

USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

**A COMPREHENSIVE TRANSFORMATION STRATEGY FOR U.S. ARMY SPECIAL
FORCES FOR THE 21ST CENTURY**

by

Lieutenant Colonel William H. Dodge
United States Army

Colonel Joe Kilgore
Project Adviser

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U.S. Army War College
CARLISLE BARRACKS, PENNSYLVANIA 17013

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ABSTRACT

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This strategy research paper examines the nuances and complexities of the 21st century battlefield in an ever-changing strategic environment and explores how U.S. Army Special Forces are adapting with new transformation strategies. With the strategic shift brought about by the increase in non-state actors and assorted terrorist groups, comes a requirement to re-focus Special Forces architecture, resourcing, and training techniques to prepare our Soldiers for the complexities of current and future battlefields. The historical, contemporary, and future design of Special Forces formations are considered and possible enhancements to resourcing and training are investigated. By exploring the complex and uncertain 21st century strategic environment, and by examining current mission requirements, we can more accurately anticipate and predict future requirements and prepare for any contingency. The result is to ensure the appropriate force design, resourcing, and training necessary to provide the nation with highly trained, competent Special Forces operatives capable of fighting and winning in any complicated environs or future battle space.

A COMPREHENSIVE TRANSFORMATION STRATEGY FOR U.S. ARMY SPECIAL FORCES FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

The United States has been engaged in the Global War on Terror (GWOT)¹ since September 11th, 2001. As a result of the dramatic events of that day, the U.S. National Security Policy has changed to more adequately address the ever-changing threats that we will face in the future.² Ralph Peters recently observed, "America is at a strategic crossroads. As the world's lone superpower, we face savage hostility, at home and abroad, from critics furious over our power and success – and their own failure. Should we retreat from the struggle for human freedom to please Muslim extremist, decaying European powers, and an irresponsible global media? Absolutely not..."³ The strategic crossroads Peters refers to is driving national policy change. With National Policy change comes collateral changes in National Security Strategy (NSS),⁴ National Defense Strategy (NDS),⁵ and National Military Strategy (NMS).⁶ Net result has been a significant reconfiguration in U.S. Special Operations Command (USSOCOM) policy⁷ and the Army's Special Operations Command (USASOC) policy.⁸ As a strategic asset, the Army's Special Operations Forces (SOF), and specifically the Army's Special Forces (SF) units, are affected by the changes in military policy. The key National Security Policy regarding "transformation of our national security institutions to meet the challenges and opportunities of the twenty-first century" comes from the President's National Security Strategy.⁹ This policy is responsible for subsequent top-down (NSS, NDS, NMS, USSOCOM, USASOC) strategy change in support of the national policy objective. The NMS, USSOCOM, and USASOC strategic guidance is to "transform" the force to "improve proficiency for irregular warfare."¹⁰ In this paper I will discuss the ever-changing character of 21st century adversaries to the United States and how our contemporary enemies are driving the need to transform Army Special Forces. I will examine the U.S. Army Special Operations Command's strategy to support the national security policy objective of "transforming the force." This paper will briefly analyze and evaluate current USASOC strategy options (ways and means) that support the national policy

objective (ends) of transformation, specifically with regard to the Army's Special Forces.

Through this examination I will discuss current and proposed future transformation initiatives for U.S. Army Special Forces and assess whether or not they are likely to achieve their desired ends.

Understanding the Adversary

Understanding contemporary adversaries and potential opponents of tomorrow differ from the traditional challenges posed by states employing conventional military formations in traditional military competitions. It is important that the United States continuously re-evaluate and assess our security institutions to ensure that they are adequately suited to address the changing complexities of future threats to the nation and incorporate sound ideas for the protection against and defeat of these threats. Future opponents will include traditional nation states with standing conventional militaries and irregular, unconventional non-state actors, intent on asymmetric warfare incorporating potential use of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) or information systems attacks against the United States and its allies. Our primary opponent has shifted from traditionally fielded military forces of an aggressor nation to irregular/unconventional forces of non-state actors. President George W. Bush says, "Enemies in the past needed great armies and great industrial capabilities to endanger America. Now, shadowy networks of individuals can bring great chaos and suffering to our shores. Terrorists are organized to penetrate open societies and to turn the power of modern technologies against us."¹¹ Because of this shift in adversarial relationships, the National Security Policy of the United States has changed. Current national policy recognizes the need to transform the security institutions of the nation to better prepare them to deal with emerging challenges/threats.¹² The USASOC and Army Special Forces strategies actively embrace the need to transform its force and energetically incorporate sound guidance and innovative ideas in their approach to do so.

The challenges and adversaries for this country are extremely complex and ever changing. Understanding modern adversaries requires an understanding and appreciation of the past. As noted by Alvin and Heidi Toffler in *War and Anti War*, "During World War I, millions of Soldiers faced each other from fortifications dug into the soil of France. Filled with mud and rats, stinking of garbage and gangrene, these linear trenches stretched for miles across the countryside, behind tangles of barbed wire. There was little question in anyone's mind where the "front line" was."¹³ Today's military formations and battlefields are quite different from those of the industrialized formations of the past. The black and white distinction between friend and

foe has turned to a contemporary shade of gray. Our technological advantage during the 1991 Gulf War between the U.S. led coalition and the occupying forces of Iraq, can today be marginalized or even used against us by similar or improved technologies now available to modern adversaries. In 1991 the world saw a classic display of AirLand battle doctrine unfold. The American war machine used technologically superior combat equipment and training to execute an advanced strategy of warfare to rapidly and decisively defeat its opponent.¹⁴ Even during Desert Storm though, there existed a very clear delineation on where the "front line" was, and who the opponents were.¹⁵ Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld maintains that, "While the security threats of the 20th century arose from powerful states that embarked on aggressive courses, the key dimensions of the 21st century (globalization and potential proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD)) mean great dangers may arise in and emanate from relatively weak states and ungoverned areas."¹⁶ "The U.S. is likely to be challenged by adversaries who possess a wide range of capabilities, including asymmetric approaches to warfare."¹⁷ Terrorism attempts to strike fear in the will of innocent populations and attempts to dissuade people from pursuing ideologies, values, and ways of life not consistent with those of the terrorists.¹⁸ Today, non-state actors comprised of transnational terrorists groups, organized criminal networks, and a multitude of various religious extremists and fanatics, can exploit technologies and subvert open societies to impose levels of devastation and financial impacts against the most powerful nations on earth. The impact of the attacks against the United States on September 11th, 2001 have proven greater than that of any single war-time military strike or attack in the history of the nation. One might argue that the only way the attacks of September 11th could have been any more successful for its perpetrators, is if they were to have employed Weapons of Mass Destruction. A WMD-type attack against the United States in the 21st century is no longer a matter of "if" but more a matter of "when." Opponents to the United States have openly stated their desires and intentions to pursue WMD for potential use against the U.S. The United States must actively engage globally, through every possible instrument of national power, in order to defeat our enemies at great distances and deny them the capability of bringing harm to our shores. President Bush maintains that terrorist organizations are interconnected by nature and for us to effectively combat them, we must pursue them wherever they are, sever their lines of communications, isolate, and destroy them.¹⁹ When considering the complex and uncertain environment of current and future battlefields, the ability to deploy "rank and file" military formations against an enemy who lives in and amongst the populations of the globe is exceedingly difficult if not impossible. With seemingly infinite new "avenues of approach" available to America's adversaries it is increasingly critical that America maintain a

highly talented, multi-faceted, and extremely flexible and lethal military capability. Contemporary battle spaces are unlike any before seen throughout history. Modern battlefields range from traditional nation states, to entire continents, to the entire globe. With such vast battle spaces and sophisticated networks of interconnected non-state actors, it is critical that our armed forces be furnished with the best technology and resources available to effectively contend with future threats.

The United States now faces enemies who often blend in with their surrounding environment. This kind of enemy straps bombs to his chest and calls himself a martyr while attacking innocent women and children in the name of his cause. Donald Rumsfeld says, "Our enemy is a complex network of ideologically driven extremist actors. They have used various means to terrorize our population, undermine our partnerships, and erode our global influence."²⁰ This enemy will not elect to directly confront the American military juggernaut in a conventional force-on-force battle. That would be sheer lunacy as his strength lies in his ability to conspire and selectively elude a direct confrontation.

Given the character of the unconventional, non-state actors and the serious threat they pose, the U.S. has begun to transform in strategic ways. The next section of this paper addresses transformation strategies and is followed by a discussion of how strategic transformation can impact the training of our Special Forces.

A Strategy to Transform

U.S. President George W. Bush says that we must take the battle to the enemy, to in order to upset and interrupt his coordination and defeat his efforts from their beginnings. The president talks about a plan of action and has implemented a national policy of preemptive action.²¹ As the potential of a conventional military "force-on-force" clash wanes and unconventional and asymmetric warfare looms prominent, the United States strategy will increasingly and routinely turn to the world's premier unconventional warriors, the U.S. Army Special Forces. Current U.S. unconventional warfare and counter-terrorism strategy talks of exploiting an enemy's vulnerabilities (e.g. finances, resources, sanctuaries) and disrupting his processes while upsetting his ability to create conflict.²² This approach to warfare focuses heavily on "dislocating" ones opponent. Here the intent is to psychologically and physically upset his balance and creating numerous unexpected challenges that he is surely unready and unable to confront.²³ U.S. Army Special Forces are specifically equipped, trained, and designed for this type of irregular warfare. Disruptive attacks by kinetic or non-kinetic means through clandestine or overt approaches are just one of a myriad of specialized tasks well within the

purview of the Special Forces skill sets. Special Forces can employ resourceful techniques to upset an adversary's equilibrium and destabilize their opponent. Through surprise tactics, disruption of logistical support, lines of communication and finances, elimination of sanctuaries, and by affecting his physical and psychological ability to maneuver; Special Forces elements ultimately exhaust and overcome the enemy's ability to fight.²⁴ In an extremely unconventional manner, U.S. Secretary of Defense Donald H. Rumsfeld assigned primary responsibility for the military's counterterrorism effort to USSOCOM. In addition to this new role, the Defense Secretary provided additional resources, personnel, and increased SOCOM's funding to assist in the increased responsibility.²⁵ U.S. SOF are experts in stealth and agility and Army Special Forces successfully led Afghan militia to overthrow the Taliban government in Afghanistan and vanquish Al Qaeda from its sanctuaries in that country.²⁶ Special Operations Forces are particularly well suited for taking on the responsibility for the worldwide effort against terrorism.²⁷

To effectively combat worldwide terrorist networks the United States has adopted a global forward posture. Through defense partnerships and alliances, the U.S. will pursue its interests throughout the international community.²⁸ This logic and understanding is incorporated into our national security strategy, our national military strategy, and USSOCOM and USASOC strategies.²⁹ The USASOC strategy supports USSOCOM and the Army by developing and providing capabilities for winning the Global War on Terror (GWOT). By "conducting special operations to globally find, fix, and finish terrorist, Army Special Operations Forces (ARSOF) will improve upon its existing capabilities to shape the global informational and geographic battlespace by conducting special operations to influence, deter, locate, and isolate terrorist and their support systems."³⁰ It is a USASOC strategic imperative to transform for the future and USASOC provides its Special Forces component great flexibility in determining where to focus its transformation efforts.³¹ The USASOC strategic guidance for Army Special Forces to transform is captured in the first of its two primary objectives listed in their Strategic Planning Guidance: 1.) "Organize, Train, and Equip Soldiers and Grow Adaptive Leaders and 2.) Provide relevant and ready ARSOF to Combatant commanders that possess Campaign Qualities with Joint and Expeditionary Capabilities."³² The transformation strategy for the Army's Special Forces component places primary emphasis on the "Organize" portion of the "Organize, Train and Equip."³³ The broad strategic guidance translates into very specific application regarding Army Special Forces: a.) Leverage existing training institutions and their evolving capabilities to continue to hone SOF skill sets, b.) Focus primarily on Special Forces particular core competencies and, where appropriate, divest redundant or excess capabilities to conventional or joint forces, c.) Leverage available conventional/joint force support assets on the battlefield,

and d.) Reshape and reconfigure the force from current design to new structures that most effectively meet current and future requirements.³⁴

Training Enhancements

The training of U.S. Army Special Forces is among the best available training in the entire Department of Defense. Highly skilled and experienced instructors execute a multitude of rigorous training Program of Instruction (POI) covering a myriad of specialized topics including academic and equipment oriented training. Recent transformation initiatives at the John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School (SWCS) at Ft. Bragg have proved immensely successful in increasing the “throughput” of new Special Forces Soldiers while improving the training curriculum and its design to produce more, elite Soldiers, at a higher caliber of training to join the Special Forces Regiment in the Global war on Terror. With GWOT and USSOCOM becoming lead agent in DOD, comes a higher demand for more Special Forces soldiers. And SWCS has risen to the challenge. In late FY 2004, the schoolhouse managed to increase its student numbers by 33% over its previous class and produced its largest class of graduates in its history.³⁵ With increased operational tempos in the field come increased demands for Special Forces troops. The Special Warfare Center has developed a new modular training POI that enables high quality instruction, conducted in a series of weeklong classes, offered by a committee of instructors who specialize in providing specific blocks of information. By organizing instruction into a modular fashion, the instruction can be offered multiple times per course/year, conceivably, at any time – “plug-and-play.” This approach eliminates potential “down time” in training cycles where students in the past were often waiting for a particular block of instruction to occur because it was only available a limited number of times per cycle. The new training POI consists of weeklong “modules” that focus on everything from basic marksmanship and weapons training, to ambushes and patrolling, to SF Core tasks, to detachment level battle drills. The new modular design has all but eliminated any student “downtime.” This new approach is not only more flexible but also saves time and money while producing *more* trained Soldiers, quicker. It is also important to note, the newly structured curriculum and methods of delivery require the same amount of logistical support and infrastructure, as did the old program. This is inherently efficient in light of the fact that modules of instruction can now be offered many more times per cycle/year at the same support costs.³⁶

Another transformational breakthrough at SWCS is a complete overhaul of its language-training program. SWCS Commander MG James Parker says:

Over the past year, the transformation of the Special Forces Training Pipeline has been a priority for us at SWCS. Current operations have made us look

closely at our cultural and language training to make sure that they enhance our ability to interact with, and ideally influence the beliefs and behavior of the populace with whom we are engaged. These are key elements of our unconventional warfare skills.³⁷

Under the new system of training, a Special Forces student takes a language aptitude test early in his assessment phase of training. If the student successfully completes the assessment, he is immediately assigned to a detachment (basic group of 12 soldiers – maneuver element in Special Forces, otherwise known as an “A”-Team) and assigned one of ten primary languages (Chinese, Korean, Tagalog, Indonesian, French, Arabic, Persian, Farsi, Russian, German, and Spanish) which coincide with real world operational requirements throughout the geographic combatant commands.³⁸ The student then receives language training throughout the duration of the average year-long training POI of the Special Forces Qualification Course (SFQC).³⁹ This is a much more logical approach to language training than in the past where the student completed SFQC, then tested for language proficiency and received one eight to twelve week block of language training before being shipped off to his unit. Now, Special Forces students receive cultural and language training throughout the SFQC along side of their fellow teammates, and *all* are confronted with situational exercises where they are required to use their language skills and cultural awareness abilities to successfully accomplish their missions. Under the new POI, students must also achieve a passing score on reading, speaking, and listening/understanding in their target language *before* being permitted to graduate the SFQC and become a “green beret.”⁴⁰ This is a significant change from the past where students who successfully completed the SFQC graduated, received their green berets and became Special Forces qualified *then* went to language training and successfully or unsuccessfully attended the training.

Training scenarios used throughout the SFQC are another aspect of change at SWCS. Today’s challenging predicaments that confront Special Forces candidates are continuously upgraded to depict the realistic situational events occurring on today’s battlefields. New realistic scenarios cause students to negotiate extremely complex and ambiguous dilemmas similar to those confronting our active component Soldiers currently engaged in GWOT. These real-world scenarios provide students extremely valuable training experiences with which to mold their skill sets while still in the schoolhouse, prior to having to use them in a combat situation. Special Forces graduates of the SFQC can be deployed to combat within weeks of graduation. Because of this, the schoolhouse has done a remarkable job in transforming its POIs and the situational-based training venues. As a result, the quality and preparedness of our future

graduates will be greatly enhanced. Special Operations Forces situational training exercises and field training events have historically been handled either internally (e.g. contract for specific scenario/education at cost to unit) and/or conducted through/at Combat Training Centers (BCTP, JRTC, CMT, NTC). Recent enhancements to these training centers have also increased their ability to provide meaningful training to our SF warriors. According to Army Chief of Staff General Peter Schoomaker, "Training scenarios are constantly updated to reflect changing battlefield conditions and incorporate lessons learned. In all scenarios, Soldiers and leaders are presented with complex cross-cultural challenges by large numbers of role players who act as both combatants and foreign citizens."⁴¹ The integration of civilians, political leaders, tribal factions, non-governmental organizations, and an array of other elements, present complex situations and scenarios that challenge conventional and Special Forces Soldiers. Training scenario realism is a key focus throughout Army Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) combat training centers (CTCs), where Army conventional and Special Operations Soldiers maintain their training abilities and hone their skills.⁴² Vast improvements are rapidly being incorporated into all training center scenarios and some CTC's will actually customize events, scripting specific scenarios to accommodate user (rotational unit) requirements. Scenario realism and improvements are being integrated throughout the training curriculum at the Army's Special Warfare Center and School as well. By leveraging "schoolhouse" improvements and sending SF Soldiers to these institutions, the Army's Special Forces can ensure that its Soldiers receive the best available training at minimal additional cost to their respective commands. By eliminating unnecessary redundancy in our training apparatus and effectively leveraging the existing robust training institutions, SF can maximize its training dollars while ensuring SF troops receive tough realistic and cost efficient training.

Across USSOCOM and USASOC, where appropriate, a concerted effort is underway to best manage manpower and human resourcing.⁴³ In many cases, it is more cost effective to transfer selected job requirements from the military member worker to civilian employees or contractors in the workforce. A comprehensive review for potential conversion of military-to-civilian job positions is currently underway and may generate large budgetary savings.⁴⁴ In addition, this ongoing review could potentially discover multiple duty positions that can be converted into civilian positions. For example, instructor positions in our schoolhouses that are currently filled by military personnel could possibly be converted into civilian positions, freeing the military personnel to re-join the ranks of the line units.

These are just a few of the many innovative solutions effectively addressing training and personnel challenges that confront the Army's Special Forces. These solutions are proving

highly effective for Special Forces and to our military leadership. Through innovative transformation practices like these, Army SF will continue to provide solutions for the demands of the future.

Core Competencies

Another fresh Special Forces strategy is to refocus SF on their core competencies and primary missions. It is essential for this low-density high demand asset to be able to maintain its proficiency and readiness. Where appropriate, SF must divest any duplication or redundant capability to the conventional or joint force.⁴⁵ Army Special Forces units have been deployed nonstop since September 11, 2001. Current Operations Tempos (OPTEMPOs) are at an all-time high and don't look to slow in the foreseeable future.⁴⁶ As I will discuss later when looking at OPTEMPO effect/impact on SF organizational structures and redesign, high OPTEMPOs are driving training and organizational decisions for Army Special Forces. In order to successfully maintain current/future OPTEMPO rates and maintain proficiency on the multitude of specialized perishable skills inherent to U.S. Army Special Forces, it is paramount that SF focus primarily on their core competencies and primary missions. Army Special Forces core tasks are: Unconventional Warfare, Direct Action, Special Reconnaissance, Foreign Internal Defense, Counterterrorism, Information Operations, and Counterproliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD).⁴⁷ Current operations around the world have U.S. Army Special Forces actively conducting ALL of their primary missions on a daily basis. It is essential that Special Forces maintain focus on their unique skill sets and divest any duplicative or redundant missions to conventional Army or Joint forces. For example; Army Infantry, Armor, Military Police forces, or U.S. Marines can easily conduct dismounted patrols and routine security operations. In fact, they are probably better suited to do these types of missions. This would not necessarily be the most prudent application of a Special Forces "A" team and could be considered a waste of a strategic asset. Consequently, directing joint fires deep behind enemy lines, conducting strategic attacks against high priority targets, or raising, training, and leading guerilla forces are all missions ideally suited for U.S. Army Special Forces. By maintaining their focus on core tasks while educating conventional U.S. Army and Joint forces on the correct application of Army Special Forces, the SF strategy will ensure maximum effective use of this limited strategic asset.

Force Structure

Special Forces are organized and configured to be modular, joint interconnected, interoperable, and globally deployable at a moment's notice.⁴⁸ They are also well versed in

combined operations with other nations. Well suited and well familiar with their core roles and functions, Army Special Forces are taking a hard look at their organizational structure. The purpose of this examination/strategy is to determine the feasibility of restructuring in order to produce a more efficient way to maximize effectiveness. Restructuring may also enable SF to rid itself of surplus or unnecessary skill sets while allowing for the incorporation of required additional capabilities.⁴⁹ The USASOC strategy has restrained its Special Forces component regarding immediate growth in organizational structure in order to allow for near-term expansion of its Civil Affairs and Psychological Operations Forces. However, some near-term change is unfolding with more long-term growth programmed for Army Special Forces. Earlier discussion illuminated the OPTEMPO challenges resulting from the Global War on Terrorism for Army Special Forces. Present OPTEMPO rates have stretched the current Special Forces organic inventory to its limits. All five of the Active Component (AC) Special Forces Groups have been deployed to combat in support of GWOT in either Afghanistan or Iraq.⁵⁰ Both National Guard Special Forces Groups have been deployed twice either to Afghanistan or Iraq.⁵¹ Special Forces units have also been consistently deployed in the SOUTHCOM, EUCOM, and PACOM areas of operation in support of GWOT.⁵² This type of operations tempo is truly unprecedented in the Army Special Forces. Some SF units are presently deployed on third and fourth combat tours since September 11th, 2001.⁵³ Today's Special Forces Soldier is truly the "pentathlete" that Army Chief of Staff Peter J. Schoomaker speaks to in his vision for the Army's future.

Projected future deployment requirements for Army Special Forces in support of GWOT don't appear to wane, in fact, the demand is greater than ever. With no relief in sight, Special Forces strategy concentrates on a.) Near-term reorganization and reconfiguration to provide a more efficient use of existing assets and MTOE billets, deleting unnecessary resources while incorporating new required capabilities (with little or no growth to present force structures) and b.) Long-term (2-6 years) transition to a much needed expanded force structure.⁵⁴ Ultimate long-term growth is projected at approximately five Support Battalions (one per AC Group) and five SF Line Battalions (again, one per AC Group).⁵⁵ Near-term strategy to leverage existing Army and Joint CS/CSS assets while it builds a more robust (long-term) organic support element is definitely the most feasible and acceptable approach for Special Forces. Minor divestitures of non essential support assets that are presently nested into current MTOE will allow Special Forces to immediately take on much needed UAV and joint fires capabilities not presently existent in their inventory.⁵⁶ Current organic Group Support Companies will grow into Group Support Battalions in the very near future. Two such battalions have already stood up. These additions will enhance the AC Group's ability to self-support/self-sustain. In the interim,

Special Forces will “lean” more heavily on conventional and joint in-theater support mechanisms. This is the most suitable approach available to SF strategists and works well on today’s battlefields because of closer proximities to the conventional and sister service units. The technique of drawing support from conventional Army units or even Joint sister service support elements is *transformational* thinking/practice for the Army’s Special Forces. As an inherently independent and unilateral operating element on the battlefield, current conditions and battle space proximity to friendly forces in both Afghanistan and Iraq, offer unique opportunities to leverage other support lines. Current and projected future operational environs appear to support this concept and should remain synchronized with Special Forces growth strategy for their Group Support Battalions.

Army Special Forces Groups are regionally oriented. For example, 1st SFG(A) covers the far east and has a forward deployed battalion located in Okinawa, Japan while 7th SFG(A) covers Latin America and has a company stationed in Puerto Rico.⁵⁷ The 3rd SFG(A) is primarily oriented on Africa, with the exception of a handful of Muslim nations along the Horn of Africa which belong to the 5th SFG(A) who has primary responsibility for the Middle East, the Persian Gulf, the Horn of Africa, and central Asia.⁵⁸ The 10th SFG(A) is oriented on Europe and maintains a forward battalion in Germany.⁵⁹ Special Forces Command and USASOC have been forced to accept some risk by rotating regionally oriented Special Forces units outside of their designated areas of expertise (Geographic Combatant Command AORs) in order to facilitate current rotation cycles to Iraq and Afghanistan.⁶⁰ Though the troops gain valuable combat experience, their cultural and linguistic skills may suffer the longer they remain out of their primary areas of operation. Current regionally oriented forces are spread a bit thinner than normal, as the Groups are rotated in and out of Iraq and Afghanistan. The programmed force strength increases for both AC and RC components may be the light at the end of the tunnel.

The U.S. Army Special Forces are the largest single SOF component in USSOCOM.⁶¹ It should come as no surprise that they are also the largest single SOF contributor to efforts in GWOT. With primacy in GWOT being placed upon their shoulders, they will be beneficiaries to some transformation priority. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, having given USSOCOM the lead in America’s War on Terror and having increased resourcing to the command, has enabled many transformation initiatives to already be explored. Furthermore, in the programmed budget years through 2013, funding for the transformation increases necessary for the required growth of the Army’s Special Forces have already been approved.⁶² The result will be much needed additions to the Special Forces ranks, bolstering the organizational structure with added capability, expertise, and manpower. Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld says,

"Transformation requires difficult programmatic and organizational choices. We will need to divest in some areas and invest in others."⁶³ Understanding that these special warriors cannot be grown over night, as inferred by Senator John Kerry during that last Presidential election when he said that if elected he would immediately double the size of SOF, it is essential to realize that Special Forces Soldiers cannot be mass produced overnight. It takes time. Time, resources, and complex planning is what is required to build Special Forces warriors. The entire growth process is extremely complicated and thanks to some visionary thinkers, USASOC is well ahead of the power curve with its transformation strategy for Special Forces. The demand for Army SF in GWOT is only going to increase. The need for expansion is immediate and the process should be nurtured carefully.

Conclusion

The U.S. Army is undergoing the most dramatic reorganization since World War II.⁶⁴ Special Forces transformation and reorganization efforts are relatively modest in comparison; yet, the significance of today's Special Forces and SF missions is extraordinarily high. Implementation of the Special Forces transformation and growth strategy is well on its way.⁶⁵ As stated earlier, Special Forces Support Battalions are currently being stood up.⁶⁶ Increases to the Special Forces Group Headquarters in the form of UAV detachments, joint fire control detachments, and increased operations detachments will begin to join the force in the next few years.⁶⁷ Finally, the addition of the individual Special Forces line Battalions (1 per AC Group) will initiate in FY2008.⁶⁸ Standing up new SF Battalions is synchronized with the Special Warfare Center and School's projections for providing new SF troops to the field. The command and control and all associated Group Support assets will be in place once the new battalions begin to enter the system. Between now and then issues like office space, support infrastructure and equipment fielding will need to be worked through.

The present USASOC/Special Forces transformation strategy for growing its force is the most cost effective and dynamic approach to transforming the organizational structure. The USASOC strategy to transform its forces in support of current US Policy of transforming national security institutions is right on the mark. This document was written with specific guidance about "transformation" and deliberately uses very specific verbiage (some directly pulled from higher strategy -USSOCOM, NMS, NDS, NSS) in an attempt to show continuity and linkage to those documents. I think the strategy effectively accomplishes its intent by leveraging innovative techniques and exploring resourceful solutions to bridge the gap between near and far-term requirements.

"Today, the United States enjoys a position of unparalleled military strength and great economic and political influence. In keeping with our heritage and principles, we do not seek to use our strength to press for unilateral advantage. We seek instead to create a balance of power that favors human freedom: conditions in which all nations and all societies can choose for themselves the rewards and challenges of political and economic liberty."⁶⁹

As we race forward into the twenty-first century it is important to think critically about the types of warfare and adversaries that the United States will face in the years to come. U.S. defense strategy warns that though past threats may have arisen from powerful nations that future threats may very well come from weak and ungoverned areas of the world.⁷⁰ If irregular warfare appears to be the direction in which we are heading, then I contend that in order to effectively support our National Security Policy of transforming the security institutions of this nation, the USASOC strategic plan should continue to prioritize the growth and support of America's premier unconventional warfare force; the US Army Special Forces.

Endnotes

¹ George W. Bush, *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America* (Washington, D.C.: The White House, September 2002), 29.

² Ibid.

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