

USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

**INTELLIGENCE SUPPORT TO SPECIAL OPERATIONS IN
THE GLOBAL WAR ON TERRORISM**

by

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ABSTRACT

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The role of Special Operations Forces (SOF) in the global war on terrorism has changed dramatically since Desert Storm. Not only has funding been increased, but support in Congress and within the Department of Defense (DoD) for the Special Operations Command (SOCOM) and Special Ops has skyrocketed, especially since the success of SOF/Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) partnership in Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF). This paper will explore the environment leading up to this change, how SOF has used and provided intelligence in the last two major conflicts, and whether that support has kept up with the demands of SOF's new roles.

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INTELLIGENCE SUPPORT TO SPECIAL OPERATIONS IN THE GLOBAL WAR ON TERRORISM

Fusing the ability to see and strike through interconnected systems, while at the same time reducing the vulnerability of operators, portends momentous changes in the nature of warfare. On the other hand, the complex task of extracting the Taliban and al-Qa'ida forces from difficult terrain and cave hideouts illustrates how much farther we need to progress in our ability to fuse knowledge, decisions, and action into a seamless combat process.

—GEN Richard B. Myers
Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff

THE POST 9/11 ENVIRONMENT

The events of 11 September 2001 had a profound impact on both institutions and individuals in the United States. After 9/11, the threat of terrorism demanded a new level of cooperation among the Interagency Community. Gone from our collective national nightmares were the ponderous standing armies of the Cold War as many of our former foes became partners in the global war on terrorism.

Instead, we were left fearful of every small bump in the night. The events of 9/11 were a slap in the face, a kinetic wake-up call of the most painful kind--to everyone from policy makers to the man on the street--that the world had changed. We were shown that it did not take a nation-state to kick sand in our face. Individual actors with a dime store tool and a plane ticket could wreak havoc all out of proportion to their evident capabilities. Compounding the anxiety were recollections of the events at the Murragh building in Oklahoma City a decade before, which showed that a few pounds of ingredients available at any garden center could accomplish the purposes of homegrown and foreign terrorists alike. The conclusion to be drawn was inescapable: new responses were going to be required. One of these new responses was demonstrated during Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) in the close partnership of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and Special Operations Forces (SOF). That partnership has continued to expand in Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF). This paper will explore the environment leading up to this change, and how SOF has used and provided intelligence in the last two major conflicts, and whether that support has kept up with the demands of SOF's new roles in the global war on terrorism.

SPECIAL OPERATIONS DEFINED

The global nature of the war, the nature of the enemy, and the need for fast, efficient operations in hunting down and rooting out terrorist networks around the world have all contributed to the need for an expanded role for the special operations forces.

—Donald Rumsfeld
Secretary of Defense

According to the 2003-2004 Special Operations Forces Posture Statement,

Special operations are conducted in hostile, denied, or politically sensitive environments to achieve military, diplomatic, informational, and/or economic objectives employing military capabilities for which there is no broad conventional force requirement. These operations often require covert, clandestine, or discreet capabilities.¹

Special operations occur in an environment and at a pace very different from conventional warfare. Special operations require more intelligence up front, in greater detail, than operations using large, conventional forces, as SOF units typically work independently for short periods of time, or with support from cooperative locals.² Given their impact, which is often disproportionate to the size of the unit, "Politico-military considerations frequently shape special operations, requiring clandestine, covert or low-visibility techniques, and oversight at the national level."³

The SOF operator is distinguished from other military personnel by his language capabilities, his extensive overseas experience, his ability to work closely with indigenous forces and to train them, his ability to blend into the fabric of the society in which he operates, his independence and maturity, and an unparalleled degree of training. These Americans are truly one of a kind—each one. That is why there are so few of them. They cannot be mass-produced. Nor can their equipment. They are one of the nation's most scarce and precious resources, and they should not be employed casually.⁴

SPECIAL OPERATIONS STRUCTURE

Army

"Army Special Forces (SF) are made up of SF (Green Beret), Ranger, special operations aviation, civil affairs, psychological operations and special operations support units.⁵ "Much like the Navy SEALs, (they) recruit from the entire service force, not only from Rangers and infantry. This recruiting is required to meet the varying skill requirements of Special Forces, as well as the need to infuse new perspectives and flexibility into the force."⁶

Air Force

Air Force Special Operations units provide forward presence and engagement, information operations, precision employment/strike, and special operations forces mobility for all SOF. Among their other flying functions is the EC-130 known as Commando Solo, which conducts psychological operations and civil affairs broadcasts.⁷

Navy

Naval Special Warfare Command forces are organized into SEAL teams, Special Boat units, and SEAL Delivery Vehicle teams. SEAL teams are multipurpose combat forces trained and equipped to perform various SOF missions. SEALs can be deployed from submarines, aircraft or surface ships.⁸ There are no Marine special forces units, but Marine Expeditionary Units can be certified special-operations-capable for the duration of their deployment overseas.⁹

SPECIAL OPERATIONS FORCES INTELLIGENCE

Special operations forces are both users and producers of intelligence. According to the Special Forces Operations Field Manual, SF performs “intelligence activities ranging from developing information critical to planning and conducting operations or sustaining and protecting themselves and the unconventional warfare force, to assessing the capabilities and intentions of indigenous and coalition forces.”¹⁰ SF also conducts special reconnaissance, in order to “confirm, refute, or obtain—by visual observation or other collection methods—information on the capabilities, intentions, and activities of an actual or potential enemy.”¹¹ The intelligence officer (S2) is responsible for all aspects of intelligence, from collection to dissemination, protection of intelligence and interface with national systems.¹² He does this via the Special Operations Command Research, Analysis and Threat Evaluation System (SOCRATES) LAN, which links him with national databases, imagery processing and communications with other analysts. “It can provide a direct link from national intelligence resources down to the executing level.”¹³

THE INTELLIGENCE COMMUNITY

It has been necessary for us to engage, quite literally, in a “full court press,” bringing to bear all elements of our national power. Striking at this [terrorist] network has necessitated an unprecedented level of cooperation among U.S. defense, intelligence, law enforcement, and diplomatic agencies.

—Marshall Billingslea
Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense, Office of the Assistant Secretary of
Defense for Special Operations/Low-Intensity Conflict

The Intelligence Community (IC) supporting OIF is vastly different than the one that supported Desert Shield/Desert Storm. The IC of today is made up of the CIA; elements within the Department of Defense (DoD): Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA), National Reconnaissance Office (NRO), National Security Agency (NSA), National Geospatial Intelligence Agency (NGA), and Army, Navy, Air Force and Marine Intelligence; and elements of non-DoD Departments (FBI, Treasury, Energy and State).¹⁴ Recent additions include the Department of Homeland Security and the Coast Guard. The level of cooperation between elements of the IC, which prior to 9/11 had been acrimonious and enforced more by external fiat than by any recognition of the synergies possible, turned around almost overnight. The IC reacted positively with a surge of coordinated activity intended to ferret out terrorists wherever they might train and operate.

Thanks to authorities broadened by the Patriot Act (P.L. 107-56), members of the IC sharpened their focus on support to military operations and found unprecedented ways to partner with both the military and law enforcement.¹⁵ The participation of all players was critical to developing the full picture of the threat posed by terrorists. For example, FBI agents joined CIA and military intelligence personnel who normally conduct prisoner interviews in interrogating Taliban and Al Qaeda prisoners in Afghanistan.¹⁶

In addition to standing up or augmenting existing counter-terrorism centers, many of these agencies and departments brought back retired experts and began significant hiring programs that were helped in large part by the surge of patriotism following the events of 9/11 and the expanded budgets approved by Congress.¹⁷ Human intelligence (HUMINT), which had been disparaged for the last decade as less reliable than other national intelligence systems, received renewed priority when it became clear that many high value targets had learned to avoid exploitable technologies.¹⁸ Finally, the new kid on the block, the Department of Homeland Security, provided a focus for coordination with law enforcement and other government agencies that had once been inconceivable.

A FEW WORDS ON LEGAL AUTHORITIES

The CIA/SOF partnership of OEF was a startling success, but it also raised questions about the authorities each used to operate with the other.

In past administrations, there was a clear effort to distinguish between the combat activities conducted by Special Operations forces and missions handled by the CIA. But the line has gradually blurred as the campaign against terrorism required greater cooperation among United States law enforcement, intelligence, and military officials.¹⁹

Joint U.S. Military and CIA Special Operations Group (SOG) strategy and combat operations in support of OEF have transformed unconventional warfare. "CIA/SOG prides itself on being small and agile, capable of sending teams of 10 operators or fewer anywhere in the world much faster than the Pentagon can...CIA operatives have fewer regulations to hamstring them than their military counterparts."²⁰

One example, described by a former intelligence operative as "an extraordinary change of threshold"²¹, is the CIA Predator strike on Ali Harithi in Yemen.

The CIA strikes are also a reflection, they say, of how slow the U.S. military, even its Special Operations Forces, have been to adapt to the ad hoc, ever-changing tactics of smaller and smaller cadres of terrorists now operating without much of a command structure. The CIA, in fact, has become a much more central tactical military tool in the terrorism war than in any previous conflict, largely because it has a much less cumbersome bureaucracy. The CIA's separate targeting process, which was used in Sunday's Predator strike, is quicker, more fluid and involves fewer decision-makers in its "trigger pulling" chain of command than even the nimblest military operation, intelligence experts said.²²

But this change of threshold raises a host of new questions about legality, effectiveness and ethics. While the focus of this paper is not on the legal authorities that permit or restrict the activities of the DoD and members of the IC, it is useful to note that those authorities do vary significantly. The National Security Act of 1947²³ established the intelligence community, and Executive Order 12333²⁴, along with other Presidential Findings, Congressional Authorization Acts, Presidential Decision Directives, etc., codify the limits of its activities, overt and covert.

DoD has a different set of authorities, and a different set of concerns. Military forces operate within the laws of war, and under Geneva Convention protections. The current White House emphasis on using unconventional forces to fight terrorists is shifting the Special Operations Command (SOCOM) mission, with more responsibility, more people, more weapons and a lot more money, into areas that tread the boundaries of these authorities.²⁵

For an excellent discussion of this topic in detail, see COL Kathryn Stone's 2003 Strategy Research Project. To drastically summarize her thesis:

- The CIA paramilitary/SOF partnership increases the risk of making covert action more visible to the enemy.
- While CIA may operate outside the laws of the target country (but inside U.S. law), the military must follow international law. Accountability is problematic under these circumstances.

- As regards Geneva Conventions, intermingling CIA and SOF forces could result in the enemy being unable to distinguish between the two groups and categorizing all captives as unlawful combatants.
- Command and control (C2) of such a mixed force is also an issue. The SOF team would typically be under the control of the combatant commander, but the CIA paramilitaries operating in the same area of operations, would not, unless specifically designated.²⁶

GLOBAL WAR ON TERRORISM

SF personnel must have a thorough knowledge of the operational area—including its geographic, political, social, economic and environmental conditions and its language.

—CW3 Charles E. Simmons

OPERATION ENDURING FREEDOM

OEF set the stage for changes in modern warfare that are required to fight terrorism. “Joint operations involving fast-moving CIA paramilitary teams and specialized U.S. military forces in Afghanistan may well serve as a model for future encounters against terrorism in other parts of the world.”²⁷ Even the President stated that the combination, along with precision air power, local allied forces and real-time intelligence “has never really been used before. The conflict in Afghanistan has taught us more about the future of our military than a decade of blue ribbon panels and think-tank symposiums.”²⁸

Initially, all was not sweetness and light in the CIA/DoD-SOF partnership. The Secretary of Defense (SecDef) was reportedly incensed that SOF had to wait for CIA to set up relationships with the local warlords, and might create problems that DoD would have to clean up. In addition, DoD felt that it had more special operations soldiers available than the “spooks at Langley.”²⁹ Indeed, in Afghanistan, CIA regularly asked for SOF medics, operational soldiers and intelligence specialists.³⁰

In Bush at War, Woodward lays the success of operations in Afghanistan to the CIA/SOF partnership, rather than large-scale assaults, which had limited success. While Woodward implies Rumsfeld’s displeasure over CIA’s early role, Tenet, he says, was unfazed and saw cooperation between the IC and Pentagon as being so good that turf battles should not be a factor.³¹

Never before had a goal of this magnitude been accomplished by so few troops on the ground. For 18 days in October, “Four teams, plus two 15-person battalion-level units—only 78 soldiers in all—accounted for the entire Special Forces presence in Afghanistan, according to

the U.S. Army Special Forces Command. Yet they set the stage for the fall of the northern two-thirds of the country.”³² “In all, the U.S. commitment to overthrow the Taliban had been about 110 CIA officers and 316 Special Forces personnel, plus massive air power.”³³

The SOF/CIA intelligence gathering partnership identified members of the Taliban and Al Qaeda, located targets, and provided actionable intelligence from captured Al Qaeda papers, telephone books and computer media. “The material produced names and phone numbers of Al Qaeda members in other countries and led to some additional arrests.”³⁴

But intelligence is subject to interpretation—and is not always interpreted correctly. By February 2002, the Joint Special Operations Task Force (JSOTF) commander was frustrated by the lack of actionable intelligence for high value targets. SOF teams had been ranging throughout Afghanistan and into Pakistan looking for Osama Bin Laden without success for months. This frustration led to planning Operation Anaconda, which mixed SOF reconnaissance teams in the mountains with conventional forces operations in the Shah-e-khot valley to take out a concentration of Taliban and Al Qaeda believed to be there.³⁵

Air Force and Army intelligence varied on the size and location of enemy forces.³⁶ Lives were lost when U.S. intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR) failed to detect enemy fortifications on Takur Ghar Mountain where SF forces intended to set up their own observation post. After several attempts to get into position on the mountain were delayed by weather and equipment failures, frustration, blind faith in ISR and underestimation of the enemy ability to adapt to that ISR led to disaster. Subsequent attempts to rescue one team member were hampered by overburdened satellite communications systems that delayed rescue orders, and over reliance by the JSOTF commander in Oman on unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) forward-looking infrared (FLIR) video, which caused him to think he had better situational awareness than the Task Force RECCE commander on the ground. Weeks after the events on Takur Ghar, analysis of the uninterrupted Predator video was still inconclusive as to the details of the fight and the actions and fates of several team members, which were only decided much later by forensic pathology.³⁷

The events on the mountain at Takur Ghar and the response to them provide a microcosm of the larger issue of over reliance on national technical means for intelligence and the loss of HUMINT capability. In this case, the eyes on the ground (the Task Force RECCE commander and the troops reporting to him) can be thought of as providing HUMINT on the situation, and the UAV and satellite communications (SATCOM) connection that enabled the JSOTF commander to take control are the national means. It is just one of many instances where better HUMINT capability would have improved intelligence preparation of the battlefield,

and where reliance on a single source of intelligence (first ISR, later the UAV FLIR video) rather than getting information from several sources, made a tragic difference.

OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM

The role SOF played in OIF varied from that of OEF, but the lessons learned in OEF from the successful SOF/CIA/IC partnership carried over.

Operational intelligence collectors and analysts accompanied the first special operations forces entering Iraq, supported by signals intelligence from the United States. Intelligence assets were committed much earlier than the main combat forces, and the demands on Army intelligence would rapidly increase with American commitment to this theater.³⁸

Intelligence agencies began providing information to SOF on Iraqi military capability and plans well before the conflict began. The early availability of intelligence helped special operations forces plan and allowed them to be more effective by prompting responses from the Iraqis, which in turn generated more intelligence.³⁹

American SOF also went “quail hunting,” conducting harassing raids designed to flush out Iraqi military units, which then became targets for US air strikes. Indeed, air power proved to be the Special Forces’ trump card. In executing their missions, SOF were linked to persistent surveillance platforms such as UAVs, while Air Force and Navy strike aircraft, along with AC-130 gunships, remained on call.⁴⁰

“In Operation Iraqi Freedom, military intelligence went beyond its traditional role as a force multiplier. Intelligence shaped the battlefield, dominated the enemy, opened possibilities for the coalition forces, and guided every step of the campaign.”⁴¹

Rather than the traditional military plan that required huge resources and took a long time, the plan in Iraq “evolved from day to day depending on intelligence.”⁴² GEN Richard Myers, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, told the Navy League that “the new American way of war”⁴³ is “faster, more agile, more precise”⁴⁴ and integrates intelligence gathering with high-tech weapons and communications. In the first week of the war, the U.S. had about 50 Special Forces teams in Iraq. The teams were made to “look 10 feet tall” by lighting up targets with lasers for aircraft to bomb.⁴⁵ SOF, along with British, Australian and Polish Special Forces, totaled around 10,000, and were better equipped than when Army Rangers and Delta Force fought in Mogadishu. Communications and night-vision gear were better, they had access to real-time views of enemy territory via UAVs, and backup from attack aircraft.⁴⁶

Cooperation between U.S. special operations forces and paramilitary forces of the CIA (many of whom reportedly are ex-SOF personnel) enabled coalition forces to secure oil fields before they could be destroyed, inhibit Iraqi ballistic missile attacks on friendly targets, and rescue U.S. prisoners of war.⁴⁷

Not only did intelligence support help to identify targets, it provided critical force protection, enabled improved coordination among the services and between conventional and SOF, and between SOF and the intelligence community. The SOF/CIA partnership in Iraq led to the identification and location of Ba'ath party leadership. HUMINT provided to a Green Beret soldier led to the rescue of PFC Jessica Lynch from a hospital in Nasiriya.⁴⁸ Intelligence provided by SOF to conventional forces identified enemy operations and hazards along conventional forces routes. Military officials have stated that conventional forces would not have gone so far so quickly without the support of Special Forces.⁴⁹

One unnamed senior U.S. intelligence official characterized Iraq as a "CIA and special ops playground" and stated that they were counting on special ops and agency (CIA) paramilitaries to do whatever it took to "crumble [Sadam's] regime from the inside out."⁵⁰ Special forces ranged across Iraq, securing oil terminals and the Haditha Dam, preventing possible ecological disasters. They also tapped into Iraq's Chinese-built fiber-optic communications lines, which allowed U.S. forces to intercept the conversations of Iraq's military and political leaders.⁵¹

LESSONS LEARNED

All the satellites and Predators in the world weren't going to find Bin Laden.

—Major General Renuart

PROS AND CONS

As with any analysis depending entirely on unclassified sources, the reviews of the effectiveness of intelligence support to SOF are mixed. But, the consensus of available unclassified lessons learned is that OEF and OIF demonstrated the value of timely battlefield intelligence and the need for increased investment in special operations. "On the basis of early reports, it seems likely that SOF played an important role in enabling the persistent surveillance that made it so difficult for Iraqi forces to move without being detected and engaged."⁵²

Sweeping statements from DoD tout the glowing success of the SOF/CIA/IC partnership.

The intelligence was so up to the minute and accurate, Pentagon officials say, that it not only allowed U.S. military commanders to take action but was in many cases "predictive" about what Iraqi leaders would do next. Coalition commanders were able to be efficient in using air power, while mostly avoiding unintended damage or casualties, by combining high-confidence intelligence, targeting called in by special forces surreptitiously inserted in Iraq and highly precise munitions.⁵³

ADM Giambastiani, Commander of the US Joint Forces Command and Supreme Allied Commander Transformation (NATO), cited special operations and special operations-

conventional integration as capabilities that had “reached new levels of performance in OIF and needed to be sustained.”⁵⁴ He also cited information operations and intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance as capabilities that “demonstrated considerable effectiveness but need enhancement,” and pointed out that intelligence on Iraqi strength was good at the start of the war, but diminished as the pace of the war increased.⁵⁵ “The ability to be able to do effects assessments or battle damage in a rapid fashion lags seriously behind the movement of our forces.”⁵⁶

According to ADM Cebrowski, director of the Pentagon's Office of Force Transformation, without SOF's capabilities and precision guided munitions, damage done by coalition forces in the course of removing Saddam Hussein's regime could have been much worse. Tactical lessons learned confirmed the importance of SOF skills and intelligence. “The general rule is that small forces with a depth of local knowledge have more power than very large formations that come from [elsewhere].”⁵⁷

In recent years, the United States has waged wars against regimes, not nations. Consequently, the US military had the mission of defeating the enemy regime without alienating the population, so as to facilitate postwar reconstruction and stability operations. Key to achieving this objective was limiting noncombatant casualties and damage to the target state's infrastructure. To do this, the US-led coalition had to strike with discrimination and move with great speed. Advanced intelligence, reconnaissance and surveillance capabilities proved critical to identifying military targets. The widespread use of precision guided munitions enabled discriminate strikes, minimizing the loss of noncombatant lives and sparing much of Iraq's infrastructure.⁵⁸

GEN Franks, former Central Command (CENTCOM) commander, stated the Operations Southern and Northern Watch, OEF and OIF “improved our joint C4I networks” and led for the first time to an “integration of forces, rather than [just a] deconfliction of forces”, whereby SOF enabled conventional forces efforts against asymmetric threats. But he added “human intelligence and communications bandwidth are areas that will require continuing focus.”⁵⁹

According to retired GEN Joseph Hoar, former CENTCOM commander, American technical abilities to monitor, listen to, and see from a distance have leapt in the past decade, but nothing substitutes for having operatives on the ground.⁶⁰

The Army Center for Lessons Learned (CALL) noted that SOF and conventional force intelligence were successfully integrated and that the liaison should continue. Their report rated spatial products and information as good, but noted that some units operated with two-year old satellite imagery. The preliminary report also recommended AM radio as a backup for the primary communications method, SATCOM, and that dedicated frequencies be allotted to reconnaissance units. In addition, they noted that it is the combination of several intelligence

products, rather than just one source, and frequent situational updates that provide the most complete intelligence picture. In OIF, HUMINT was the primary means of detecting and tracking targets—HUMINT drove the targeting process. Finally, the intelligence preparation of the battlefield (IPB) and targeting processes were well integrated between SOF and conventional forces. SF teams had direct liaison authority with the sector's conventional forces commander where they were working, and along with imbedded personnel from other government agencies, developed actionable targeting information. This successful integration resulted in the destruction and capture of Iraqi forces.⁶¹

BG Cone, Director of the Joint Center for Lessons Learned at Joint Forces Command (JFCOM), in a lessons learned briefing at the Pentagon, credited SOF with compensating for the loss of access to Iraq via Turkey, with enabling the movement of ground forces, and with how SOF was able to get critical intelligence about changes on the battlefield to leadership. Cone went on to criticize the intelligence available about the enemy when we got into Baghdad, but said that intelligence dissemination and IPB were fairly good. On the other hand, he said our ability to leverage sensors and HUMINT capabilities, while unprecedented compared to Desert Storm, was not equal to the demand for intelligence. Two specific factors were mentioned: time sensitivity and getting the one piece of intelligence out of all that was available to the person who could act on it.⁶²

MG Renuart, former Operations Director at CENTCOM, sees an important lesson in the lengthy struggle against terrorists. "Nowhere is there complete freedom of action. The US is not all-seeing. And, huge as its military capabilities are, they are not omnipotent. Special forces and secret agents have their limits."⁶³

Lessons from the Gulf War illustrate that the problem of getting national-level intelligence down to the commander on the ground who can use it is nothing new. "Despite enormous quantities of strategic intelligence gathered by aircraft, satellites, and other means, ground commanders at division level and below complained continually about the lack of information on enemy forces along their route of attack."⁶⁴ Systematic dissemination problems, difficulties refining national level assets for rapidly changing tactical requirements, and poor HUMINT assets all played a part. Add to that the fact that "satellite imagery can provide only a picture of enemy force positions, but not his intentions."⁶⁵ The more things change, the more they stay the same. In the era of the global war on terrorism, we have many of the things lower level commanders wished for during Desert Storm, but the complaints sound hauntingly familiar.

The issue of credibility of intelligence, or of the Administration's use of intelligence, prior to Iraq war, has affected all that followed. Within six weeks of the start of OIF, the search for

weapons of mass destruction (WMD) was well underway. "...U.S. 'mobile exploitation teams' and other special forces...visited 90 of the top 150 'hot' sites identified by U.S. intelligence. No wonder Hans Blix, head of the U.N. inspection team, says that what he got from American intelligence was 'garbage'."⁶⁶ Special forces teams spent a lot of time and resources looking for those elusive WMDs, to no avail, when they could have been looking for Bin Laden or Hussein. Was it the intelligence? Or the way the Administration used the intelligence? We may never know.

THE IMPORTANCE OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INTELLIGENCE

Intelligence was crucial to force protection, saving civilian infrastructure, and identifying and destroying the Iraqi regime's center of gravity. Intelligence remains a key advantage of the American military over its enemies, as the United States faces new threats in an uncertain world.

—CPT Mark Choate

According to the DepSecDef, there were three times the number of Joint Strategic Airborne Reconnaissance System (JSTARS) sorties in OIF compared to Desert Storm, and greatly increased satellite capabilities. "The extensive use of small Special Operations units and ISR connected together by new communications links vastly improved our forces' knowledge of the location and disposition of enemy forces before and during OIF."⁶⁷

SOF teams used satellite communications to talk to air support, to get situational updates and to call in air strikes. Army Special Forces also had connectivity with Navy F-14 Tomcats to improve the speed at which the SOF units received imagery from tactical aircraft in the theater of operations. "The two-way communications system (FTI) allowed the ground troops to send images to the Tomcats, and allowed the Tomcats to send imagery to the ground troops within 2 minutes."⁶⁸

LTG Steven Boutelle, the Army Chief Information Officer, acknowledged greatly increased bandwidth requirements during OEF and OIF. He said that commercial satellite bandwidth and terminals are being provided to units because both conventional and SOF signal units need enterprise network connectivity, with voice and data, to national intelligence networks.⁶⁹

The need to track friendly forces anywhere in the area of operations in order to avoid fratricide was dramatically illustrated in the non-linear battlefields of OEF and OIF. Improvements in technology since Desert Storm allowed the Combined Air Operations Center at the Prince Sultan Air Base outside Riyadh, the capital of Saudi Arabia, to receive intelligence from Afghanistan, 1500 miles away, and track SF teams' movements.⁷⁰ "Hundreds of SOF deployed behind Iraqi lines wore Grenadier Beyond Line of Sight Reporting and Targeting

(BRAT) miniature transmitters, enabling headquarters units hundreds of miles away to know their location.”⁷¹ GEN Franks testified before the House Armed Services Committee in July that “the command and control of air, ground, naval and SOF from 7,000 miles away was a unique experience in warfare as our forces achieved unprecedented real time situational awareness and C2 connectivity.”⁷² ADM Giambastiani told the same committee in October 2002 that information capabilities allowed for “precision decision-making.”⁷³ But keep in mind that those same long-distance communications were not infallible and proved to be an Achilles heel at Takur Ghar.

CONCLUSIONS

The Summer Study on Special Operations and Joint Forces in Support of Countering Terrorism by the Defense Science Board focuses on the shifting counter-terrorism mission of U.S. Special Operations Forces. The report echoes the need for better HUMINT and less reliance on national technical systems such as satellites. It also recommends more DoD covert units and a much larger budget to support new expenditures.⁷⁴

Indeed, SecDef Rumsfeld wants to expand his own capability and has added significantly to SOF’s budget to support operations against Al Qaeda worldwide. CIA feels some of this is duplicative, or could be. Tenet oversees intelligence programs, but DoD has the lion’s share of the budget. The referee will ultimately be the President.⁷⁵

Questions remain concerning the relationship between special operations forces and the CIA. Have command and control issues been sufficiently clarified by experience in OEF and OIF? Where do DoD/SOF and IC/CIA roles overlap? Are they redundant? Or, given their differing legal authorities, do they complement one another? And will Congress view their operational cooperation as an opportunity for budgetary efficiencies? ⁷⁶ Clearly, the relationship was extremely successful, if initially controversial, even contentious, in OEF. But CIA had been on the ground for years and had established relationships in place that simplified and speeded-up the job that SOF was there to do.

Afghanistan again shows that virtually all low intensity and asymmetric wars require both intelligence and military personnel on the ground to support coalition operations, directly support targeting, and gain information in real time that can support operations. The US was fortunate that it had some recent Special Forces experience in Afghanistan, but it had only a very limited pool of military and CIA operations personnel, and almost certainly would have done better with more.⁷⁷

Phase 3 and Phase 4 are tangled together in Iraq. U.S. forces remain in Afghanistan. Resources are spread thin, and troop rotation is a problem. Winning the peace remains to be accomplished.

...Much of the hard military work that must be done in Afghanistan and Iraq should now pass from conventional soldiers to counterinsurgency units and Special Forces—numbering, let us hope, in the thousands rather than the hundreds. These, by means of intelligence-gathering and the creation of friendly cadres, are far better-equipped to perform the unenviable task of hunting down Taliban and Ba'athists, and to accomplish that task to the satisfaction rather than the chagrin of the local population.⁷⁸

The need for partnership and support continues unabated. It is important to remember that SOF is a provider of intelligence, as well as a user. Their ability to partner with indigenous assets as well as with the intelligence community helped rout the Taliban in Afghanistan, find Ba'athists in Iraq, and ultimately, Saddam. The way we use SOF in the future will determine success or failure of military operations at all levels. We must keep in mind the unique strengths and vulnerabilities of SOF. Over reliance on a single source of intelligence is more likely to put them at immediate risk. The pace of the global war on terrorism and the emergence of asymmetrical and non-linear warfare as the norm make good intelligence, from every source, even more important than ever before. The intelligence community must continue to break down barriers to sharing information among its own members, law enforcement and the military. More importantly, each of these constituencies must understand the operations of the other.

Clearly there are not enough people in the intelligence community who understand who SOF are and how they work. Truth be told, there are not enough people in the conventional force who understand SOF, but that's another paper. OEF and OIF have shown us that we can get spectacular results by integrating the knowledge and skills of specialists in both the DoD and Intelligence Community. We've done it for a relatively short period of time with good result. The question is, can we keep it up? Can we develop a "joint" intelligence service that gets beyond "need to know" and compartmentation restrictions to get the intelligence to the shooter on the ground as quickly as it is needed? Can we merge intelligence professionals—military and civilian—into an effective fighting force in the global war on terrorism? It's been a tough row to hoe for the military—joint service is still not a viable career path. Military Intelligence officers still have careers capped because they are not considered to be war fighters. In addition, special operators take years to develop, and are a scarce commodity that is currently being stretched thin between Afghanistan, Iraq, and other conflicts around the world.⁷⁹ The recent change that makes SOCOM a supported command responsible for prosecuting the global war on terrorism, with the commensurate increase in budget, will help, but the time it takes to

develop special operators and capabilities to support them is a factor. It is also a factor in locating and developing HUMINT sources, which inevitably take years. As we have seen, those sources are critical in the global war on terrorism, and reliable intelligence depends on input from several of these sources at a time.

Clearly, a lot of things need to change before DoD and the IC capabilities truly merge to give SOF the kind of support it needs out there on the point of the spear. We've seen a lot of progress since 9/11. We've also seen some missteps; missteps that unfortunately cost lives. But OEF and OIF have proven the efficacy of the special operations/intelligence community partnership, both as the primary force and as an enabler for large conventional forces in major conflict. If small wars, fought with speed, precision and flexibility are the future of the global war on terrorism, then special operations and the intelligence that supports them will continue to be at the focus.

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