



**STRATEGY
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SOF: THE ENGAGEMENT FORCE OF CHOICE

BY

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SOF: The Engagement Force of Choice

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ABSTRACT

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The U.S. Armed Forces advance National Security by applying military power as directed to shape the international environment and respond to the full spectrum of crises. These shaping and responding operations have greatly increased over the past 5 years. This paper highlights the role of Special Operations Forces (SOF) within these operations and explains why Special Operations Forces should be the engagement force of choice. This SRP explores the current Special Operations Forces apportioned to each regional CINC, and describes the unique skills and attributes that SOF personnel possess. It further describes the US Army, Air Force, and Navy Special Operations Force; their core missions, capabilities, limitations, and command and control organizations, and how these units are ideally organized, trained, and equipped to conduct the full range of engagement activities required by today's National Military Strategy. The focus of the paper is to describe each services' Special Operations Force and provide a clear understanding of the missions and capabilities of SOF, in order to demonstrate why SOF should be the engagement force of choice.

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SOF: THE ENGAGEMENT FORCE OF CHOICE

Our Current National Security Strategy (NSS) was published in December 1999 and is one of "Selective Engagement and Leadership Abroad." Its three core objectives: Enhance America's security, Bolster America's economic prosperity, and Promote democracy and human rights abroad are designed to meet the fundamental purposes set out in the preamble to the Constitution. These purposes are to provide for the common defense, promote the general welfare, and secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our prosperity.¹ The Military element of power (EOP) plays a key role in the execution of this NSS. Therefore, the purpose of this Strategic Research Paper (SRP) is to examine why Special Operations Forces (SOF) are uniquely qualified to be the Regional CINC's "Engagement Force of Choice." The methodology is to first articulate the importance of engagement activities conducted by the military EOP in the execution of our Shape, Respond, and Prepare National Military Strategy (NMS). Second, to describe the unique skill sets that SOF bring to the table (by reviewing their core missions, capabilities, and command and control structure). Third, to describe current engagement activities SOF are conducting around the world in support of Regional CINC Theater Engagement Plans (TEPs). All will show that SOF units are ideally organized, equipped, and trained to be the Regional CINC's optimum Engagement Force of Choice.

As stated above the current NSS is one of Selective Engagement and Leadership Abroad. It is based on the premise that in order to protect our interests the United States must remain engaged around the world and prepared to provide the global leadership required to deter aggression, promote regional stability and strengthen democracies.² This Selective Engagement and Leadership Abroad strategy is based on the premise that international cooperation is vital in building regional stability because a single actor cannot resolve many of the challenges faced in the international community. Therefore, the United States must work through alliances, international organizations, or ad hoc coalitions to build the required consensus on those specific actions that deter aggression and promote regional stability, economic prosperity, and continued peace.

As specified in the current NSS the three pillars of this Selective Engagement strategy are Shaping of the international community, Responding to crises as required, and Preparing now for an uncertain future. All three pillars are mutually supporting and fundamental to the accomplishment of the three NSS afore mentioned objectives (Enhance America's security, Bolster America's economic prosperity, and Promote democracy and human rights abroad). SOF have unique skills and capabilities to conduct a wide range of shaping and responding

activities around the world. They can be a key enabler for each Regional CINC in the execution of this Shaping, Responding, and Preparing strategy.

In terms of National Security Strategy, the “Ends” of Shaping activities in any region should be regional stability. Stability is usually gained through the promotion of democratic reforms based on the rule of law and economic prosperity. The “Ways” is to shape the international environment through a focused and decisive Theater Engagement Plan (TEP) that builds on two key activities: Deterrence and Peacetime Engagement. Deterrence is best achieved by the United States demonstrating three unique capabilities: unmatched warfighting capabilities across the operational spectrum, the ability to lead coalitions, and the capacity and will to protect our homeland. These three capabilities are the key components of deterrence and are often demonstrated during military engagement activities. The second key activity involved in shaping the international environment is Peacetime Engagement. SOF play a vital role in this, the most visible of military shaping activities. Some of these SOF activities consist of security assistance, humanitarian assistance, bi-lateral training, and multi-national exercises. These numerous contacts between SOF and other militaries around the world greatly increase the United States’ ability to shape the environment towards stronger alliances and increased regional stability.

The second pillar of this Selective Engagement strategy is responding to crises across the full range of military operations, from humanitarian assistance to fighting and winning major theater wars, (MTW). The ability to rapidly respond and decisively resolve crises is an effective deterrent to regional conflict and sets the stage for future operations if additional force must be used. These response actions are a clear commitment of the United States’ resolve to commit resources in a particular region in a timely and decisive manner in order to enhance peace and stability within the designated region. Ongoing SOF engagement activities clearly enhance this response capability by building trust and confidence with designated regional partners. Once established, this rapport with coalition forces greatly increases the successful integration of US conventional, follow on forces with designated regional partners.

The final pillar, Preparing now for an uncertain future, is also enhanced through SOF engagement activities. These enhancements may include establishment of future basing rights, intelligence on key facilities, development of personal relationships with key leaders, and increased interoperability among specific military units. All of these collateral capabilities gained through routine SOF engagement activities could be very important in any future crisis situation.

Finally, the “Means” for the execution of this Selective Engagement strategy are the Regional CINC’s SOF, with their unique skill sets, force structure, and language and regional

expertise. These inherent SOF capabilities clearly demonstrate why SOF are the CINC's engagement force of choice. In order to further explain SOF's relevance as the engagement force of choice a discussion of each services' Special Operations Forces; their core missions, capabilities, and command and control structure will follow.

RECENT HISTORY

The failed mission to rescue the 53 American hostages in Iran in April 1980 was a watershed event for US SOF. This event led to the realization that the US must maintain specialized forces capable of performing extremely difficult, complex and politically sensitive missions on short notice, in peace and war, anywhere in the world. Over the next seven years numerous commissions, initiatives, and force structure changes were conducted by the Armed Forces to increase its SOF capability. This culminated in 1987, when Congress mandated the creation of the U.S. Special Operations Command (USSOCOM) with the responsibility to prepare and maintain combat-ready Special Operations Forces to successfully conduct Special Operations.³ All Army, Navy, and Air Force SOF based in the US were placed under USCINCSOC's combatant command. USSOCOM's four component commands are the Air Force Special Operations Command at Hurlburt Field, Florida; the Naval Special Warfare Command at Coronado, California; the US Army Special Operations Command at Fort Bragg, North Carolina; and the Joint Special Operations Command also at Fort Bragg. SOF provide unique capabilities not found in other elements of the US military. SOF requirements were derived from lessons learned from past operations and world events. This led to the development of a force that has a wide range of capabilities, and includes land, air, and maritime forces that can be employed either as joint or single service units. The acquisition of these capabilities has produced a unique force with distinctive characteristics, capabilities, and limitations.⁴

SOF GENERAL CHARACTERISTIC AND CAPABILITIES

SOF general characteristics include the following: mature leadership, foreign language capabilities, regional focus, specialized equipment, skills and tactics, political and cultural sensitivity, and a small, flexible joint force structure. These general characteristics vary slightly between components but truly make SOF unique in the current US military structure, and enable SOF personnel to work very effectively with both civilian populations and military forces to shape the environment in support of US interests. These characteristics allow SOF to be formed into small, versatile units with a variety of important capabilities that are ideal for theater specific engagement activities.

SOF capabilities ideally suited to engagement activities include: the ability to rapidly deploy anywhere in the world, communicate worldwide with unit equipment, survey and assess local situations and report rapidly, work closely with host nation military and civilian authorities, organize indigenous people into working teams to help solve local problems, and deploy at relatively low cost, with a low profile and less intrusive presence than larger conventional forces.⁵

In peacetime, SOF work closely with host nation governments, military forces, and the civilian populace to assist them in resolving their own problems, thereby enhancing stability within the region. Successful shaping efforts to resolve or contain regional conflicts may preclude the need to deploy large conventional forces. Through engagement activities SOF usually forge strong relations with both military forces and civilian groups that can be of great value to US forces during any follow on combat operations. Additionally, these SOF contacts with foreign military forces are also an effective, low cost means of promoting the respect for human rights and democratic values, which hopefully will lead to enhanced regional stability. All of these unique SOF characteristics and general capabilities greatly enhance SOF's ability to conduct specific engagement activities within each CINC's Area of Responsibility (AOR). A further discussion of the specific mission, capabilities, and command and control structure of each USSOCOM component follows.

US ARMY SPECIAL OPERATIONS FORCE (ARSOF)

ARSOF is a force that consists of five different types of organizations, each with its own distinct capabilities, and missions. ARSOF includes US Army Special Forces, Rangers, Civil Affairs, Psychological Operations, and Special Operations Aviation. Their missions are to conduct Special Operations and/or to provide support to Special Operations. As defined in Joint Pub 3-05, Special Operations are operations conducted by specially organized, trained, and equipped military and paramilitary forces to achieve military, political, economic, or informational objectives by unconventional means in hostile, denied, or politically sensitive areas.

US Army Special Forces consist of 5 active component (AC) and 2 reserve component (RC) Special Forces Groups each comprised of 3 Battalions and Headquarters and Support personnel totaling approximately 1500 personnel. The Groups are regionally oriented to support the 5 regional CINCs and routinely conduct operations in direct support of each CINC's TEP. The basic warfighting element within these Groups is the Operational Detachment – Alpha (ODA). There are 18 ODAs within each Battalion for a total of 54 within each Group. The ODA

consists of 2 officers and 10 Non-commissioned officers with expertise in the areas of operations, intelligence, light and heavy weapons, engineering, medical, and communications.

Special Forces (SF) soldiers are taught to organize, train, advise, and assist host nation military and paramilitary forces. The 5 primary missions of SF units are: Unconventional Warfare (UW) – A broad spectrum of military and paramilitary operations normally of long duration, predominantly conducted by indigenous or surrogate forces who are organized, trained, equipped, supported and directed in varying degrees by a external source. UW includes guerrilla warfare and other direct offensive low visibility, covert, or clandestine operations, as well as the indirect activities of subversion, sabotage, intelligence activities, and evasion and escape.⁶ Direct Action (DA) – Short duration strikes and other small-scale offensive actions to seize, destroy, capture, recover, or inflict damage on designated personnel or material in denied areas. In the conduct of these operations SF may employ raid, ambush, or direct assault tactics; emplace mines, conduct standoff attacks by fire from air, ground, or maritime platforms and provide terminal guidance for precision guided munitions.⁷ Special Reconnaissance (SR) – Actions conducted by SF personnel to obtain or verify, by visual observation or other collection methods, information concerning the capabilities, intentions, and activities of an actual or potential enemy or to secure data concerning the meteorological, hydrographic, or geographic characteristics of a particular urban or denied area.⁸ Foreign Internal Defense (FID) – Participation by U.S. civilian and military agencies in any of the action programs taken by the host nation government to free and protect its society from subversion, lawlessness, and insurgency. SF personnel will organize, train, advise, and equip host nation military and/or paramilitary forces in order to facilitate internal stability.⁹ Combating Terrorism (CBT) – Offensive actions (Counter-terrorism) and defensive actions (Anti-terrorism) taken to prevent, deter, and respond to terrorism.¹⁰

In order to accomplish these five doctrinal missions SF units have developed the following capabilities: Infiltrate/exfiltrate operational areas by air, land, and sea. Ability to conduct operations in remote or denied areas for extended periods of time with little external direction and support. Ability to organize, equip, train, and advise indigenous military and paramilitary forces. Ability to train, advise, and assist Allied Forces or agencies. Additionally, SF soldiers' language training and cultural awareness help them to communicate effectively and gather information quickly while developing the trust of their host nation counterparts. This trust can greatly increase the overall success of follow on U.S. conventional forces if they are required. This expertise coupled with the flexible command and control structure and deployment packages of single or multiple ODAs allows the CINC to engage multiple coalition partners

throughout his AOR at relatively low cost. These inherent capabilities of SF units coupled with those overall SOF general characteristics mentioned earlier greatly increase the CINC's abilities to shape his AOR to promote U.S. interests.

U. S. Army Rangers: The Rangers consist of one Airborne Infantry Regiment consisting of 3 Airborne Infantry Battalions and designated support personnel. They are the Army's premier Light Infantry unit, with the primary mission of Direct Action (same definition as used previously in regards to SF personnel). Rangers are primarily employed to seize airfields, and conduct raids on strategic targets. However, once the targets are secured, Rangers are usually relieved in place by follow on forces. They may also conduct Special Reconnaissance and Combating Terrorism missions as required. The specific capabilities Rangers possess are: Ability to rapidly deploy to all environments. Ability to infiltrate/exfiltrate an operational area by land, sea, or air, conduct airfield seizures or attack critical transportation nodes, command and control facilities, or other high value targets. Rangers give the CINC a very effective forced entry capability with the ability to quickly seize targets and shape the battlefield for the entry of follow on conventional forces. Additionally, as the Army's premier light infantry unit, Rangers are in great demand for combined training exercises. This demand gives the CINC the opportunity to employ Rangers with designated regional partners to expand his engagement activities.

Civil Affairs (CA) – CA personnel support conventional force commanders by providing advice, assistance, and specific functional assistance during the conduct of civil military operations (CMO) to minimize the impact of civilian presence on military operations. They can provide limited support to civil administration in friendly territory and in occupied territory aid in the reestablishment of the constitutional government and restore essential services to the population. CA units are an invaluable resource as they provide the link between the military organization and the civilian populace and infrastructure, as well as with Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and International Organizations (IOs).

CA units are mainly in the Reserve Component (only one Active Component Battalion) and contain personnel with technical and professional expertise such as: facilities engineering, law enforcement, civil government, road and rail networks, and power production. They strive to establish and maintain trust, and influence relations between military forces and civil authorities. They provide the capability to work with and coordinate the activities of NGOs thru the establishment of the unit Civil-Military Operations Center (CMOC) at the JTF Headquarters. Additionally, all CA personnel are knowledgeable about cultural aspects of the country, its ethnic groups, and their relationships to one another. CA units may utilize their capabilities to support the conventional force in the following manner.

The first method is helping the unit Civil-Military Operations Staff Officer in the establishment of the Unit CMOC. The CMOC synchronizes the efforts of the conventional force and all nonmilitary agencies. It is the nerve center for all CMO activities and includes the effective coordination with all nonmilitary agencies, the population, and host government, in areas where the conventional forces are operating. The importance of the CMOC and its ability to enhance the efforts of the CMO staff officer to orchestrate the efforts of many nonmilitary organizations and agencies participating in the operation cannot be over emphasized. The CMOC allows for a two-way information exchange between participating nonmilitary agencies and the conventional military force.

The second method of providing CA support to the conventional force is to attach CA teams to selected units. The functions of these teams are to facilitate military operations by working to lessen the impact of the local population on current military operations. Typically, units such as Military Police, Support Commands, and Aviation could have CA teams attached to them for specific periods of time. Many of these CA team personnel are linguists and can perform the role of interpreters and translators. This skill is of great utility when the units are coordinating with local governmental officials for services as well as follow on military operations. Clearly these inherent skill sets of CA personnel greatly increase the CINC's engagement abilities, and assists in the establishment of specific host nation agreements and relationships with future coalition partners. These CA capabilities are routinely used during combined training exercises as well as humanitarian and peacekeeping operations.

Psychological Operations (PSYOP) – Psychological Operations personnel like SF personnel are regionally oriented as well as language and culturally trained. Their mission is to conduct PSYOP at the strategic, operational, and tactical levels to influence opinions, emotions, attitudes, and behaviors of foreign audiences. PSYOP personnel are usually the primary SOF contributor to the CINC's Information Operations mission to deter or control a crisis, project power, or promote peace. At the JTF and theater levels the CINC usually employs PSYOP units through the establishment of a separate Joint Task Force. The capabilities that PSYOP units possess are: Regional orientation with target audience analysis and focus. Ability to conduct propaganda development, production and dissemination. Ability to conduct sociological and intelligence research. Ability to conduct face to face and mass media communications to influence behavior.

PSYOP personnel develop information campaigns to accomplish the PSYOP objectives through persuasion and truth, rather than through intimidation. PSYOP is a critical resource because it provides accurate and timely information to the local population that helps prevent

rumors and misinformation. The PSYOP campaign is centrally controlled and decentrally executed. The PSYOP Task Force, based on guidance from the regional CINC and the National Command Authorities, develop the informational themes and products (leaflets, billboards, broadcast tapes) that communicate the approved national message. This material is disseminated through loudspeaker broadcasts (portable, vehicle or helicopter mounted) and leaflet distribution (ground, hand, aerial) or through radio and TV broadcasts if the systems are available. These tools provide a non-threatening means of keeping the local population informed of the commander's message. This can greatly enhance the safety and security of a force through the explanation of missions, intentions, and instructions to the local population. These effects can be felt at every level and come from proper planning and distribution of PSYOP products in a carefully planned and executed campaign. In the execution of this PSYOP campaign PSYOP personnel will be at most levels from the CINC, down to individual tactical units. Their mission is to conduct psychological operations in support of the commander by broadcasting a centrally approved message at the time and place chosen by the local military commander.

Special Operations Aviation is a Brigade size organization equipped with specially modified rotary wing aircraft who routinely operate with all SOF units. Their mission is to unilaterally or in conjunction with Air Force SOF (AFSOF) aircraft support Army SOF (ARSOF) missions. They perform long-range night, all weather infiltration and exfiltration of SOF, conduct resupply in hostile areas, perform selected Combat Search and Rescue (CSAR) missions, and conduct medical evacuation under emergency conditions. Their primary expertise is precise, long-range, night operations into hostile, denied, or sensitive areas. Their unique aircraft, such as the MH-47 and the MH-60 are in-flight refuelable and specifically developed and modified to support SOF missions. They can conduct reconnaissance, surveillance and electronic warfare support; provide airborne command and control, and armed escort in support of SOF missions. Specific capabilities of Special Operations Aviation are: Ability to task organize for specific SOF missions. Ability to conduct long-range penetration to insert, resupply, and extract SOF personnel. Ability to conduct medical evacuation, armed attack, electronic warfare support, and command and control.

U.S. AIR FORCE SPECIAL OPERATIONS FORCES (AFSOF)

AFSOF is the Air Force component of USSOCOM and is comprised of both active and reserve component forces. AFSOF contains the following types of units: one active wing with eight squadrons (five fixed-wing, one rotary-wing, one aviation FID unit, and one fixed-wing

training squadron). Two active overseas-based groups, each consisting of two fixed-wing squadrons, one rotary-wing squadron, and one special tactics squadron. One Air Force reserve wing with two fixed-wing squadrons. One Air Force National Guard wing with one fixed-wing squadron. One active special tactics group with four special tactics squadrons and one combat weather squadron. One active flight test squadron, and the Air Force Special Operations School.

AFSOF's primary mission is to provide long-range penetration into hostile, denied, or sensitive airspace so as to infiltrate, exfiltrate, resupply or support Army, Navy, or Air Force SOF. To conduct this mission AFSOF has organic tanker, gunship, PSYOP, and electronic warfare aircraft. AFSOF's unique capabilities are: Ability to conduct fixed-wing and rotary-wing long-range penetration to infil, exfil, and resupply SOF missions. Ability to provide close air support and conduct air interdiction operations in support of SOF missions. Ability to conduct CSAR. Ability to provide combat control and weather support to SOF missions.

AFSOF's air support to SOF operations is usually broken down into six distinct categories: infiltration, resupply, exfiltration, fire support, PSYOP, and air refueling support. To accomplish these missions AFSOF aircraft and crews operate in hostile airspace, at low altitudes, under conditions of minimum visibility while navigating precisely within narrow time parameters, to arrive at specifically defined drop or landing zones, infiltration or exfiltration points or targets. In addition to the aircraft and crews AFSOF have specialized ground units that provide additional support to SOF units. These units, called Special Tactics Squadrons, consist of combat control teams, pararescue forces, and weather teams. They are task organized into Special Tactics Teams (STTs). These STTs are trained and equipped to establish and operate drop zones, landing zones, airfields, and forward arming and refueling points (FARPs) in austere and nonpermissive environments. Additionally, they can direct and position aircraft, designate targets, assist in attacks and extractions, provide limited weather support and conduct personnel recovery operations and coordinate medical evacuation operations.

U.S. NAVY SPECIAL OPERATIONS FORCES (NAVSOF)

Naval special warfare forces are organized to support naval and joint special operations within the CINC's AOR. These forces are organized, equipped, and trained to be highly mobile and quickly deployable. All forces are assigned to Navy Special Warfare Command which is comprised of two active Naval Special Warfare (NSW) groups, five active NSW units stationed overseas, two active special boat squadrons, 13 active patrol coastal ships, three active special boat units, two active SEAL Delivery Vehicle (SDV) teams, six active SEAL teams, the Naval

Special Warfare Development Group, and the Naval Special Warfare School. NAVSOF have the following capabilities: Ability to destroy or sabotage maritime or riverine targets (port and harbor facilities, oil facilities). Ability to conduct hydrographic reconnaissance and mine detection/clearing operations. Infiltrate or exfiltrate across the water. Ability to conduct coastal boat patrol, and support to USN fleet operations. NAVSOF are usually task organized into three different types of units: Sea, Air, and Land (SEAL) Teams, SEAL Delivery Vehicle (SDV) Teams, and Special Boat Squadrons.

SEAL Teams operate mainly in 16 man platoons from sea-based platforms. SEALs primarily conduct clandestine ground and waterborne special reconnaissance and direct action missions in a maritime, littoral, or riverine environment in support of joint and fleet operations.¹¹ SDV Teams are specially trained SEALs and support personnel who operate and maintain SDVs and dry deck shelters (DDS). SDVs are wet submersibles designed to conduct clandestine special reconnaissance, direct action, and passenger delivery missions in maritime environments. DDSs deliver SDVs and specially trained forces from modified submarines. When teamed with their host submarines, SDV and DDS platoons provide the most clandestine maritime delivery capability in the world.¹² Special Boat Squadrons are units composed of specially trained naval personnel. They are responsible for operating and maintaining a variety of special operations ships and craft, such as rigid inflatable boats and patrol coastal ships, to conduct coastal and riverine interdiction and support naval and joint special operations. They provide the Navy's only riverine operations capability and small-craft support to SOF.¹³ SEALs like the Army's Rangers are in high demand for combined, training exercises. These requests usually come from regional partners who possess a "brown water" maritime capability and wish to increase their riverine capability. This demand, once again, gives the CINC the opportunity to engage designated forces within his AOR.

SOF COMMAND AND CONTROL STRUCTURE

The five regional CINCs each have their own Special Operations Command (SOC), a subordinate unified command that serves as the functional special operations component. As the Joint Force Special Operations Component Commander (JFSOCC) the SOC reports directly to the geographic CINC and normally exercises operational control of all SOF (except PSYOP and Civil Affairs forces) within their theaters. Additionally, he is the CINC's principle SOF advisor and serves as the single point of contact for all SOF activities within the theater. In order to execute these functions the SOC has a joint staff (varying in number based on the specific theater from 50 to 250 personnel), four integrating staff elements that work with the other

functional components within the theater, and three standard operational command and control organizations utilized to execute SOF exercises and operations.

The four integrating staff elements are the Special Operations Coordination Element (SOCOORD), the Special Operations Command and Control Element (SOCCE), the Special Operations Liaison Element (SOLE), and the Naval Special Warfare Task Unit (NSWTU). These integrating staff elements deploy with and operate with the conventional components in order to synchronize SOF operations. The SOCOORD is a small planning staff of SOF planners usually led by a lieutenant colonel who acts as the principal advisor to an Army Corps or Marine Expeditionary Force commander and assists in the integration of SF and Ranger operations into the Corps or MEF's campaign planning and combat operations. The SOCOORD is a functional staff element within the Corps or MEF operations staff.

The SOCCE is a command and control element generally based on a U.S. Army SF company headquarters (12 personnel commanded by a Major) or a Ranger Liaison Element and is found usually at Corps or MAGTF level. The SOCCE provides liaison and command and control of designated SOF units in order to integrate SOF operations with the conventional force operations being conducted by the assigned Corps or MAGTF. The SOCCE normally stays under the operational control of the JFSOCC.

The SOLE is composed of SOF air operations planners and liaison officers from the SOF elements and is usually led by the JSOACC's (Joint Special Operations Air Component Commander's) representative. The SOLE works within the JFACC's (Joint Force Air Component Commander's) AOC (Air Operations Center) and is responsible for the integration of all SOF air and surface operations into all joint air operations. The SOLE accomplishes this through the air tasking order system by reconciling duplicative targeting, resolving airspace conflicts, and preventing fratricide. The SOLE reports directly to the JFSOCC and coordinates with all JFSOCC components.

The NSWTU is a command element that provides command and control, coordinates administrative and logistical support, and integrates maritime SOF with the conventional maritime operations. Designated NSWTUs may be under the operational control of the Naval component commander or the JFSOCC based on mission requirements.

The three standard command and control organizations that may be used by the JFSOCC to control assigned SOF are: the Joint Special Operations Task Force (JSOTF), the Joint Psychological Operations Task Force (JPOTF), and the Joint Civil Military Operations Task Force (JCMOTF). These SOF JTFs are flexible in size, compositions, and duration of

establishment. They may be small and temporary or larger and more enduring depending upon the assigned mission.

A JSOTF is composed of SOF units from more than one service, formed to carry out a specific SOF mission or prosecute SOF in support of a JFC campaign or other operations. It may have conventional units assigned or attached, to support specific missions. These missions usually include unconventional warfare, direct action, special reconnaissance, foreign internal defense, and combating terrorism.¹⁴

A JPOTF is composed of psychological operations units from more than one service, formed to carry out psychological operations in support of a JFC campaign or other contingencies. The responsibility for psychological operations planning and supervision lies with the JFC, who is assisted by the J3 psychological operations officer and forward liaison teams from the active component Psychological Operations Group. During peacetime operations the JFC may form a joint functional component command to plan, coordinate, and execute all psychological operations in the theater, in effect, establishing a joint force psychological operations component commander. The JFC may designate the senior psychological operations unit commander as the JFPOCC, or in reality, the JPOTF commander. The JPOTF commander retains overall responsibility for the execution of psychological operations in support of the JFC campaign plan.¹⁵

A JCMOTF is composed of civil-military operations units from more than one service or U.S. agency, formed to carry out civil affairs in support of a JFC campaign or other contingencies. The responsibility for civil affairs planning and supervision lies with the JFC, who is supported by the J3 civil affairs operations officer. A JCMOTF may be established by the JFC to assist in carrying out missions of either limited or extended duration involving: military forces' interface with indigenous civilian populations, resources, or agencies; and military forces' coordination with other DoD, U.S. Government agencies, multinational and host nation forces, and NGOs and PVOs. The JFC commander may designate the senior CA unit commander as the JCMOTF commander. Some CA forces may be assigned or attached to other component commands as the mission dictates. However, the JCMOTF commander should retain overall responsibility for the execution of all civil-military operations in support of the JFC campaign plan.

SOF operations are inherently joint and complex operations that are centrally planned and decentrally executed over large geographic areas. Therefore, an effective SOF command and control network must provide for the effective control of SOF operating within the theater, and the effective staff coordination with all other components. SOF have developed command and

control networks that maximize these two capabilities, been developed based on joint doctrine, and validated during recent SOF contingencies. Additionally, SOF operations are most effective when they are closely integrated into the CINC's TEP or specific country campaign plan and these command and control networks maximizes this integration.

CURRENT SOF ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES

The final segment of this SRP will describe a few examples of how current SOF operations worldwide are fully integrated into each of the regional CINC's TEP and emphasize why SOF is the Engagement Force of Choice.

SOCSOUTH, forward based in Puerto Rico, is responsible for all SOF (except for CA and PSYOP) in the USSOUTHCOM's AOR and consists of forward deployed Army and Navy SOF units and support from CONUS based Air Force SOF assets. SOCSOUTH supports the USSOUTHCOM Strategy of Cooperative Regional Peacetime Engagement by providing SOF capabilities that assist in shaping the theater's security environment, while ensuring appropriate forces are postured to respond when U.S. interests are threatened. SOCSOUTH manages over 200 SOF deployments annually, averaging 42 missions in 16 countries at any given time.¹⁶ A few of these activities consist of ARSOF personnel assisting U.S. agencies in training host nation forces to target drug production and trafficking, conducting FID operations to assist friendly countries in dealing with internal and external threats, and conducting military to military contacts with host nation military forces that build mutual trust, improve interoperability and promote democratic ideals. Additionally, SOCSOUTH is commonly called upon to handle emergencies requiring military assistance. When Hurricane George struck the Dominican Republic, SOF helicopters and soldiers were the first U.S. forces in country. As Hurricane Mitch was hitting Honduras, SOCSOUTH deployed forces that rescued over 900 people on the first day of their arrival. After the life saving efforts were complete, SOF with their language and communication skills were employed to coordinate the initial multinational relief efforts in Honduras, El Salvador, Guatemala and Nicaragua.¹⁷

SOCEUR is the subordinate unified command for special operations in USEUCOM and is comprised of Army, Navy, and Air Force SOF stationed in Europe. SOCEUR's operations and activities support CINCEURs TEP and play an important role in promoting peace and shaping the international environment. Key SOCEUR engagement activities include Joint Combined Exchange Training events (JCETs), the Joint Contact Team Program (JCTP), and the African Crisis Response Initiative (ACRI). JCETs are training activities between SOF and designated host nation military forces. These JCETs allows SOF units to perform mission essential tasks

and regionally focused training while simultaneously establishing U.S. presence and influence in priority engagement countries for the CINC. The JCTP is a USCINCEUR initiative to provide greater U.S. military interaction with former Warsaw Pact countries that may or may not be in the PFP. SOF units provide this contact at low cost and are excellent models for these nations to emulate in their evolving militaries. ACRI is a Department of State initiative to develop the capabilities of selected African countries to respond to regional crises with capable, professional, indigenous military forces. SOF personnel are the primary organizers and trainers for these designated host nation forces. In their capacity as trainers SOF have the opportunity to engage these designated forces on a daily basis. This contact clearly fosters the ideals of a professional army under civilian control, democratic principles and the respect for human rights.

SOCCENT is the subordinate unified command for special operations in USCENTCOM. SOCCENT has several forward-positioned command and control elements within the AOR and supports CINCCENT's strategy of "Shaping the Central Region for the 21st Century" by conducting operations throughout the full spectrum of engagement activities. These activities include warfighting and contingency planning, combined and bilateral exercises, UN sanctions enforcement and monitoring, and security assistance and demining operations. SOCCENT forces participate in all these areas unilaterally or as part of a joint or combined force and are usually the first to deploy (if not already present) and the last to redeploy. The relationships established by these SOF personnel with designated coalition partners clearly enhance CINCCENT's ability to conduct day-to-day security operations and promote stability within the region.

SOCAPAC is the subordinate unified command for special operations in USPACOM. It supports USCINCPAC's shaping strategy through operations such as humanitarian demining operations, counter drug operations, combined exercises, and JCETs. SOF, in conjunction with host nation governments have designed and managed a training program to improve mine awareness, detection, and recovery, and treatment of casualties. SOF conducted 4 rotations in Laos in 1998 and 1999 and have completed initial assessments in Thailand. SOF also conduct training to improve planning, and small unit tactics of designated host nation military and law enforcement agencies to increase their ability to reduce drug trafficking. During 1999 SOCPAC personnel conducted 37 JCETs in 12 different countries within the AOR. These JCET activities include training in small unit tactics, airborne and airmobile operations, and basic medical training.¹⁸ These activities serve to demonstrate U.S. commitment, develop trust among Pacific nations, and deter aggression throughout the region.

CONCLUSION

While the nation is currently at peace, with much of the world embracing democracy, and the threat of nuclear war diminished, threats to our national security still exist. The United States will likely face several significant security challenges in the future. These threats may include regional coercion or aggression, proliferation of potentially dangerous weapons and technologies, terrorism and international crime, threats to our homeland, failed states, humanitarian disasters, asymmetric challenges, and "wild card" or unpredictable scenarios.¹⁹ The president's "National Security Strategy for a New Century" stresses the imperative of engagement and enhancing our security through integrated approaches that allow the nation to shape the international environment, respond to the full spectrum of crises, and prepare now for an uncertain future.

Our National Military Strategy of shape, respond, and prepare is based on the concept that the United States will continue to deploy its armed forces globally and will remain engaged to influence the shaping of the global environment, thereby creating favorable conditions for U.S. interests and global security. Regional CINC's develop their TEPs to support this strategy. They strive to remain engaged (based on their resources and focused efforts) throughout their AOR. The "ends" of this engagement is to promote regional stability that is essential to accomplish the three security objectives of the president's NSS (enhance security of U.S. interests, bolster America's economic prosperity, and promote democracy). The "ways" is to develop the TEP that is regionally focused, cost efficient, (in terms of personnel and equipment) and executable within current peacetime constraints.

SOF, with its unique characteristics, and skill sets of foreign language capabilities, regional orientation, specialized equipment, training and tactics, flexible force structure, and the political understanding of the political context of their mission, are ideally suited to support the full range of engagement activities. These inherent capabilities have proven very successful over the last 10 to 15 years and as shown in the previous examples, CINCs, worldwide, are now more than ever, employing their assigned SOF as their "Engagement Force of Choice." This is clearly the correct thing to do. SOF for all the reasons specified within this SRP are the most relevant force for the CINC to employ in the prosecution of his TEP. Therefore all regional CINCs should continue to maximize their use of SOF as their "Engagement Force of Choice."

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ENDNOTES

¹ William J. Clinton, A National Security Strategy for a New Century (Washington, D.C.: The White House, December 1999), 1.

² Ibid, 3.

³ Brian E. Sheridan and Peter J. Schoomaker, Providing Unique Solutions for a Changing World: United States Special Operations Command Forces Posture Statement 2000, (Tampa, Florida: US Special Operations Command, 25 January 1996), 3.

⁴ Ibid, 1.

⁵ Ibid, 2.

⁶ USSOCOM PUB 1, Special Operations in Peace and War, (Tampa, Florida: U.S. Special Operations Command, 25 January 1996), 3-2.

⁷ Ibid, 3-2.

⁸ Ibid, 3-2.

⁹ Ibid, 3-2.

¹⁰ Ibid, 3-2.

¹¹ Brian E. Sheridan and Peter J. Schoomaker, Providing Unique Solutions for a Changing World: United States Special Operations Command Forces Posture Statement 2000, (Tampa, Florida: US Special Operations Command, 25 January 1996), 54.

¹² Ibid, 54.

¹³ Ibid, 54.

¹⁴ USSOCOM PUB 1, Special Operations in Peace and War, (Tampa, Florida: U.S. Special Operations Command, 25 January 1996), 6-10.

¹⁵ Ibid, 6-10.

¹⁶ Brian E. Sheridan and Peter J. Schoomaker, Providing Unique Solutions for a Changing World: United States Special Operations Command Forces Posture Statement 2000, (Tampa, Florida: US Special Operations Command, 25 January 1996), 18.

¹⁷ Ibid, 19.

¹⁸ Ibid, 29.

¹⁹ Ibid, 5.

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