Italy; three airborne rifle companies in Alaska and one in Panama; and special forces battalions in Germany and Panama.

¹¹The Rand Corporation, U.S. Preparation for Future Low-Level Conflict (July 1977), 7 and 8.

¹²FM 101-5, 4-7, 14-9.

¹³U.S. Preparation for Future Low-Level Conflict, 8.
It may be somewhat of an overstatement that such operations are "ignored." Certainly, however, they have been deemphasized as the Army turns its attention to Central Europe. For example, in the mid-1960's the Army's Command and General Staff College curriculum included over 80 hours of instruction on airborne operations. During the school year 1978-79, the number of hours devoted to this subject had been reduced to five.

CHAPTER II

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

Where is the Prince who can afford to cover his country with troops for its defense, as that 10,000 men descending from the clouds, might not in many places, do an infinite amount of mischief before a force could be brought together to repel them?

Benjamin Franklin
U.S. Ambassador to France
1784

EARLY PRECEDENTS

The idea of specially trained troops striking where and when the enemy least expects is not an idea new to warfare. Americans, in particular, demonstrated their skill at irregular warfare long before the First Continental Congress raised the first rifle companies of the Continental Army in 1775. Today's rangers, in fact, trace their origins to 1756 and the French and Indian War.¹ Nearly thirty years later, Benjamin Franklin, upon observing a hot air balloon demonstration would foresee the possibilities of landing troops from the air. In the 19th Century, the crossed arrows worn by today's Special Forces, would first be worn by the Regular Army officers and NCO's who led the indian scouts of the frontier army. Early in the 20th Century, Colonel Billy Mitchell,² would propose parachuting American infantrymen

behind the German trenches at Metz, as a method for breaking the deadlock of World War I trench warfare.

WORLD WAR II

These early precedents notwithstanding, ranger, airborne and special force type units directly resulted from the World War II experience. Ranger units were formed as an American version of the British commandos. American airborne units (concurrently with the British) were organized along the lines of the German "fallshirmjagers"³ whose success as a partner in the "blitzkrieg"⁴ had made a lasting impression on the Allies. Members of the OSS (Office of Strategic Services, later to become the Central Intelligence Agency) were employed to organize guerrilla forces in the occupied territories, as the predecessors of what would later be known as Special Forces.

The Allies, impressed with German strategic use of airborne forces to conduct the invasion of Crete in the spring of 1941, would expand their airborne force⁵ until in the European Theater alone there would be the equivalent of six airborne divisions, plus various smaller units.⁶ The airborne division, originally intended as a light, specialized formation, would undergo continuous modification until it approximated the infantry division in size.⁷

The large scale operations subsequently conducted by the Allies were tactical in nature, in which airborne forces were used to support the operations of conventional ground

forces. Although plans for the independent, strategic use of paratroops were developed (among others to seize Berlin and Rome) they would never be carried out. Charles MacDonald, an American World War II historian, summarizes the use of airborne forces during the war thusly:

. . . the fact that airborne troops turned out to be a luxury may have resulted from the way Allied commanders employed the new resource. A genuinely strategic instead of a tactical approach to the use of airborne troops might have produced decisive results. As it was, ground or other air action, including strategic bombing and aerial resupply of ground troops, usually had priority, and ground commanders were reluctant to agree to an airborne attack unless they were sure it would not divert resources from more conventional operations. A reverse approach, looking upon airborne troops as something more than ancillary, might have contributed far more to the ultimate victory.

Perhaps the closest to the strategic use of these forces was the attempt to outflank the Rhine defenses at Arnhem in 1944. This operation, described by B. H. Liddell Hart as a "strategic prize that justified the stake and exceptional boldness of dropping airborne forces so far behind the front,"¹⁰ would fail by a "a bridge too far,"¹¹ and became the classic example used by both airborne proponents and opponents alike to support their views.

While airborne forces grew in stature until they became a separate Army,¹² ranger and special forces type organizations remained small. Six ranger battalions and a regimental size "special service force"¹³ were trained, fielded and employed as elite assault infantry units. OSS agents and other clandestine operatives (such as those Americans who were

isolated in the Philippines) organized and led guerrilla forces in every theater of the war. Rangers and the 1st Special Service Force enjoyed considerable success spearheading the invasions the Aleutians, North Africa, Normandy, Southern France and the Philippines. However, like their elite cousins, the airborne, they suffered from the tendency of higher commanders to employ them "for tasks other than those for which they were specifically trained."¹⁴ Likewise, despite the worldwide and fairly extensive use of guerrillas led by OSS agents and other clandestine operatives, ". . . their potentials were not fully developed and exploited," often because their command relationships were "vague and confused" and "the strategic and tactical relationship of guerrilla forces to conventional forces were rarely appreciated."¹⁵

Despite this general failure to fully capitalize on the unique capabilities of these special units (a lesson in itself), certain operations do emerge which provide a perspective on current roles and missions. These operations, although small in comparison to the major operations of World War II, specifically combined and capitalized upon special capabilities to produce decisive results. The forces employed, although small and outnumbered, combined thorough planning, superior training, decisive and imaginative leadership, and aggressive and skillful execution to accomplish their missions. For these reasons, and because a crisis today may only allow,

or even dictate, an expeditious and decisive military response with only minimal force, they are deserving of closer study.

The Germans were the first to demonstrate the potential of these special operations, preceding their attack on the Low Countries in 1940 with both airborne forces and "shadowy groups of men in plain clothes, or in Dutch police or military uniforms, (who) undertook small but important coup de main operations to secure bridges, overpower guards and generally undermine defense arrangements."¹⁶ In the same campaign, a specially trained and rehearsed assault force landed atop the Belgian frontier fortress of Eben Emael, while elements of an airborne battalion landed on and near the three nearby bridges across the Albert Canal. While the platoon-sized "coup de main" neutralized the heavy artillery of the Fort with shaped explosives, heretofore unused in military operations, the paratroops seized two of the three bridges intact. This "legendary victory"¹⁷ which combined the daring well-rehearsed action of the commando with the "strike hold"¹⁸ concept of the paratrooper, "unlocked the Belgian defenses . . . and provided a free run for the panzers."¹⁹

Later in the war, Hitler's chief commando, Otto Skorzeny, leading a mixed force of SS commandos and paratroopers rescued Mussolini from the 5900 foot Monte Carno, 100 miles from Rome and the highest peak in the Apennine Mountains. As the assault party of paratroopers and commandos landed by glider atop the mountain, other paratroopers landed

in a nearby valley to prevent reinforcement of the guard force. Other paratroops secured a nearby airfield to enable the dictator to be flown to safety. As John Galvin, author of Air Assault comments, "The coup may have succeeded because it was a combination of the training and discipline of the paratroopers and the devil-may-care opportunism of Skorzeny and his crew."²⁰

The effect of such daring and imaginative operations was not lost on the Allies. In early 1942, the British mounted a parachute raid into occupied France. Dropping at night atop a 300 foot coastal cliff at Bruneval, a specially trained and rehearsed company of paratroops raided a key German radar station and captured key components of the radar. Well before sunrise the raiders had linked up with naval landing craft and a covering force of commandos at the nearby beach and were enroute home. From such modest beginnings, the British would develop the techniques and tactics that on "D-Day," June 6, 1944, would allow a combination of glider-landed special assault parties, rapidly reinforced by parachute troops and soon thereafter by sea-landed commandos, to firmly establish the left flank of the Allied beachhead by seizing the key bridges across the Caen Canal and Orne River.

Late in the war, in April 1945, two battalion of Free French paratroops, accompanied by British special force liaison personnel, were dropped on 19 different drop zones ahead of the Canadian 1st Army's advance into northeast Holland.

Delivered "blind"²¹ by aircraft equipped, with a special bomber navigational system, the French, operating in small groups and "displaying fierce offensive spirit,"²² attacked German strongpoints, prevented the destruction of key bridges and an airfield, and rallied Dutch resistance groups. The operation "materially assisted" the Canadian drive to the North Sea.²³

The Americans also demonstrated the potential of special units operating in conjunction with one another. Two such operations which capitalized on the unique capabilities of rangers, paratroopers and guerrillas were conducted within 30 days of one another in the Philippine Islands. Both operations were raids to rescue prisoners of war.

In January 1945, a reinforced company of Rangers, preceded by a small advance force of Alamo Scouts²⁴ rescued over 500 American and Allied prisoners from the Japanese stockade at Pangatian. The raid was described in a report published by Headquarters, Sixth Army soon after the operation as follows:

. . . the rescue force, with negligible casualties . . . made a 29 mile forced march into enemy territory, obtained the full support of local civilians and guerrillas; . . . determined accurately the enemy dispositions; crawled nearly a mile through flat and open terrain to assault positions; destroyed two trucks, four tanks and a Jap (sic) garrison nearly double the size of the attacking force itself; in the dark assembled over five hundred prisoners and evacuated them from the stockade area within twenty minutes; and evacuated some 300 walking and 200 invalid prisoners through 19 miles of enemy territory.²⁵

In this operation, the advance group of Alamo Scouts (3 officers and 10 enlisted men) preceded the main body of the assault force (the rangers) into the objective area by 36 hours. This advance element established contact with local guerrillas and coordinated their activities which included reconnaissance, security, and blocking enemy reinforcement of the objective area, while the ranger force carried out the raid itself.

Less than 30 days later, at Los Banos, the 1st Battalion, 511th Parachute Infantry and the reconnaissance platoon of the 11th Airborne Division reinforced by 80 Filipino guerrillas conducted another successful rescue, this time 50 miles behind Japanese lines. Again, the advance elements of the force (the reconnaissance platoon and Filipino guerrillas) departed 36 hours early; and used native canoes to infiltrate the Japanese positions and reconnoiter the objective area. The raid itself commenced at 0700 hours on 23 February, with a parachute infantry company jumping on a drop zone (marked by the advance party) adjacent to the camp. Within 15 minutes, the paratroopers, scouts and guerrillas had killed all 275 of the Japanese garrison and rescued 2,147 men, women, and children with the only casualty being one slightly wounded prisoner. The raiders then linked up with the remainder of the parachute battalion, which had landed over a nearby beach, and proceeded to evacuate both the prisoners and themselves to friendly lines. One author describes this operation:

. . . the raid on Los Banos prison camp is, like the Eben Emael raid, an example of imaginative planning and excellent use of small-unit tactics . . . If there ever was a school book operation, it was the raid on Los Banos.²⁶

Both of these rescue operations vividly demonstrate the effective combined use of these special units. They are particularly applicable in the age of the terrorist which finds American facilities and citizens increasingly vulnerable to attack and capture, and which may require the conduct of similar type operations.

As we have seen, both the British and Americans demonstrated that they appreciated the value of "coup de main" or special assault forces and the use of guerrillas in conjunction with other specialized units in seizing or securing critical targets. Nevertheless, Market Garden, characterized by Cornelius Ryan in A Bridge Too Far as "the most momentous airborne offensive ever conceived,"²⁷ and the Allies "bitterest airborne defeat"²⁸ did not exploit the use of these tactics at the points at which they very well may have been decisive. The entire operation depended solely on the seizure of critical targets, specifically a series of highway bridges capable of supporting armored vehicles. Two bridges in particular, one at Arnhem and one at Nijmegen turned out to be pivotal.

At the Arnhem bridge, the British seemingly ignored the successes of the Orne River operation and landed seven miles from this the key divisional (and corps) objective. One lone battalion (2d Battalion, The Parachute Regiment), did

manage to secure one end of the bridge and hold it for four days in "the outstanding independent parachute battalion action of the war."²⁹ However, the remainder of the 1st British Airborne Division was isolated and eventually destroyed in the vicinity of its drop zones. The outcome may very well have been different if the British had chosen to employ "coup de main" forces to seize the bridge outright and landed the remainder of the division within supporting distance of both ends of the bridge. Certainly such a maneuver, particularly if coupled by an equally daring approach eleven miles to the south at Nijmegen would have materially improved the chances of this "probably the most daring, unorthodox plan the Allies executed during the war."³⁰

At Nijmegen, the American 82d Airborne Division was responsible for securing the bridge over the Waal River, in addition to a series of other bridges and key terrain. Although the 82d fought exceptionally well during the battle, being praised afterwards by the Commander of the Second British Army as "the finest division in the world today,"³¹ one blemish would mar an otherwise perfect performance. The key bridge across the Waal River, "second in importance only to (the bridge) at Arnhem,"³² would not be captured until the fourth day of the battle--at approximately the same time that the defenders of the Arnhem bridge were overwhelmed. Although the division commander, Major General James M. Gavin, realized the importance of the bridge, and the bold tactics heretofore

proven to be required to seize such critical targets,³³ the bridge was nevertheless assigned as an "on order" objective to be secured only after the other key terrain elsewhere in the sector was taken. Consequently it was not until near dusk on D-Day (September 17, 1944) that the first paratroopers of the 508th Parachute Infantry Regiment began to move against the bridge. Whereas "in the first hours after the landings only a few sentries stood between the paratroopers and the bridge, after dark . . . german reinforcements arrived . . . to begin a stalwart defense."³⁴ Charles MacDonald attributes this failure to "employ the verve and vigor expected of airborne troops"³⁵ as one of two major contributive factors in the ultimate failure of Market Garden.

In the opinion of this author, had at least a small force been allotted to seize the bridge by direct assault, either independently or in conjunction with the 600³⁶ members of the local underground (present and later used to deny German access to the bridge), perhaps the results would have been different. Certainly, it would seem that more bold, innovative, and decisive tactics were demanded than either the British or Americans employed in the early stages of the airborne assault. Most importantly, this example of what might have been, serves to illustrate that special units, besides being a valuable asset in independent operations of key tactical or strategic importance, also have the potential to be equally decisive within the context of larger ground operations if their unique capabilities are properly understood and applied.

POST WORLD WAR II

At the outbreak of the Korean War there were two airborne divisions in the American Army. However, airborne employment, despite a new generation of transport aircraft, was still limited in range; and "in her capacity as a world power the United States was still primarily dependent upon maritime resources to deploy her military forces . . ." ³⁷ Although Lieutenant General James Gavin, the World War II commander of the 82d Airborne Division would comment, "I know of no single thing that General MacArthur needs more now than an airborne division . . .," ³⁸ only one airborne regimental combat team was made available to the Korean commander. The planned employment of the regiment near Seoul to assist the amphibious landing near Inchon was cancelled, although the regiment was subsequently employed twice in a parachute role (both drops being successful but limited in scope).

Rangers, inactive since World War II, were resurrected, this time in company-size organizations, with an airborne (parachute) capability they had not had during World War II. Ranger companies were attached to all infantry divisions in Korea to provide "an added increment of trained and aggressive fighters capable of airborne, amphibious, and ground-infiltration penetration of enemy rear areas for destruction, harassment and intelligence." ³⁹ For the most part, once again, like in World War II, they were misemployed by their parent divisions. Due to their organization into separate companies, they were

considered "too light in firepower for sustained combat, too small for deep penetration, and not organized to conduct independent operations" ⁴⁰ These problems were further exacerbated by staffs who "failed to discover suitable targets" and "found it difficult . . . to think in terms of employing Ranger companies for special ranger-type operations." ⁴¹ As a result, after Korea, as after the Second World War, Ranger units would once again be inactivated, although the training would continue to be given to selected officers and non-commissioned officers.

Although guerrilla warfare was conducted in Korea by an organization entitled UNPIK (United Nations Partisan Infantry Korea), it was not until immediately afterwards that the first special forces group, as we know it today, was activated. Although the mission of special forces (like their OSS predecessors) remained essentially one of organizing and conducting guerrilla warfare, they adopted the lineage and heritage of the inactive Rangers and 1st Special Service Force, contributing to a general misunderstanding of these two different type forces that persists to this day.

After Korea, the helicopter began to replace the parachute as the principle means of entering the battlefield from the air. In the Vietnam War, all infantrymen, not just paratroopers, moved through the air as a means of closing with the enemy. Also as a result of Vietnam, and the backing of President Kennedy, the number of special forces groups increased dramatically (from two to eight groups). ⁴² Ranger

units were once again formed, this time as long range reconnaissance patrol units, which were attached to all divisions in Vietnam.

From the point of view of this study, one of the most significant operations of the Vietnam War was the raid on the prisoner-of-war camp at Song Tay, North Vietnam. In 1970, a special raiding force was organized, assembled and trained to attempt a rescue of American prisoners being held in this isolated camp approximately 20 miles west of Hanoi. Transported by Air Force long range helicopters, which were refueled enroute and guided by a C130 aircraft equipped with terrain following radar equipment, the force raided the camp with near perfect execution of their well rehearsed plan, only to find it empty. Following this "dry hole," as Benjamin Schemmer in his book The Raid notes, plans were formulated to try again, using a combination of special forces teams and the entire 82d Airborne Division to raid the prison camps in downtown Hanoi.⁴³ The plan was, of course, never carried out, however, it is in itself illustrative of complementary capabilities and how they might have been used. The other point to be noted is that the Song Tay raiders themselves had to be specially recruited, trained, and rehearsed over a sixty day period (most of the Army ground force being drawn from Special Forces units). There was no standing unit or units available in and of themselves capable of meeting the demands of the mission. It is highly speculative that had there been

such a unit, and had they been employed when intelligence first located the prisoners, whether the results would have been any different. It is fair to say, that future such operations will very likely demand a quickness of response that will not permit the formation of ad-hoc groups of raiders such as conducted the Song Tay operation.

After the United States' withdrawal from the Indo-chinese conflict, the number of airborne and special forces units were reduced. Rangers, likewise, underwent another reorganization and change in mission. During the war, one of the Army's two airborne divisions (the 101st Airborne) had been converted to an airmobile division.⁴⁴ After the war, special forces was reduced from eight to three groups. In 1974, the two remaining ranger long range patrol companies located in the United States were used as a base to form two new ranger battalions. These battalions, more on the order of their World War II predecessors, were organized as "elite light infantry battalions."⁴⁵

Although the helicopter replaced the parachute as the principle means of tactical airmobility, it did not render parachute units obsolete. Even though the full adoption of the "airmobile concept"⁴⁶ has been characterized as "the most dramatic organizational advance in the U.S. Army since 1945,"⁴⁷ and has meant that any unit capable of moving the essential elements of its combat power by helicopter can exploit the vertical flank, parachute capable units have continued to have

a significant place in the Army force structure. While the helicopter revolutionized tactical airmobility, the long range assault transport provided a major improvement in strategic deployability. These aircraft,⁴⁸ with greatly increased payload, as well as range, began to be developed after Korea and gave parachute capable units the "strategic reach" they lacked during both World War II and Korea. The development of these aircraft, coupled with the inherent ability of rangers, airborne, and special forces units to fight immediately upon landing, gave the United States the capability to rapidly project military power over great distances directly into ground combat operations. Thus, in addition to still providing unique capabilities applicable to general war scenarios, these special units have also come to be identified as the reaction forces to be called upon first in rapidly developing crisis situations overseas.

In the past twenty-five years, for example, the United States, as well as other countries, have used their airborne and other special units to intervene in crisis situations short of actual war. In 1954 the British and French seized the Suez Canal by airborne assault, in an attempt to repossess the critical waterway, but were soon forced to withdraw by world opinion. In 1964, Belgian para-commandos, parachuting from American C130's, intervened at Stanleyville in the newly-independent Belgian Congo to rescue foreign nationals. The same year, the U.S. 82d Airborne Division was rapidly deployed

to the Dominican Republic to stabilize a deteriorating governmental crisis in that island nation. Although the division subsequently airlanded at the national capital airport, the leading elements of the division departed their stateside base (approximately 44 hours after first alerted) rigged for parachute assault, fully prepared to jump and fight for the airfield. Since that time, the division has been alerted for possible deployment several times, although never actually deployed. In 1970 the division was alerted and prepared for deployment to Jordan during that country's civil war with the Palestinians. Four years later, in 1973, the division was again prepared to deploy to the Middle East, this time as a counter move against possible Soviet intervention in the 1973 Middle East War. Lastly, in 1978, elements of the 82d were marshalled for a possible rescue of foreign nationals from an isolated region of Zaire (the former Belgian Congo). The mission was eventually undertaken by Belgian and French Foreign Legion paratroops, transported to their staging base in U.S. Air Force aircraft. Although not deployed in these crises, certainly the very fact that the division was alerted and prepared to move on short notice constituted a show of force that may very well have lent a degree of stability to the situation.

Likewise, the utility of airborne forces has not been lost on the principle adversary of the United States, the Soviet Union. The Soviets were early pioneers in the use of parachute troops, however, their use against the Germans on the Eastern Front during World War II was generally less than

successful. However, "successful airborne actions during the invasion of Manchuria in August 1945 restored Soviet confidence in a method that has particular advantages where speed and surprise are of paramount importance."⁴⁹ Since the 1960's the Soviets have maintained an "Airborne Landing Troops Command,"⁵⁰ consisting of eight airborne divisions⁵¹ and two special service brigades. Equally important, and perhaps stealing a page from the German experience of World War II, they have developed a comprehensive doctrine of employment known as "desant." This Soviet concept envisions not only the mass use of airborne troops, but also their use as special raiding forces, and as, or in conjunction with, partisans, saboteurs and even KGB (secret police) agents. Although primarily thought to be targeted against the NATO rear and flank regions, they are also the primary rapid reaction forces of the USSR. It was, in fact, the alert and movement of Soviet airborne divisions (the advance party was in Syria)⁵² that prompted the United States alert of the 82d Airborne Division and other forces during the 1973 Middle East War. In the 1968 subjugation of Czechoslovakia, Soviet airborne troops, preceded by a clandestine group of KGB agents, in a "lightning airborne thrust at the nerve center of the nation,"⁵³ reminiscent of the German invasion of The Hague in 1940,⁵⁴ neutralized the Czech government, and ensured that the overland invasion by the Soviet tank and motorized mass would be unopposed.

Additionally, the rise, in the 1970's, of trans-national terrorism has fostered an expansion of the roles and missions of rangers and special forces in particular. To combat international terrorist groups most nations⁵⁵ have looked to the elite units of their armed forces for a counter-terrorist force. The British lean heavily on their Special Air Service Regiment, a special forces type of unit. The Israelis draw theirs from among the ranks of their airborne and commando forces. The United States response⁵⁶ would in all probability be provided by some combination of rangers, special forces and possibly airborne forces depending on the extent and nature of the threat.

Two highly successful counter-terrorist operations have been conducted, both involving hijacked commercial airliners. At Entebbe, Uganda, in July 1976, Israeli paratroopers and commandos launched an airborne raid "which must remain a military classic for many years to come."⁵⁷ Using C130 aircraft, the force clandestinely landed at the Ugandan airfield, neutralized the terrorists and Ugandan soldiers assisting them, seized control of the airfield, rescued the crew and passengers of a hijacked airliner, destroyed much of the Ugandan Air Force on the ground and were enroute back to Israel within 53 minutes. A little over a year later, in October 1977, German counter-terrorist commandos, operating in cooperation with the government of Somalia, stormed a hijacked airliner at Mogadishu, overwhelmed the terrorists

and rescued crew and passengers. It is important to note that the concept of these two operations differs little from the successful raids of World War II, cited earlier, in which equally skillful, resourceful, and daring special units achieved spectacular results.

In summation, airborne ranger, and special forces, like any other military force, have both capabilities and limitations. As their relatively short history testifies, when they have been employed so as to capitalize upon their unique capabilities, they have often produced decisive and tactically significant results. In particular, many of their more spectacular successes have resulted when their combined capabilities have been exploited. On the other hand, when either their individual or complementary capabilities have either not been understood or disregarded, or when they have been employed in other than their intended role, they have as often as not, achieved less than desired results. Most importantly, their respective and collective histories lend perspective to and promote an understanding of current roles and missions, and provide some insight as to how current capabilities might best be maximized within the context of rapid reaction, crisis intervention scenarios.

CHAPTER II

ENDNOTES

¹During the French and Indian War (Seven Years' War, 1756-1763) a force of Americans known as Rangers served as an auxillary of the British Army. "Rogers Rangers" capitalized on the techniques and characteristics of the American frontiersmen to perform scouting and raiding missions.

²The same Billy Mitchell, whose outspoken advocacy of airpower between the World Wars would lead to his court-martial and resignation from the U.S. Army.

^{3,4}"Fallschirmjagers" (parachute and glider troops) were normally landed in advance of mechanized ground forces to seize key objectives in the enemy rear. The combination of airborne troops, tanks, armored infantry and close air support aircraft was known as "blitzkrieg" or "lightning war."

⁵Unlike the Allies, Hitler saw Crete as a "Pyrrhic victory." As a result, German paratroops would never again be employed on an airborne operation of any size, although they would fight throughout the war as "elite" infantry.

⁶Two British divisions (1st and 5th) and four American (13th, 17th, 82d and 101st).

⁷Russell F. Weigley, History of the United States Army (1967), 470. The airborne division gradually increased in size from 8,500 to 12,799 men and changed in structure from two glider regiments (of two battalions each) and one parachute regiment (of three battalions) to an organization of two parachute regiments and a glider regiment (increased to three battalions), with a third parachute regiment at least more or less permanently attached.

⁸James M. Gavin, On to Berlin, Battles of an Airborne Commander 1943-1946 (1978), 59, 269-270.

⁹Charles MacDonald, Airborne (1970), 159.

¹⁰B.H. Liddell Hart, Strategy, The Indirect Approach (1954), 320.

¹¹Cornelius Ryan, A Bridge Too Far (1974), 9. Phrase used by British Lieutenant General F. A. M. Browning, Deputy Commander, First Allied Airborne Army, to describe the depth behind German lines the British 1st Airborne Division was to be employed.

¹²The First Allied Airborne Army, formed in 1944, consisted of five airborne divisions, various smaller airborne, units and Anglo-American troop carrier units.

¹³The 1st Special Service Force was a combined Canadian-American unit formed originally to fight behind German lines in Norway. Airborne qualified and trained extensively in winter, mountain and amphibious warfare, the unit was primarily used as infantry in Italy and Southern France.

¹⁴Airborne, 157.

¹⁵U.S. Army, Special Forces Operations(U), FM 31-20 (September 1977), 96.

¹⁶Maurice A. J. Tugwell, "Day of the Paratroops," Military Review, Vol 57, No 3 (March 1977), 47.

¹⁷"Day of the Paratroops," 45.

¹⁸John R. Galvin, Air Assault (1969), 313. "Strike hold," term used to describe the concept of employment of paratroops, wherein they were delivered to seize or secure an objective (strike) and then defend it (hold) until link up with an attacking ground force.

¹⁹"Day of the Paratroops," 45.

²⁰Air Assault, 124.

²¹Paradrops during World War II, and up until the early 1970's, in large part depended on specially trained "pathfinders" to proceed the main body of paratroops to mark the drop zone and provide terminal guidance for the airlift aircraft.

²² Maurice A. J. Tugwell, Airborne to Battle (1971), 276-277.

²³ Airborne to Battle, 276-277.

²⁴ The Alamo Scouts were a Sixth Army provisional reconnaissance unit, trained and organized to conduct long range clandestine reconnaissance, and organize and direct guerrilla activities.

²⁵ U.S. Army, "Rescue by the 6th Ranger Battalion," Combat Notes #5, Headquarters Sixth Army (March 1944), 10.

²⁶ Air Assault, 236.

²⁷ A Bridge Too Far, 188.

²⁸ Air Assault, 187.

²⁹ James M. Gavin, Airborne Warfare (1947), 120.

³⁰ Airborne, 30.

³¹ On to Berlin, 185. Comments by General Sir Miles Dempsey, Commander of the Second British Army and overall commander of Market Garden.

³² Air Assault, 189.

³³ On to Berlin, 190.

³⁴ Charles MacDonald, The Mighty Endeavor (1969), 343.

³⁵ The Mighty Endeavor, 346. The other, according to MacDonald was the slow progress of the ground forces in their attack to link up with the airborne force.

³⁶ On to Berlin, 165.

³⁷ Airborne to Battle. 299.

³⁸Airborne to Battle, 239.

³⁹U.S. Army, Special Problems in the Korean Conflict, (Eighth U.S. Army Monograph), (1952), 82.

⁴⁰Special Problems in the Korean Conflict, 84.

⁴¹Special Problems in the Korean Conflict, 84.

⁴²Robin Moore, The Green Berets (1965), 18.

⁴³Benjamin F. Schemmer, The Raid (1976), 216.

⁴⁴The 101st Airborne Division was converted to an airmobile division, a reconfiguration wherein the division lost its parachute capability and was equipped with 400 plus helicopters organic to the division.

⁴⁵The battalions were given the regimental lineage of the 75th Infantry, "The Merrill's Marauders" of World War II, since the "colors" of the earlier rangers had long since passed to special forces.

⁴⁶The "airmobile concept" is the use of helicopters, organic or assigned to the ground force, to move combat, combat support and service support elements about the battlefield. It also includes the use of observation helicopters for reconnaissance and armed helicopters for fire support.

⁴⁷U.S. Army, Operations, FM 100-5 (1977), 2-30.

⁴⁸The principle assault transport is the C130 Hercules, which has five times the payload and twice the range of its World War II counterpart the C47 Dakota. The C141 Starlifter, a jet strategic airlift aircraft, is also habitually used in airborne operations.

⁴⁹Airborne to Battle, 329.

⁵⁰Airborne to Battle, 329.

⁵¹International Institute for Strategic Studies, The Military Balance, 1978-1979 (September 1978), 9.

⁵²London Sunday Times, The Yom Kippur War (1974), 409.

⁵³Airborne to Battle, 332.

⁵⁴Day of the Paratroops, 47.

⁵⁵As an exception, the Germans created a counter terrorist commando unit from among the ranks of their border police, although they are paramilitary in organization, training, and operation.

⁵⁶The armed forces would be used to counter international terrorism. They are forbidden by law from being used domestically. The FBI is responsible for countering domestic or internal terrorism.

⁵⁷Phillip de Ste Croix, Airborne Operations (1978), 212.

CHAPTER III

CURRENT ORGANIZATION, MISSIONS AND CAPABILITIES

Of the approximately 774,000 men and women in the United States Army, a little more than 23,000, or three percent of the Army's strength, is to be found in its airborne ranger, and special forces units. This chapter addresses the current organization, missions and capabilities of these units. In so doing, one must not only examine and compare their singular capabilities, but also their collective capabilities. It is this, "sum of capabilities" that offers the military planner the broadest range of options and, in turn, serves to maximize the relative combat power² of both the respective units and the force as a whole into which they may be tailored.

ORGANIZATION AND MISSION

The Army's airborne forces are primarily embodied in its one airborne division, the 82d Airborne, although as noted in Chapter I, several smaller airborne units are also maintained. Continuing the trend begun in World War II, organizationally the division varies very little from the standard infantry division.³ Figure 1 shows the current organization and mission of the airborne division. The airborne division

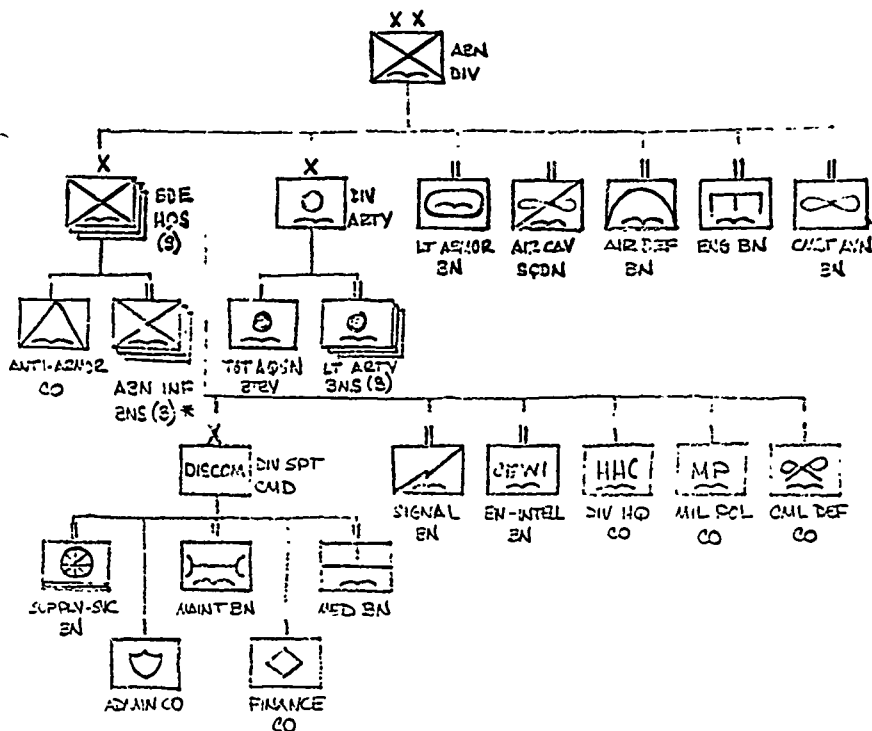


Figure 1. Airborne Division Organization and Mission.

Mission: Movement by air and by airborne assault to seize and hold assigned objectives, to close with the enemy and destroy or capture him in a low-intensity or mid-intensity conflict until ground link-up can be accomplished or until reinforced by air or surface landing.

Movement by air and by airborne assault, when reinforced, to seize and hold assigned objectives in high-intensity operational environments.

Execution of small scale airborne commando type operations to perform selected missions.

Movement by air on short notice to any overseas land areas as a deterrent or resistance force in any threatened area.

has become more a general purpose force and less a special purpose force, than was its World War II predecessor. As an article in Infantry magazine pointed out:

Improvements in the airborne state-of-the-art and the introduction of sophisticated weapons into the division have transformed the airborne unit from a specialized force with limited capabilities once on the ground into a general purpose force with tremendously improved sustaining capability both in terms of combat power and tactical or battlefield mobility.

While it is convenient for many to think of the airborne division in World War II terms, the division bears little resemblance to its forebearers. Table I compares the weapons of the World War II airborne division, with the present day division and the current infantry division. In terms of anti-armor weaponry alone the difference is most dramatic. Whereas in World War II the 82d Airborne Division routinely relied on captured German "panzerfausts" due to the inadequacy in both quality and quantity of its own weapons,⁵ today the division equals the infantry division in anti-armor firepower.

The basic combat element of the airborne division is the airborne infantry battalion, of which there are nine in the division. Besides being the basic maneuver element around which the division is organized for combat, it is also the basic "building blocks" around which the 82d Airborne Division is organized for rapid deployment. Three hundred sixty-five days a year a battalion task force of the division is on alert to deploy "on no-notice to any place in the world and conduct operations on arrival."⁶ The organization and mission of this

TABLE I

AIRBORNE DIVISION WEAPONS COMPARISON

Comparison of World War II and Present Day Airborne Divisions					
World War II (TOE 71-1)			Present Day (TOE 57H)		
Light Machine Gun (30 Cal)	260	561	Light Machine Gun (7.62mm)		
Heavy Machine Gun (30 Cal)	24	---			
Heavy Machine Gun (50 Cal)	165	94	Heavy Machine Gun (50 Cal)		
Rocket Launcher (2.36 in)	612	65	Rocket Launcher (66mm)		
	---	*	Light AT Wpn (66mm) (LAW)		
AT Gun (57mm)	50	162	TOW Heavy AT Wpn		
	---	276	Dragon Medium AT wpn		
	---	54	Lt Tank (Sheridan)		
Mortar (60mm)	81	---			
Mortar (81mm)	42	84	Mortar (81mm)		
	---	36	Mortar (107mm)		
Howitzer (75mm)	48	---			
Howitzer (105mm)	12	54	Howitzer (105mm)		
	---	*	Redeye Air-to-Air Missile		
	---	48	AH-1S Anti-armor helicopter		
	---	48	Vulcan Air Defense Gun (20mm)		

*Ammunition items issued based on mission. EG. every individual rifleman could theoretically be issued one or several LAWS.

SOURCE: U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, "Airborne Division Operations." Course PJ12-6.

Comparison of Present Day Airborne and Infantry Divisions			
Airborne		Infantry	
54 (Light)	Tanks	54 (Medium)	
162	TOW hvy AT wpns	166	
276	Dragon Med AT wpns	226	
54	105 Howitzer	54	
---	155 Howitzer	18	
---	8" Howitzer	4	
48	Vulcan AD Gun	24	
---	Chapparel AD MSL	24	
48	AH-1S Anti-Armor HEL	48	

SOURCE: US Army Infantry School, "Airborne Division Operations," Course M312.

battalion task force, called the Division Ready Force #1 (DRF 1) is shown at Figure 2. The battalions of the division are sequentially numbered 1 through 9, based on their state of alert and anticipated order of deployment from their home station. DRFs 1 through 3 comprise the Division Ready Brigade #1 (DRB 1). The other battalions comprise DRB's 2 and 3, likewise signifying their readiness posture and anticipated order of deployment. Based on mission requirements either a DRF or DRB may be tailored with additional "special packages" from divisional and non-divisional resources. These augmentation force packages may include light armor, air defense artillery, engineer airfield construction elements, medium artillery (from Corps assets), air cavalry, and army aviation. DRB organization is shown at Figure 3. Under normal readiness conditions the DRF 1 is prepared to begin deployment within 18 hours of notification. This time may be reduced if for example an increase in tensions warranted the marshalling of troops, equipment and aircraft at the departure airfield. This was, in fact, the case during the Zaire crisis in May 1978, as the DRF was marshalled, ready to load and begin deployment immediately upon direction of the National Military Command Authority.

The Army's two ranger battalions were activated in 1974 as (in the words of the then Army Chief of Staff, General Creighton Abrams) "elite, light 'nfantry." The battalions bear no resemblance to the ranger long range reconnaissance

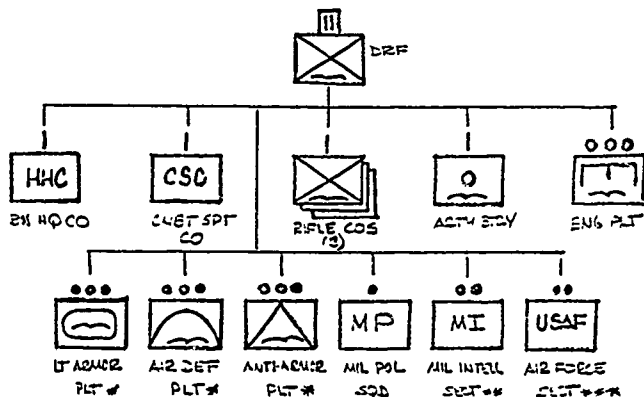


Figure 2. Division Ready Force (DRF) Organized for Separate Deployment

Mission: As an independent force, deploy by air for periods not to exceed 14 days; conduct such operations as raids, air base security, show of flag demonstrations, protection or evacuation assistance for non-combatants or combat operations against light resistance.

As part of a larger force, conduct airborne operations commensurate with the mission assigned to that force.

*Augmentation force packages attached as required by the nature of the mission.

**Includes counter intelligence, army security agency, POW interrogators, and sensor specialists.

***Consists of USAF tactical air control party and combat control team.

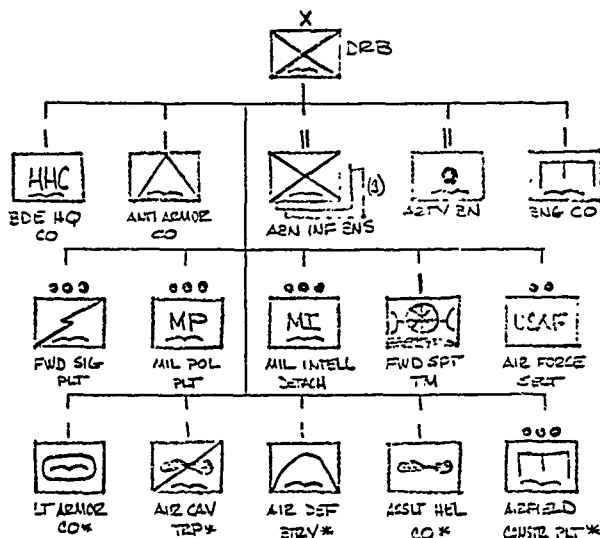


Figure 3. Division Ready Brigade (DRB)

Mission: As an independent force, deploy by air and conduct assigned missions initiated by airborne operations in designated objective areas for periods up to 30 days.

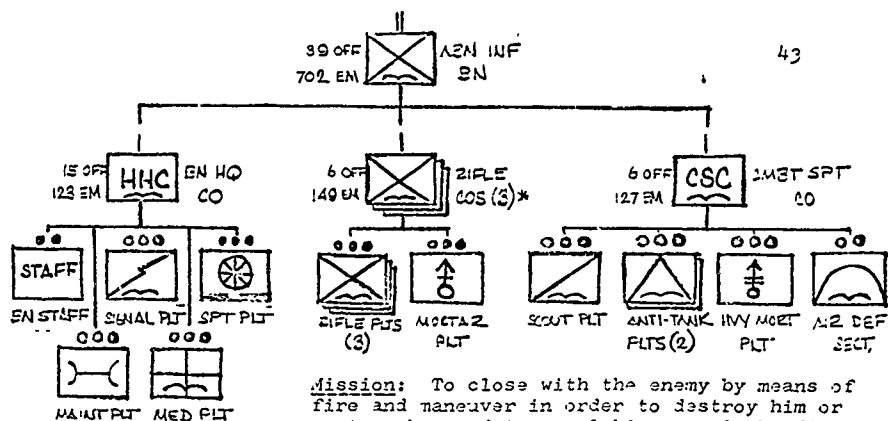
As part of a larger force conduct operations commensurate with missions assigned to the force.

NOTE: Task organization of brigade varies with assigned missions. Attached elements are normally further attached to the infantry battalions for air movement and airborne assault operations.

*Special Force packages any or all of which may be attached based on the mission assigned.

companies of the Vietnam War, but are organized along conventional infantry battalion lines. Figure 4 shows the organization and mission of the battalions in comparison with that of the airborne infantry battalion.

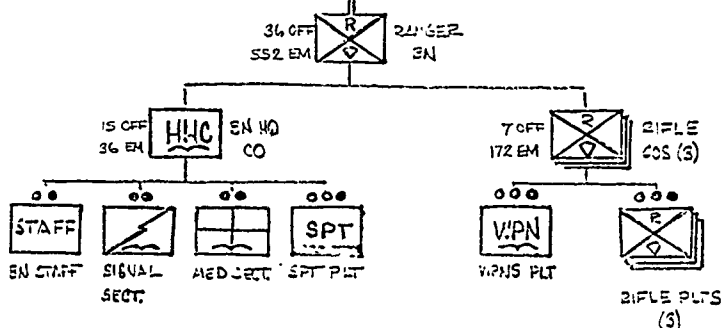
Although conventionally organized, their missions of "special operations" is unique and is defined by FM 31-20, Special Forces Operations as "sensitive actions of a specified nature initiated in the face of emergency or strategic contingency."⁷ Organizationally, the small austere headquarters company (53 officers and men) and the absence of a combat support company reflects the lack of heavier crew served weapons and the sustaining combat service support (and the attendant vehicles) which are organic to the airborne infantry battalion. While the battalions are capable of accepting augmentation of combat and combat service support elements so as to conduct sustained conventional infantry operations, in their primary role they are not habitually so augmented. Unlike the airborne battalion which is habitually tailored as a combined arms task force with a multiplicity of weapons systems, the ranger battalions principle weapons system is the individual Ranger, a highly trained and conditioned infantryman, characterized by "pride, confidence, self-determination and the ability to lead, endure, and succeed regardless of the odds or obstacles of the enemy, weather or terrain."⁹ The manpower-intensive nature of the battalions is illustrated by the fact that 91 percent of the battalions'



Mission: To close with the enemy by means of fire and maneuver in order to destroy him or capture him and to repel his assault by fire, close combat and counterattack.

*4TH RIFLE CO ADDED BY WARTIME AUGMENTATION.

WEAPONS	DENSITY	DANGER
26	7.62 LT MACH GUN	27
9	LAUNCHER 66mm (FLASH)	6
—	60mm MOETAR	6
9	81mm MOETAR	—
4	107mm MOETAR	—
—	90mm 20LB RIFLE	9
30	AT&M (DEALON)	9
12	AT&M (TOW)	—
75	GRENADE LAUNCHER 40mm	60



Mission: To plan and conduct special military operations in support of United States policy and objectives.

Figure 4. Comparison of Airborne Infantry and Ranger Battalions

strength is found in their rifle companies, as compared to 63 percent in the airborne infantry battalion.

Like the battalions of the airborne division, the ranger battalions are also maintained in a high state of readiness. The battalions rotate periods of "Ranger Ready Force" (RRF) duty, during which they are likewise capable of deployment within a maximum of eighteen hours or as little as six hours from no-notice notification. The flexibility exists to deploy the entire RRF, or only selected elements thereof. These selected elements vary from reinforced platoon and reinforced company force packages, to a special "hand-picked" assault force which could be required by particularly sensitive missions.

Unlike airborne and ranger units, special forces units are not conventionally organized. Rather their unconventional organization reflects their primary mission-unconventional warfare. As defined by Training Circular 31-20-1, The Role of U.S. Army Special Forces, unconventional warfare is:

Operations, which include but are not limited to guerrilla warfare, evasion and escape, subversion, and sabotage, conducted during periods of peace and war in hostile or politically sensitive territory.¹⁰

Other missions of special forces are special operations and foreign internal defense. As noted by FM 31-20, Special Forces Operations(U), "these areas are related and in some situations require that two or all three be conducted at the same time."¹¹

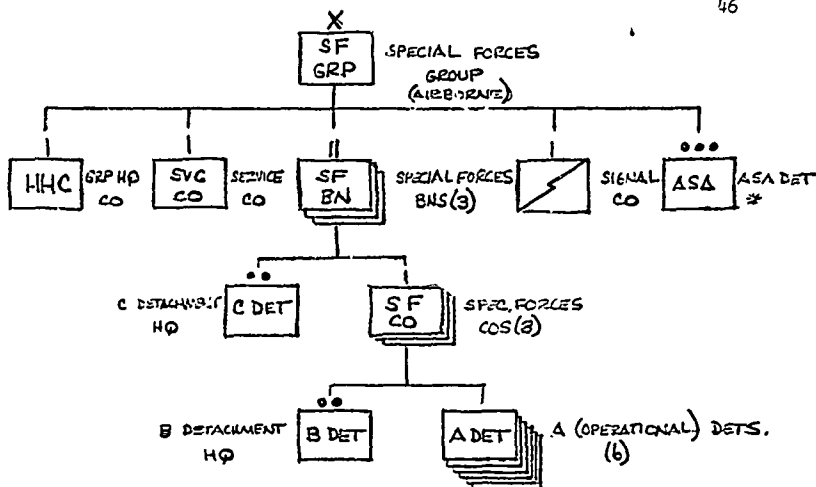
As previously noted special forces are organized into groups. The organization and mission of which are shown at

Figure 5. The group is:

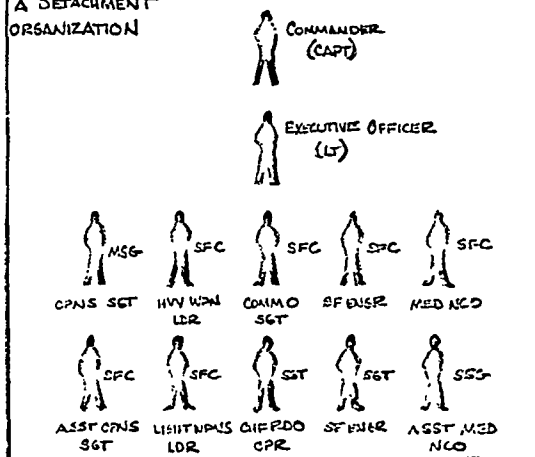
. . . a multipurpose force. Its organization, flexible command arrangements, tailored logistical and fiscal procedures and highly trained personnel enable it to accomplish a variety of missions--either in a primary role or in a role supporting other forces or agencies.¹²

The basic building block of this organization is the special forces operational detachment of 12 men, or "A" detachment. This detachment, or "team" as it is commonly called, may be employed independently or in conjunction with other detachments, in which case it may be controlled by a "B" detachment or company headquarters. Several "B" detachments in turn could be controlled by a battalion headquarters or "C" detachment. Regardless of the number of operational detachments employed, centralized command and control is exercised by a Special Forces Operational Base (SFOB), or Forward Operational Base (FOB), which the special forces group headquarters is specifically organized to establish.

The forte of special forces is their "maturity, experience, flexibility, and multiplicity of skills."¹³ For example, the "A" detachment, as shown at Figure 5, is comprised of two officers, and ten non-commissioned officers, all highly trained in specific skills and cross-trained in others. There are no junior enlisted men, or "privates" as they are called in the vernacular of the Army. The "team" is primarily intended to function as a "force multiplier,"¹⁴ or to organize, train, and lead guerrilla forces. Because of this, and unlike airborne units, and to a lesser extent rangers, they are not equipped



"A" DETACHMENT ORGANIZATION



Certain detachments trained in military free fall parachuting and underwater (SCUBA) operations.

*ARMY SECURITY AGENCY DETACHMENT

Figure 5. Special Forces Organization

with heavy weapons, although they may be trained in their use and employment. Likewise, although they may unilaterally conduct special operations, special forces are not specifically organized for it, as are the ranger battalions. Although they have been assigned these missions in the past, they have usually been conducted by an "ad hoc" force, such as executed the "Song Tay Raid" as cited in Chapter II. As an Army magazine article entitled, "Rangers and Special Forces: Two Edges of the Same Dagger" noted, the fact that Special Forces were assigned such a missions when formed in the 1950's,

. . . reflected, among other things, the lack of Ranger units capable of high-level combat missions . . . (and) it is within this sphere that confusion arises as to the dividing line between Ranger and Special Forces operations.¹⁵

Like the airborne and rangers, special forces units may also be deployed on short notice to trouble spots anywhere in the world. However, due to their orientation on specific geographic areas, no one unit in particular sits "worldwide" alert as do ranger and airborne ready forces.

So much for the organization and missions of these units. Let us now turn to their specific capabilities, and more importantly, how they might be employed within the realm of short notice, rapid reaction contingency operations.

CAPABILITIES

The capabilities of the airborne division as expressed in its Table of Organization and Equipment (TOE)¹⁶ are:

Executing airborne assault by means of parachute drop or air landing.

Closing with the enemy and destroying or capturing him, utilizing firepower, maneuver, and close combat.

When organized for combat with additional combat, combat support and combat service support units, this division is capable of sustained ground operations.

Acting alone or part of a larger force.

Conducting airmobile operations.

In large part, the capabilities of the division are based on the capabilities of its subordinate maneuver battalions, which by TOE¹⁷ are:

Close with the enemy by means of fire and maneuver in order to destroy or capture him.

Repels enemy assault by fire, close combat and counterattack.

Provides base of fire and maneuver elements.

Seizes and holds terrain.

Conducts independent operations on a limited scale.

Furnishes limited antitank protection.

Provides indirect fire support for organic and attached units.

Conducts long range patrolling when appropriately equipped.

Participates in air-transported (airmobile) operations when provided with sufficient transportation.

Maneuvers in all types of terrain and under all climatic conditions.

Capable of frequent airborne assault by parachute or assault aircraft with minimum marshalling and planning procedures.

Translated into roles and missions these capabilities mean that the airborne division can be expected to conduct the following type operations¹⁸ within the context of

contingency operations:

- a. Seize advanced bases to facilitate the deployment of other forces or to deny it to the enemy.
- b. Seize, secure and hold important objectives and facilities until linkup with other forces or until withdrawal.
- c. Occupy areas or reinforce units beyond the immediate reach of land forces.
- d. Conduct quick reaction deployments to overseas areas as a deterrent force (show of force operations).
- e. Conduct operations to protect U.S. lives and properties in overseas areas.
- f. Secure a lodgement area for the introduction of other "heavier" forces.
- g. Conduct a full range of combat operations including stability and airmobile operations, raids, and conventional mid-intensity combat operations to include anti-armor defensive operations independently or in conjunction with other U.S. or Allied forces.

The operations may be of either short or long duration. For example a raid may be terminated in a matter of hours, whereas as an advanced or independent force sent to assist a friendly nation, the division, or elements thereof, may be required to operate independently up to 30 days. The obvious limitation of the airborne division is that it is "light," as it must be in order to maintain its most significant advantages of rapid deployability and "strategic reach."¹⁹ It is the delicate balance between deployability and sustainability in

a world in which even the smallest of nations may possess sophisticated weaponry that has and will continue to plague Army force planners. Indeed for every critic of the "lightness" of airborne forces, there are those who make the counter claim that the increases in divisional combat power (and simultaneously airlift requirements) may mean that the division is "too heavy" for certain contingencies.

Perhaps due to this latter criticism, lighter still are the ranger battalions. Although, as previously discussed, organized essentially as infantry battalions, their capabilities although to some extent similar to airborne battalions are nonetheless different and unique. The TOE capabilities²⁰ are:

Use air, land, water, foot mobility, and parachute delivery when required, to conduct raids, ambushes, and attacks against key targets in enemy territory.

Maneuver with speed and surprise in all types terrain and climatic conditions day or night.

Operate independently as required.

Conduct limited sustained combat operations by accepting attachments of combat, combat support, and combat service support augmentation.

Establish a credible American presence in any area of the world to demonstrate United States resolve.

Typical missions for rangers as expressed by the Army's Training and Doctrine Command are:²¹

Commando type raids or special operations against deep targets such as nuclear storage sites, missile sites, or key enemy military/political personnel or resources.

Operations in conjunction with conventional forces against critical targets such as airfields, communications centers, command and control facilities, or key bridges.

Airmobile or airborne operations in support of larger units.

Rescue of American PW, hijacked airliners, or American political hostages.

Safeguarding American lives, property or investments abroad, such as protecting American citizens and/or embassies during political insurrections or other foreign emergencies.

Ranger battalions are intended to be employed against targets of "strategic or significant tactical value, of political significance or of a time sensitive nature."²² Their operations were normally of limited duration (the battalions are self-sufficient for five days) but of an intensity and sensitivity which requires the highest degree of mental and physical conditioning, training and flexibility. Likewise, because they lack the firepower which is the measure of combat effectiveness of more conventional units, "they must rely on deception, mobility, speed, audacity and superior training . . ."²³ Although they are rapidly deployable, because of the nature of their mission and the fact that they are expected to be "totally reliable,"²⁴ their success is highly dependent on detailed and accurate intelligence as well as thorough and well rehearsed plans. Thus, the advantages of a rapid response must be weighed against the time required to gather the necessary intelligence needed to formulate a plan with the highest probability of success.

Like airborne units, the most serious limitation of ranger units is their "lightness." However, as previously noted, capabilities and limitations are interrelated and must

be balanced one against the other. The fact that ranger battalions are exceptionally and purposely "light" is a basis for many of their unique capabilities. Of more serious concern is the danger that their capabilities and limitations may not be fully understood by those who may employ them. Thus, as was sometimes the case in World War II and more often the case in Korea, they may be employed for purposes for which they are not really suited or intended.

Also frequently misunderstood are special forces. To quote the Army's Training Circular 31-20-1:

Myth: Special Forces can do everything!

Reality: There are those who believe Special Forces is some complicated all-powerful system which should be able to answer every need. THIS IS NOT TRUE . . . It is true that Special Forces has the capabilities to conduct a wide variety of missions under circumstances and in environments not normally envisioned for conventional forces²⁵

These capabilities as stated in the TOE of the Special Forces battalion are:²⁶

Provide Special Forces operational elements or personnel for unconventional warfare or stability operations as directed.

Plan and conduct military operations which include but are not restricted to the following:

Develop, organize, equip, train and direct non-U.S. Forces in the conduct of guerrilla warfare.

Participate in and/or support evasion and escape operations.

Conduct other unconventional warfare missions, either unilaterally or in conjunction with resistance forces.

Train, advise, and assist non-U.S. military or paramilitary forces, to include operational, logistical, and fiscal support.

Infiltrate and exfiltrate specified areas by air, land or sea.

Survive and operate in remote areas and hostile environments for extended periods of time with minimum of external direction and support.

Recover friendly personnel from remote or hostile areas.

Provide planning assistance and training to U.S. and Allied Forces or agencies in Special Forces operational techniques.

Plan and conduct deep penetration missions to include:

Attack of critical strategic targets.

Collection of intelligence.

Strategic target acquisition.

Selected independent operations of a sensitive or critical nature when directed by higher authority.

By virtue of their training, organization, and equipment, special forces units are capable of operating for extended periods in enemy, contested or denied areas, as indeed they must, since guerrilla forces are not trained and organized overnight. However, the capabilities also have applicability to a quick response operation into areas in which U.S. forces may have to be rapidly deployed, but are not already operating. Some likely unconventional warfare missions under such circumstances could include:

a. Deployment as an advance force for a larger force to be marshalled and deployed at a later date.

b. As such an advance force conduct such operations as intelligence gathering and/or training, organizing, and directing friendly indigenous forces who may be operating in the area.

c. Prior to or concurrent with the arrival of the larger force, unilaterally or in conjunction with indigenous forces, conduct such operations including but not limited to attack of critical targets, interdiction of enemy movement and communications, or seizing and holding for limited periods key terrain and facilities critical to the mission of the larger force.

d. Assist the arrival of a larger force by providing guides, marking drop zones and landing zones, and assisting in the control of prisoners, stragglers and civilians.

e. Engage in subversion and sabotage activities.

f. Undertake a broad range of special operations, unilaterally, jointly with indigenous forces, or in conjunction with other U.S. forces. Such operations may include:

- Liberation of prisoners of war and political prisoners.

- Abduction of selected personnel.

- Location, identification, recovery and extra-action of sensitive items of equipment such as nuclear weapons or satellites.

- Advise and assist in hostage rescue operations.

- Attack of terrorist installations and personnel to preclude their continued threat.

Special forces operations may be overt, covert, or clandestine. By contrast airborne and ranger units engage in overt operations only. As defined by the Joint Chiefs of Staff and

amplified by Training Circular 31-20-1:

Overt operations are operations in which no attempt is made to conceal either the operation or the identity of the sponsor.

Covert operations are operations which are so planned and executed as to conceal the identity of the sponsor.

Clandestine are operations which are so planned and executed in such a way as to assure secrecy or concealment.

Clandestine operations differ from covert operations in that the former emphasizes concealment of the operation, while the latter emphasizes concealment of the sponsor. While the operations of all three forces are planned under strict operational security measures, to enhance initial surprise; only special forces operations may be either covert or clandestine in execution.

Likewise, unlike airborne and ranger battalions, special forces units are not conventional maneuver units. Although when directing or controlling guerrilla forces, the guerrilla units may, in some instances, be assigned certain conventional ground combat missions; this is highly dependent on the organization, training, and armament of the particular guerrilla force. Guerrillas, by their very nature, are generally more adept at unconventional warfare, than conventional operations and such a use of them may require retraining, reorganization and most likely some degree of rearmament. Whereas this is no doubt a limitation of special forces (and guerrillas), on the other hand, it would seem doubtful that the capability to raise, train and equip conventional land

forces would require, or even be compatible with, the special skills, organization, and training required to conduct unconventional warfare.

Collectively, the respective capabilities of airborne, ranger, and special forces units provide a broad range of options, ranging from the ability to conduct full scale division size sustained combat operations to covert or clandestine unconventional warfare operations by small highly skilled teams of specialists. The diverse nature of the contingencies in which these forces may be employed may require any or all of these capabilities, or likely some combination thereof. In order to better understand how each of these forces might best be employed and to facilitate a correlation of their respective capabilities a comparison of capabilities is in order.

COMPARISON OF CAPABILITIES

Although both airborne and ranger battalions are conventionally and similarly organized, significant differences do exist in their particular capabilities. As previously discussed the airborne battalions are more heavily armed and possess the capability for sustained operations that the ranger battalions lack. Likewise, they are routinely configured as combined arms task forces. Although capable of limited duration independent operations, they habitually and are intended primarily to function as the basic maneuver elements of the brigade and division. The ranger battalions,

in addition to being more lightly equipped and armed, are separate battalions primarily intended to conduct independent or semi-independent operations of a strategic or critical nature. Although they may operate in conjunction with conventional forces, or even, when suitably augmented, conduct sustained combat operations, they are specifically organized and trained to conduct special operations of limited duration.

Both are capable of rapid strategic deployment. However, because of the greater density of heavier weapons and vehicles of the airborne battalion task force, significantly more aircraft are required to transport it, than are required to transport a ranger battalion. For example, 33 C141 jet²⁹ transports are required to move the parachute assault elements of one DRF, whereas the similar assault elements of a ranger battalion can be transported in 10 such aircraft.³⁰ It is also important to note that while both airborne and ranger units have a parachute capability, this technique of entering the battlefield is used differently by the respective forces. For the airborne, the airborne assault is an end in itself, wherein the airborne force uses parachute assault techniques primarily to seize or secure either terrain objectives or facilities such as airfields. By contrast, the parachute capability of ranger units is used primarily as one means of infiltrating the target area.³¹ The important distinction is that between a parachute assault capability and using parachute delivery as a method of

infiltration. Whereas airborne units due to their heavier structure have the capability to use "airborne assault to seize and hold assigned objectives,"³² rangers do not. Although rangers, under certain circumstances may use their parachute capability to secure especially critical objectives for limited durations, their parachute capability is primarily intended as but one form of mobility to be exploited "to conduct raids, ambushes and attacks against key targets in enemy territory."³³

Another important distinction between the two units is the mission and capability to conduct "small scale commando type operations to perform selected missions."³⁴ Although the airborne division is specifically assigned this mission, the TOE³⁵ which does so was published in September 1974, at the same time the Army was forming, for the first time since Korea, ranger units specifically designed to conduct such operations as a primary mission. The Training and Doctrine Command Revised Ranger Summary Doctrinal Statement which specified "commando-type raids"³⁶ as a typical ranger battalion mission was not published until several months later, in December 1974. The fact that airborne units were historically,³⁷ and still officially are, assigned such a mission may not be so much a duplication of effort, as much as a reflection of the lack of ranger units specially organized, trained and equipped to fulfill this role. As cited earlier, special forces, were assigned similar "direct action" missions for

just possibly the same reason.

Nevertheless, despite this seeming overlap of assigned missions, the organization and training of airborne infantry suits them more for conventional infantry type operations, albeit of a highly specialized nature, while rangers are specifically organized and trained for "the small scale commando operation." The Army Training and Evaluation Program³⁸ under which both type battalions are trained and evaluated is evidence of this division of tasks. Under this program, only certain elements of the airborne infantry battalion are required to be proficient in raid and ambush operations, the traditional characteristics of commando-type forces. Specifically only the airborne rifle platoon must be proficient in raid operations, and only the airborne rifle squad must be trained in ambush operations. By contrast, the ranger battalion, company, platoon and squad must be proficient in conducting raids, and the ranger company, platoon and squad must attain proficiency in the conduct of ambushes. Additionally, the ranger battalion is specifically tasked to train in security and rescue operations which the airborne battalion is not. Likewise, the suitability of ranger battalions for special operations is reflected by the specialized nature of their individual training which routinely includes (for selected individuals) such subjects as demolitions, sniper training, foreign weapons training, free fall parachuting, underwater and surface swimming, and close quarter battle skills

such as hand-to-hand combat and instinctive or quick fire rifle and pistol shooting, in addition to more conventional infantry training.³⁹ With the exception of static line parachute training, by comparison, the training of the airborne infantryman is more conventional in nature.

In short, to compare these two elite units, is to compare a general purpose force (the airborne) which combines the capability to conduct a broad range of conventional combat operations with a specialized capability of vertical assault with a special purpose force (rangers), who are specifically trained and organized to conduct certain special military operations. On the surface there would appear to be some overlap in assigned responsibility for "commando-type" operations. However, a closer examination of capabilities reveals that rangers are better suited for such operations, especially if the targets are of strategic or sensitive nature, and for which only minimal airlift requirements are either required or desired. Nonetheless, the dividing line is a thin one, as elements of the airborne division may also be called upon to participate in such operations, especially if the mission requires a force with greater relative combat power than can be generated by a lightly armed ranger battalion.

When special forces are added to the contingency operation equation, questions most often arise concerning the responsibility for special military operations. Unlike unconventional warfare and foreign internal defense which are

clearly a special forces responsibility, both rangers and special forces have been assigned a special military operations mission. The issue is further clouded by the broad range of activities that special operations may encompass, by the fact that both conventional forces and unconventional warfare forces may undertake them, and that they may be undertaken unilaterally or in conjunction with indigenous or guerrilla forces. Additionally, many of the skills of the individual ranger are equally applicable in the job of special forces soldier as well.

As previously noted, special operations may be closely interrelated with unconventional warfare and may often be a key ingredient in a guerrilla warfare campaign. In such cases, in which guerrilla forces are used to conduct special military operations, it is no doubt a special forces role to organize, train, and possibly even direct if not command the guerrilla force. Further as Shaun M. Darragh, in his article "Rangers and Special Forces: Two Edges of the Same Dagger," points out, Special Forces did in Vietnam organize, train and direct "defacto ranger" forces.⁴⁰ These specially trained indigenous forces were used to conduct special operations, although in a counter guerrilla role, rather than as guerrilla forces. No doubt, under certain circumstances, in which similarly trained United States forces are not available or suited to the mission (as Darragh contends was the case in Vietnam) or in which indigenous forces may be more effective (as they might

be in covert or clandestine operations) certainly special forces cadres are well suited to organizing and directing such an effort.

However, it is within the sphere of unilateral special operations, or operations undertaken by an exclusively United States military force, that specific responsibilities are less clearly delineated. For example, the ARTEP for the special forces battalion tasks the battalion to train to "conduct unilaterally special operations,"⁴¹ specifically an attack on a strategic target. As previously established, the ranger battalions are similarly tasked by both their ARTEP and TRADOC doctrinal statement. To attempt to establish a clear dividing line between these two special units may not be altogether possible. Nevertheless, some parameters may be established for their employment, singularly or collectively, in this unique role.

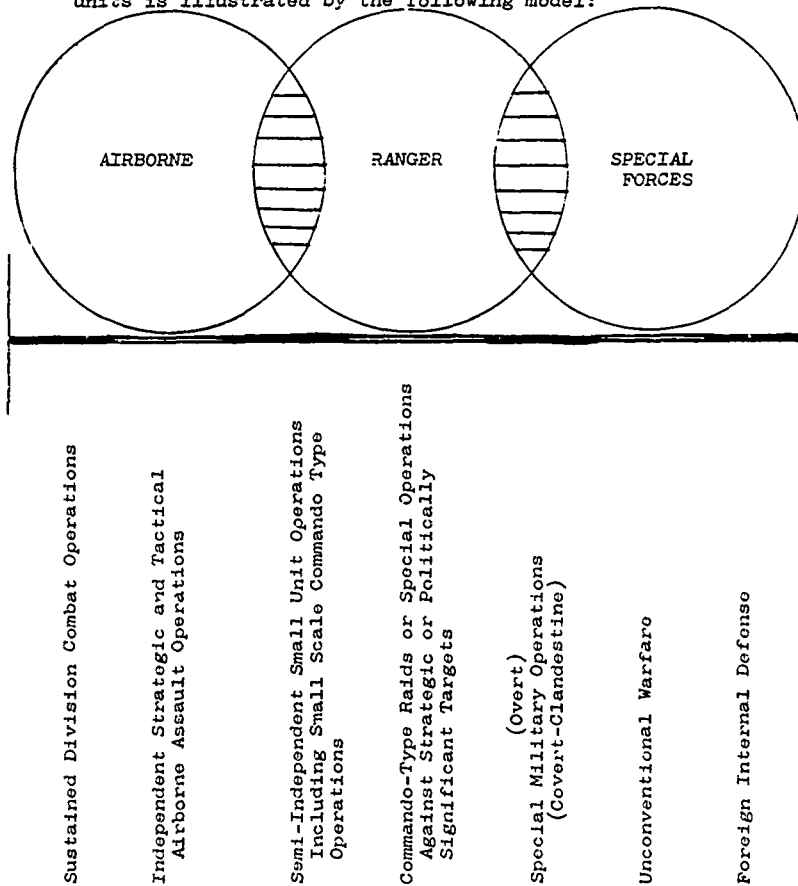
In this regard, it is important to recall that special forces operations may be either overt, covert, or clandestine, whereas ranger operations are exclusively overt. Therefore, it would seem fair to reason that the nature of the mission will determine the composition of the special operations force. Therefore, if either the operation itself or the identity of its sponsor, or both, must be concealed, the mission would fall within the assigned roles and missions of special forces. If on the other hand, there is no such requirement, and particularly if the nature of the mission required a somewhat larger

force with some measure of conventional combat power and an organization specifically intended to conduct the "small scale commando operation," then rangers would seem to be the most likely force option. Equally significant is that the organization of the ranger battalions as a unilateral special operations force in-being provides the responsiveness required to conduct quick-response contingency operations. Although one small and highly classified special forces detachment is maintained full time with a special operations mission, special forces, as a general rule, do not provide this responsive, quick reaction capability due to the requirement to tailor a unilateral special operations force from operational detachments who are primarily organized to function as guerrilla cadres.

In summation, to compare rangers and special forces is to contrast two units whose "roles and heritage have been confused by historical experience and past misemployment,"⁴² but who share a common mission, that of conducting special operations. While the dividing line between their roles and missions is a thin, if not non-existent, they nevertheless provide the United States important military options, which may range from covert or clandestine operations by small teams to overt operations of a sensitive or strategic nature carried out by conventionally organized and equipped, but specially trained commando-type units.

CAPABILITIES CORRELATION MODEL

The range of capabilities and the correlation of the respective capabilities of airborne, ranger and special forces units is illustrated by the following model:



Aside from illustrating the broad range of capabilities these forces offer the military planner, the model demonstrates that the dividing lines between airborne and ranger roles and missions and between the roles and missions of rangers and special forces is not clear cut. Whereas it might be convenient to establish some arbitrary division of tasks between the respective forces, so that specific situations might be met with a specific response by a specific force, the varied and diverse nature of the contingencies in which these forces may be employed would in all probability soon invalidate such an arbitrary approach. Rather by virtue of its portrayal of less than a clean division of roles and missions, the model graphically displays the complementary nature of the singular capabilities of the respective forces. In this regard, it adds credence to the lessons of history and reinforces the proposition that the effectiveness of airborne, ranger and special forces is maximized by routinely tailoring contingency forces that capitalize on the potential offered by their combined capabilities.

How such a force might be structured and employed so as to best be able, in the words of the late John F. Kennedy, to "respond, with discrimination and speed, . . . at any spot on the globe at any moments notice,"⁴³ is addressed in the following chapter of this thesis.

CHAPTER III

ENDNOTES

¹International Institute for Strategic Studies, The Military Balance 1978-1979 (September 1978), 6.

²"Relative Combat Power" is the Army's concept of measuring a unit's combat power when compared to the opposing force. Besides the obvious factors such as unit strength, weapons density and organic and supporting firepower, it includes such "combat multipliers" as terrain, weather, state of training, leadership, morale and combat and combat service support.

³Major differences are: the airborne division has only light artillery whereas the infantry division has a battalion of medium artillery in addition to its light artillery; the armor battalion of the airborne division is equipped with "light armor" (the Sheridan, armored airborne reconnaissance vehicle) while the infantry division armor battalion is equipped with medium battle tanks. Additionally the infantry division may include a mechanized infantry battalion, which the airborne division does not.

⁴Robert M. Elton, and John A. Ford, "The Airborne: A General Purpose Force," Infantry, Vol 65, No 2 (March-April 1975), 13.

⁵James M. Gavin, Cn to Berlin, Battles of An Airborne Commander 1943-1946 (1978), 51-52. The "panzerfaust" was a shoulder-fired anti-tank grenade launcher.

⁶U.S. Army, 82d Airborne Division Regulation 525-4, Readiness Standing Operating Procedures (RSOP)(1977), 1.

⁷U.S. Army, FM 31-20, Special Forces Operations(U), (1977), 5.

⁸U.S. Army, Headquarters Training and Doctrine Command, Letter: Revised Ranger Battalion Summary Doctrinal Statement (10 December 1974), 2.

⁹U.S. Army, Ranger Training and Ranger Operations, FM 21-50, (1962), 4. Ranger training is physically and mentally intense small unit infantry training given volunteer officers and enlisted men. Only selected individuals in regular units undergo the training (by doctrine one officer per company and one NCO per platoon). In ranger units normally 50 percent of the personnel are formally "ranger qualified," meaning they have graduated from the Ranger School. By doctrine all officers and NCO's in ranger battalions are so qualified.

¹⁰U.S. Army, The Role of U.S. Army Special Forces, TC 31-20-1, (1976), 2.

¹¹Special Forces Operations(U), 5.

¹²Special Forces Operations(U), 7.

¹³The Role of U.S. Army Special Forces, 28.

¹⁴The Role of U.S. Army Special Forces, 32.

¹⁵Shaun M. Darragh, "Rangers and Special Forces: Two Edges at the Same Dagger," Army, Vol 27, No 12 (December 1977), 15.

¹⁶U.S. Army, TOE 57-H, Airborne Division (1974), with Change 2 (1977), I-03.

¹⁷U.S. Army, TOE 7-35H, Infantry Battalion(Airborne), Airborne Division (1970), with Change 2 (1977), 3.

¹⁸These "type operations" are in large part based on USA Command and General Staff College instruction entitled "Airborne Division Operations," (Subcourse P312-6), School Year 1978-79.

¹⁹Fletcher K. Ware, "The Airborne Division and a Strategic Concept," Military Review, Vol 56, No 3, (March 1976), 30, "Strategic reach" a term attributed to Lieutenant General Harry W. O. Kinnard to describe the long ranges from their bases that airborne forces can be deployed directly into combat.

²⁰U.S. Army, TOE 7-85H, Ranger Infantry Battalion,
(1974), 1.

²¹Revised Ranger Battalion Summary Doctrinal State-
ment, 2.

²²Revised Ranger Battalion Summary Doctrinal Statement,
2.

²³Revised Ranger Battalion Summary Doctrinal State-
ment, 2.

²⁴Revised Ranger Battalion Summary Doctrinal State-
ment, 2.

²⁵The Role of U.S. Army Special Forces, ii.

²⁶U.S. Army, TOE 31-105H, Special Forces Battalion
(1970), with Change 2 (1974), 3.

²⁷Joint Chiefs of Staff, Publication #1, Dictionary
of Military and Associated Terms (1974), 67, 93, 244.

²⁸The Role of U.S. Army Special Forces, 16.

²⁹82d Airborne Division Regulation 525-4, Readiness
Standard Operating Procedures, 8-9.

³⁰U.S. Army, 2d Battalion (Ranger) 75th Infantry,
Readiness Standard Operating Procedures (RSOP) (1978), 5-15.

³¹Rangers may also use amphibious ships, small assault boats or such specialized techniques as free fall parachuting and surface swimming for selected small elements. Airborne units are not so trained.

³²TOE 57-H, Airborne Division, I-01.

³³TOE 7-85H, Ranger Infantry Battalion, 1.

³⁴TOE 57-H, Airborne Division, I-01.

³⁵TOE 57-H, Airborne Division, I-01.

³⁶Revised Ranger Battalion Summary Doctrinal Statement, 2.

³⁷The Airborne Division was assigned the same mission verbatim by TOE 57G, dated 30 June 1966, which preceded the present TOE under which the division is organized.

³⁸U.S. Army, ARTEP 7-15, Army Training and Evaluation Program for Light Infantry Battalions with Ranger Battalion Supplement, (April 1976), 7-1, 7-2.

³⁹U.S. Army, 2d Battalion (Ranger), 75th Infantry, Battalion Training Circular 350-1-2, Individual Training (April 1978), 2, 3.

⁴⁰"Rangers and Special Forces: Two Edges of the Same Dagger," 16-19. The author distinguishes between the "defacto" indigenous ranger units organized and trained to accomplish the "traditional raiding force" mission of rangers, and the "dejure rangers," or Americans trained by the Army's Ranger School who were assigned essentially to lead conventional American units or the long range ranger reconnaissance companies.

⁴¹U.S. Army, ARTEP 31-101, Army Training and Evaluation Program for Special Forces, (August 1977), 6-54.

⁴²"Rangers and Special Forces: Two Edges of the Same Dagger," 14.

⁴³Seymour J. Deitchman, Limited War and American Defense Policy, Building and Using Military Power in a World at War (1969), 5.

CHAPTER IV

DEPLOYMENT AND EMPLOYMENT

. . . the Kolwezi operation demonstrates how complex and vulnerable are intervention missions. They imply distant and lonely action with goals as political as military in nature. They confer to the commander but one right, that of success and but one duty, that of succeeding quickly and thoroughly.¹

Commanding Officer
1st Foreign Legion Parachute
Regiment
French Ground Force Commander
in Zaire, May 1978

This chapter examines the deployment and employment of airborne, ranger and special forces in quick response contingency operations. As expressed by the preceding quote of the Commander of the French Foreign Legion paratroopers who together with Belgian para-commandos carried out a rescue and stability operation in Shaba Province, Zaire, in May 1978, not only must the response to such a crisis be rapid, but the committed forces must be reliable and employed in a manner to assure the success of the operation. Accordingly, this chapter will focus sequentially on deployment (or how fast can the forces get to the trouble area) and employment specifically the aspects of command, control and organization which impact on the integration of their respective capabilities into a force suitably tailored to accomplish the mission.

DEPLOYMENT

An Infantry magazine article on the 82d Airborne Division noted that the quotation "git thar fustest with the mostest," (attributed to the Confederate States cavalryman Nathan Bedford Forrest) is as true today as it was more than 100 years ago.² As previously shown, airborne, ranger and special forces are specifically organized and intentionally maintained in a posture that facilitates their rapid deployment by air upon which "U.S. military planners have no option but to depend . . . to get there first with the most . . ."³ Although other Army, and for that matter, Marine Corps forces may also be moved by air, they are either too heavy so as to make airlift inefficient (as are the armor and mechanized divisions) or lack the capability to conduct long range vertical assaults⁴ and thus require secure airfields at which to land and reorganize themselves for combat (as do the air assault and Army and Marine Corps infantry divisions).⁵

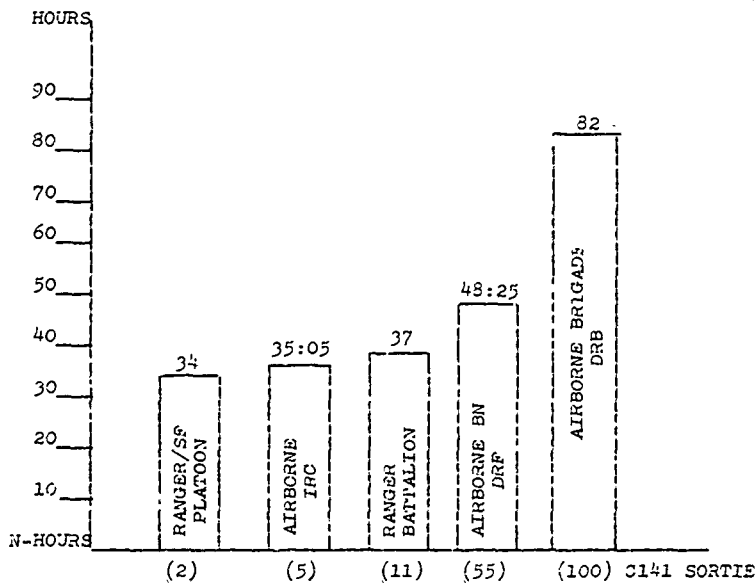
However, the forces themselves are but one variable in the equation. Other factors such as flight times, overflight and basing rights, and the national resolve to employ military force must be considered. Not only must the appropriate force be alerted, assembled, marshalled, and loaded onto aircraft, but allowances made for the flight time required to reach either the staging base or objective area. For example, calculations⁶ by the staff of the 82d Airborne Division show the following times are required to alert and deploy the

elements of the Division Ready Brigade to a staging base in Turkey:

- a. Initial Ready Company (the leading infantry rifle company)--35 hours and 5 minutes.
- b. Division Ready Force #1 (the leading airborne infantry battalion)--48 hours and 25 minutes.
- c. Division Ready Brigade--82 hours.

Similar calculations for ranger and special forces elements would vary according to the size of the force, but would generally fall between 34 hours (a ranger platoon or similarly-sized special forces unit) and 37 hours (a full ranger battalion),⁷ assuming they are also deployed on 18 hour notice from an east coast base. At Figure 6 is a graphic representation of these closure times for the respective elements. As noted, these times are for deployment to a staging base, and additional time is thereafter required to make final preparations for subsequent airborne assault operations. No definitive figures are available on the time required to make these final preparations as they are highly situation dependent and the time could vary from only a matter of a few hours to several days.

A serious limitation to rapid air deployments of military forces is their dependence on basing and overflight rights. As was demonstrated during the early 1979 Iranian crisis, when the Turkish government refused permission for Marine Corps reinforcements for the American Embassy in Tehran



N-Hour=Time of notification to alert, assemble and begin deployment.

Figure 6. Closure Times

to standby in that country, even allied nations cannot always be counted upon to provide such cooperation. Despite the significant range of Air Force transports, they still require intermediate bases for refueling, and will so until at least 1982 when inflight refueling modifications to the C141 fleet is scheduled to be completed.⁸ Even thereafter, some basing requirements, especially for operations involving larger than battalion-size forces, will remain, as the C130, the primary tactical assault transport is not being so modified. Likewise, although the United States has some 250 C141's,⁹ at the present time only 50-odd air drop qualified C141 crews are maintained by the Air Force.

Even if basing and overflight rights and the necessary ground and air forces capable of conducting the operation are available, the lack of national resolve may obviate them. While this subject alone is a suitable thesis subject in itself, suffice to say for the purpose of this thesis, that timely decisions at the national level are required in order to alert and deploy the forces, in order that they are strategically positioned and prepared for subsequent employment.

In summary, although the forces are capable of rapid deployment on short notice, so that a battalion-sized force may be in or near the objective area within a day-and-a-half or a full brigade in less than four, the capability to do so is dependent on basing and overflight rights and the timely decision to at least position or begin the deployment of the forces. As amphibious warfare proponents point out, these

limitations are not inherent in the capabilities of Marine Corps units, the other traditional reaction force of the United States, which are maintained "afloat" at key points around the world. In fact, these units, embarked in naval amphibious ships, may in fact arrive on the scene faster, and once in position, remain unobtrusively just off shore in international waters, awaiting the decisions of the national decisionmakers. Despite these advantages, only one such battalion landing team (similar in organization to the airborne battalion task force) is maintained aboard ship in each major geographic area of the world. Although this one battalion may arrive within one to two days if it is within "steaming" distance and the crisis area happens to be adjacent to or at least within helicopter range of the sea, it cannot be rapidly and readily reinforced. As a Military Review article entitled "The Airborne Division and a Strategic Concept" pointed out, whereas another Marine battalion could conceivably reach the area in five days, it would take between 13 and 14 days for this initial element to be joined by the remaining elements of a Marine Division. Whereas within the same time frame an airborne force can buildup to an entire brigade in less than four days and to an entire division within 10 days.¹¹ Likewise the airborne force can access inland or land locked areas inaccessible from the sea.

EMPLOYMENT

Once deployed, these forces must be employed in accordance with the long recognized principle of war, "Unity of Command." This applies not only to the Army forces, but also the Air Force elements who are responsible for first getting the ground forces to the objective area, and secondly, supporting them until termination of the operation. The unified and joint command arrangements to facilitate this "Unity of Command" are specified in Joint Chiefs of Staff Publication Number 2, "Unified Action Armed Forces," the stated purpose of which:

. . . is to set forth principles, doctrines, and functions governing the activities and performance of the Armed Forces of the United States when two or more services or elements thereof are acting together.¹²

Because contingency operations will, at least initially, be limited in scope and duration, they will in all probability warrant the formation of a joint task force, which is a force composed of two or more services, "established when the mission to be accomplished has a specific limited objective."¹³

Airborne, ranger and special forces routinely operate under the control of joint task forces, and this facet is well established in the doctrine governing their respective operations. Field Manual 57-1, "U.S. Army/U.S. Air Force Doctrine for Airborne Operations," in fact reiterates and emphasizes the provisions of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Publication Number 2 cited earlier.¹⁴ Special Forces doctrine

outlined in Field Manual 31-20, "Special Forces Operations" also specifies that they may operate under the control of a Joint Unconventional Warfare Command directly under the unified commander for strictly unconventional warfare operations or under the control of a joint task force for contingency operations.¹⁵ Likewise, doctrine for the employment of rangers, implies such joint command arrangements, stating that the "command and control of the Ranger battalion will normally be at a level where the unit's unique capabilities can be fully employed on a worldwide/theater-wide basis . . ."¹⁶ In practice, rangers, also habitually operate under the control of a joint task force.

Although joint doctrine governing the employment of airborne, ranger, and special forces in conjunction with other services is seemingly well established, the research for this thesis has not uncovered a comprehensive employment doctrine on how the forces are to operate in concert with one another. Although special forces doctrine does address operations in conjunction with conventional forces and specifically addresses operations in support of airborne forces,¹⁷ operations in conjunction with rangers is not so addressed. Airborne doctrine, likewise, gives little attention to operations with guerrilla forces, and no doubt, because it was last updated more than a decade ago (in 1967, well before the formation of the current ranger battalions) makes no mention of ranger operations. Updated doctrine for the employment of rangers themselves is

equally scant,¹⁸ and limited to a four page "doctrinal statement" issued by the Training and Doctrine Command, which although mentioning operations in conjunction with other forces, does not address specifics.

Aside from this apparent inter-Army doctrine gap, peace time stationing of the units also, at least, conceivably exacerbates the problem. Whereas the 82d Airborne Division and two of the three special forces groups¹⁹ are located at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, under the control of Headquarters, XVIII Airborne Corps, the ranger battalions are not. Rather, as separate Army Forces Command battalions, they are located at separate installations under the administrative control of division commanders not habitually associated with XVIII Airborne Corps, the Army's light, contingency corps.

Although, in theory, the flexible way in which Army forces are tailored based on their capabilities to meet the requirements of the mission should allow efficient employment of an Army component of a Joint Task Force comprising airborne, ranger, and special forces elements, the preceding evidence suggests otherwise. Although the respective forces have complementary capabilities and a correlation of these capabilities can be shown, the lack of a comprehensive employment doctrine and fragmented peace time control would seem to present serious potential difficulties in tailoring a force on short notice that makes maximum use of the capabilities the forces individually and collectively possess.

EMPLOYMENT VIGNETTE

Finally as a summary and to describe how airborne, ranger and special forces might be organized and employed in some future contingency the following vignette is used. Although strictly hypothetical, it is based on the capabilities of the respective forces and how they might be employed collectively in a scenario similar to the Zaire crisis.

Following the seizure of a key city in an isolated region of a friendly African nation and the capture of over one thousand foreign nationals including numerous Americans by a well-armed rebel group of several thousand,²⁰ the immediate reaction by the National Military Command Authority is to alert the 82d Airborne Division Ready Brigade, a ranger battalion, and elements of special forces battalion with an African orientation. A joint task is activated commanded by the Commanding General XVIII Airborne Corps.

As diplomats seek a peaceful solution and intelligence gathering intensifies, the designated units alert and marshal: an activity, which since it cannot be kept secret, serves to demonstrate United States resolve. By the end of the first day forces are marshalled, and a decision made to deploy the ranger battalion and a special forces company to a remote base to begin planning and rehearsal of a hostage rescue operation. Simultaneously, the Joint Task Force headquarters and a special forces forward operational base deploy to an island possession of a friendly power offshore but within several

hours flight time of the objective area. The initial ground tactical plan is formulated and the necessary warning order issued.

By the second day diplomatic efforts show little result and the Division Ready Brigade begins deployment to the offshore island staging base, portrayed to the world as a show of force operation only. Also on the night of the second day, special forces detachments accompanied by a small ranger advance element and an Air Force combat control team²¹ are inserted by free-fall parachute drop into the objective area under the control of a Special Forces "B" detachment. Their mission, to gather intelligence, attempt to rally the remnants of government forces scattered by the rebel assault and to provide guides and drop zone markings for the main body of the rescue force.

The third day deployment of the airborne brigade and mission preparations continue. As intelligence begins to present a clearer picture of the actual situation, plans are adjusted. By the night of the third day the assault elements of the airborne brigade of two airborne battalion task forces and the Army forces component headquarters (ARFOR) close into the forward staging base. Also that night, due to a steadily deteriorating situation, the National Military Command Authority directs military operations to rescue the foreign nationals and restore stability to the area be undertaken beginning the night of the fourth day.

On the fourth day the ranger battalion flies from its remote base to the forward staging base. While the aircraft refuel, intelligence is updated and plans further adjusted. That night, as the airborne brigade makes final preparations the rangers depart. At midnight they conduct a parachute infiltration on a drop zone away and shielded by terrain from the buildup area in which the hostages are held. Linking up and guided by with the special forces and their own advance elements they begin to infiltrate the target area. Upon landing the ranger commander assumes control of the special forces/ranger advance element.

Just prior to first light on the fifth day, the airborne brigade conducts a parachute assault on the town's airfield. As the rebels focus their attention on the airborne brigade, the rangers assisted by Special Forces led government forces begin their assault of the built up area to secure all known hostage locations. One battalion of the airborne brigade secures the airfield, required to evacuate the hostages and extract the rescue force. The other battalion, reinforced by an additional rifle company and a platoon of light armor to counter the armored cars the rebels have believed to have captured from government forces, immediately pushes out to open the evacuation route and to assist the rangers in clearing the town and evacuating the civilians. A graphic portrayal of this ground tactical plan is shown at Figure 7.

(2400) RANGER PARACHUTE INSECTON

62

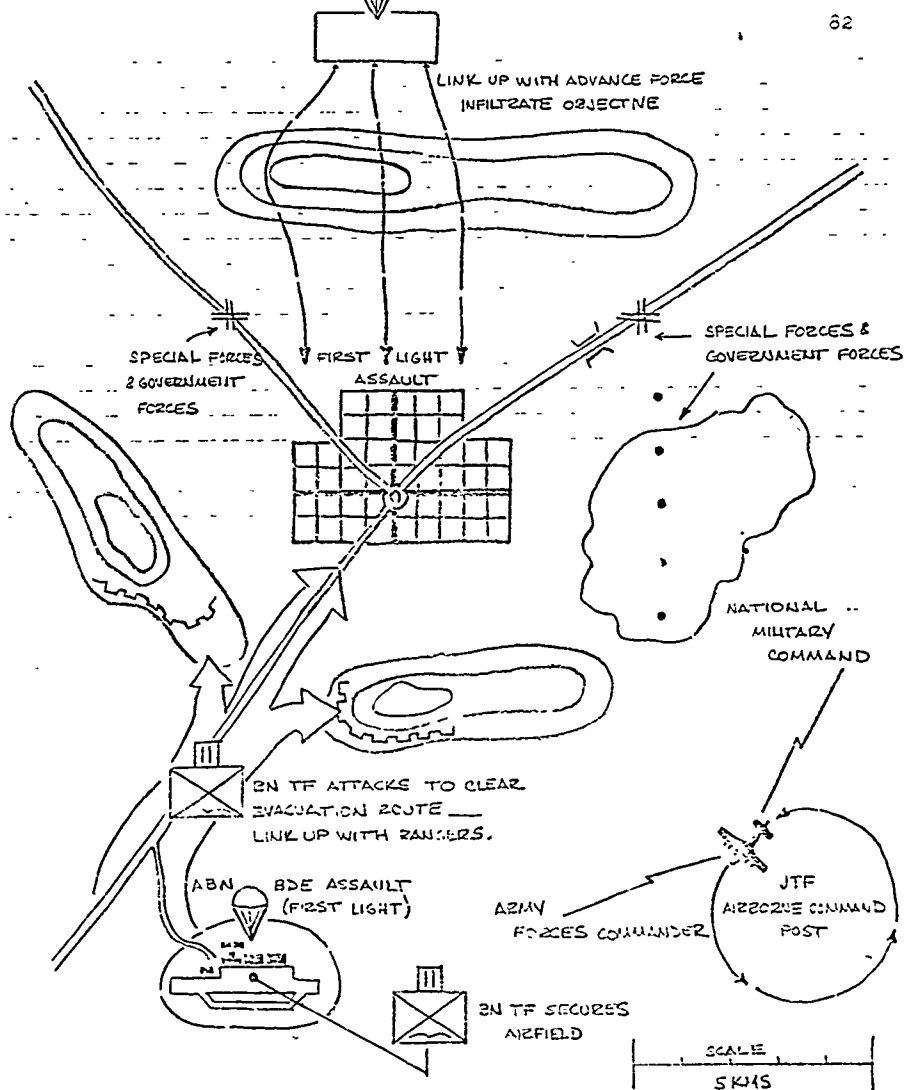


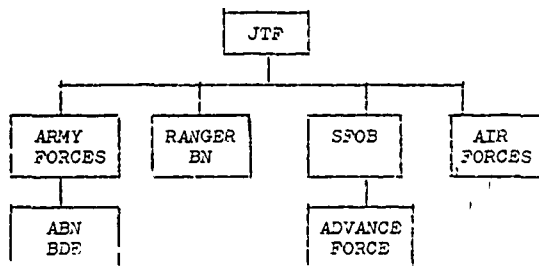
Figure 7. Ground Tactical Plan

Simultaneous with the airborne assault control of all ground forces passes to the Army Forces Commander who with a small headquarters jumps with the airborne brigade. The JTF Commander exercises overall control of the operation from an overhead airborne command post, with direct communications with Washington, D.C. Figure 8 shows the phased command relationships previously discussed.

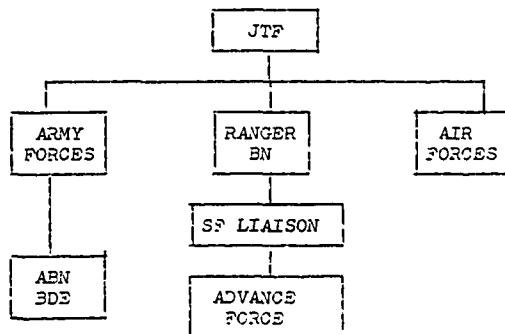
As airborne engineers clear the runways of the airfield, the first airlanded elements arrive called forward through the airborne command post. These elements include a medical company to treat both civilian and military casualties and helicopters to assist in the search for and rescue of civilians who may be scattered throughout the area. Additional on-call "packages" of combat, combat support and survive support remain at the staging base to be called forward should the force be required to undertake sustained combat operations.

As the situation stabilizes and the rebel force is either destroyed or withdraws from the area, the American military forces incrementally withdraw as government forces resume control. Last to leave are the special forces who remain behind to assist in the reorganization and retraining of those government forces initially defeated by the rebels.

Although fictional, this scenario is nevertheless a realistic one. While it serves to illustrate force capabilities and outline employment concepts that capitalize



UPON INFILTRATION OF RANGER BATTALION



UPON INITIATION OF AIRBORNE BRIGADE ASSAULT

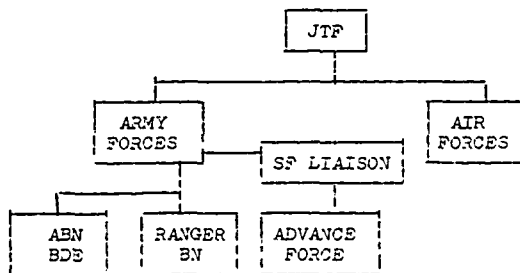


Figure 3. Command Relationship

on complementary capabilities, it also portrays the complex nature of this type of operation. As such, it supports the assertion that the forces expected to be able of conducting these operations must be linked by common doctrine, if not a single headquarters responsible for or nestrating their peace time training so that they may be better able to perform their respective roles and missions.

CHAPTER IV

ENDNOTES

¹P. Erulin, "French Army Operations in Zaire."
Address to U.S. Army War College, (24 January 1979).

²"The 82d Airborne Division," Infantry, Vol 69,
No 2 (March-April 1979), 15.

³"The 82d Airborne Division," 15.

⁴Beyond the range of the helicopter, vertical assaults
can only be conducted by parachute. Only airborne, ranger and
special forces are parachute capable.

⁵Although the infantry and air assault can in large
part be deployed by airlift, in addition to requiring core
airlift, they are dependent on sealift to move the heavier
tanks, artillery and engineer equipment of the infantry
division and the larger helicopters of the air assault division.

⁶"The 82d Airborne Division," 17. Calculations are
based on deployment by C141 jet transport, commencing 15 hours
after initial alert, with aircraft departing every 20 minutes.

⁷U.S. Army, 2d Battalion (Ranger) 75th Infantry Readiness Standard Operating Procedures (RSOP), 1978, 5-15. Calculations based on two C141's required to deploy a reinforced ranger platoon and 11 C141's to deploy an entire ranger battalion.

⁸Joseph E. Hines, "Trip Report on Meeting of United States Readiness Command Joint Air Movements Board," (4 October 1978).

⁹International Institute for Strategic Studies, The Military Balance 1978-1979 (September 1978), 7.

¹⁰U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, Principles of Joint Amphibious Operations, Programmed Text 6-1 (August 1977), 2-1.

¹¹Fletcher K. Ware, "The Airborne Division and a Strategic Concept," Military Review, Vol 56, No 3 (March 1976), 30.

¹²Joint Chiefs of Staff, Unified Action Armed Forces, JCS Publication Number 2 (October 1974), 3.

¹³Unified Action Armed Forces, 3.

¹⁴U.S. Army, U.S. Army/U.S. Air Force Doctrine for Airborne Operations, Field Manual 57-1 (September 1967), 9.

¹⁵U.S. Army, Special Forces Operations (U), Field Manual 31-20 (September 1977), 25-26.

¹⁶U.S. Army, Headquarters Training and Doctrine Command, Letter: Revised Ranger Battalion Summary Doctrinal Statement (10 December 1974), 3.

¹⁷Special Forces Operations (U), 34-37.

¹⁸FM 21-50, Ranger Training and Operations was published in 1962 and addresses primarily individual training and small unit tactics. It does not address doctrine for the employment of ranger units.

¹⁹The third special forces is stationed at Fort Devens, Massachusetts with a European mission. One battalion of the group is forward deployed in Germany.

²⁰"French Army Operations in Zaire," According to the author the rebel force in Zaire was a well organized, well armed regular military force who had in fact captured 2500 Europeans.

²¹Combat Control Teams are small Air Force elements trained to mark drop zones and landing zones and to provide terminal guidance or air traffic control and direction for Air Force aircraft conducting tactical airlift operations.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND SUMMATION

The purpose of this thesis has been to examine the roles and missions of airborne, ranger, and special forces in the conduct of quick-response contingency operations. This examination has been conducted by a research of both historical and contemporary literature on the subject. The research focused primarily on the requirements for such forces within the context of the nation's "one-and-a-half" strategy, historical perspectives relevant to their current roles and missions, and their current capabilities to include the doctrine relating to their singular, as well as, collective employment.

The evidence relating to their place within the contemporary military strategy of the United States indicates that they play a key role in the "more likely" half-war contingency the Army must be prepared to fight at some unforeseen time and place. This conclusion is supported both by doctrine and remarks by the Army Chief of Staff.

Historical research indicates that when employed so as to capitalize on their unique capabilities the forces have often produced spectacular results. Small scale operations have generally been more successful, although less significant, than the larger ones. Such operations as the British airborne

raid at Bruneval, American POW rescues in the Philippines, and the German rescue of Mussolini, all World War II operations, provide significant lessons in the age of the terrorist--as demonstrated by the Israeli commando raid at Entebbe in July 1976. Historical evidence further suggests that success has often been realized by combining the unique capabilities of airborne, ranger or commando-type units, and guerrilla or unconventional warfare forces. On the other hand, history reveals that the special nature of these units has often been misunderstood making them liable to misemployment--the ranger experience in Korea being the prime example.

The examination of their present organization, missions, and capabilities indicates not only major improvements in capabilities, but that these capabilities provide a broad range of military options ranging from sustained division-size combat operations to covert and clandestine operations by small, highly skilled teams. This investigation also reveals that their respective capabilities are complementary and that a definite correlation of capabilities can be established. Although dividing lines between the roles and missions of airborne forces and rangers, as well as, between rangers and special forces can be narrowed they cannot be definitely established. Such is not necessarily undesirable as it may serve to increase the overall flexibility of the forces as a whole.

The body of evidence relevant to the deployment and employment of these forces suggests that although the forces themselves are readily deployable, limitations do exist with respect to overflight and basing rights for the airlift forces that must transport them. Additionally, the nation's leadership must have the resolve to deploy the forces in time for them to be effectively employed. These limitations will continue to exist because of continued, albeit reduced, dependence on refueling bases for airlift aircraft at least into the foreseeable future. Equally significant is that the employment of these forces is also hindered by the lack of an up-to-date and comprehensive employment doctrine. In addition, there appears to be some disregard in peace time for what may likely be the command arrangements required for the effective, collective employment of the forces in contingency operations. In short, significant inhibiting factors impacting on the effective deployment and employment of the forces as a whole do exist and must be considered a shortcoming worthy of address by the Army.

In conclusion, the forces themselves possess varied and unique capabilities, which in combination provide the United States and the Army a broad range of flexible responses applicable in a crisis situation. However, the forces themselves are not enough. They must be linked by a common, updated doctrine and by peacetime command arrangements similar if not identical to those expected to be exercised in a contingency.

It is in this light that the following recommendations are made:

a. That a major Army field headquarters be made responsible for the training, readiness, contingency planning, and control of CONUS based airborne, ranger, and special forces units. The most likely candidate would appear to be XVIII Airborne Corps, the Army's "light, contingency" corps.

b. That doctrine for the employment of the respective forces be updated and comprehensive employment concepts for their collective employment, perhaps similar to Soviet "desant" concepts, be formulated. This task rightfully belongs to the Army's Training and Doctrine Command, however, should one headquarters be made responsible for the forces in peace time, as recommended above, then it could also serve as a major source of input from the Army in the field.

c. That the Army actively support and seek improvements both in current and developmental Air Force airlift capabilities to better facilitate the long range and rapid deployment of these forces.

In summary, this thesis is intended to add to the body of knowledge on the elite units of the American Army, a subject noted by Samuel Huntington on which ". . . serious literature . . . is almost non-existent."¹ It has attempted essentially to define roles and missions, or "who is supposed to do what part of any total military task,"² the military task in this case being the short-notice, limited duration contingency operation. It does not and was not intended

to address airborne, ranger, and special forces roles and missions in a general conventional or nuclear war in Europe or elsewhere.

Future thesis efforts on the subject of airborne, ranger, and special forces may choose to direct their attention to this aspect of roles and missions, as it certainly is no less important. Another equally important related topic on which future research may be focused is the employment of airlift forces in the support of these or other forces which may be directed to undertake contingency operations. As previously discussed, the entire concept of rapidly reacting worldwide is in large part based on the efficient and expeditious use of this limited resource. Research on both of these topics would serve to increase the general understanding of these frequently misunderstood military units, and benefit not only the Army, but Sister Services and the Unified Commands which may have to employ and support them.

Finally, the importance of this and related topics can be expressed by the following quotation from the Army Strategic Appraisal for 1981-88:

The strategy, doctrine and force structure necessary for a Napoleonic campaign in either Western Europe or Asia, should not be maintained at the expense of a capability to meet the much more likely challenges posed by client or proxy wars in the resource-rich nations of the Third World.

CHAPTER V

ENDNOTES

¹Eliot A. Cohen, Commandos and Politicians (1978), 11.

²Seymour J. Deitehman, Limited War and American Defense Policy, Building and Using Military Power in a World At War (1964), xiii.

³U.S. Army War College Strategic Studies Institute, Army Strategic Appraisal 1981-88(U), Vol I (November 1977), 19.

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