

NORWEGIAN SPECIAL FORCES: THEIR ROLE IN FUTURE COUNTERINSURGENCY OPERATIONS

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One of the Norwegian government's main goals is to fulfill its security obligations to the international society by participating in complex multinational operations. Accordingly, during the past decade the government has strengthened the Norwegian Special Forces as an important strategic military asset for domestic and foreign engagements. The Special Forces have been deployed to several crisis response operations. A Norwegian Minister of Defense policy statement clearly emphasize that Special Forces will continue to be an important force contributor in future operations. This Strategy Research Project argues that the Norwegian Special Forces can make substantial contribution to military counterinsurgency campaigns. In background, this SRP describes the organization and recent missions of the Norwegian Special Forces. It analyzes the Special Forces capabilities and cites lessons learned from previous counterinsurgency operations. It concludes with recommendations for strengthening the capabilities and concept developments for the Norwegian Special Forces in order to meet 21st-century challenges.

NORWEGIAN SPECIAL FORCES: THEIR ROLE IN FUTURE COUNTERINSURGENCY OPERATIONS

Direct threats against Norwegian territory and its vital national interests have changed since the end of the Cold War. Norway's functional security interests focus primarily on the defense of the nation's territorial integrity. Therefore, Norwegian national security focuses on countering external threats.¹ Accordingly, the Norwegian government has committed the nation's military forces to participate in multinational operations that are vital to Norway's national interest. A recent Norwegian Chief of Defense white paper clearly states that Norwegian Special Forces (NORSOF) will continue to be an important force multiplier in future multinational out-of-area operation.² Because of its participation in counterinsurgency operations in Afghanistan, the Norwegian Special Forces Task Force has gained great experience while making sustained contributions to these operations.³ General John Reith, Deputy Supreme Allied Commander of Europe (SACEUR), NATO recently informed Norway's Chief of Defense of the noteworthy contribution of NORSOF to operations in Afghanistan: "During my recent visit to Afghanistan, the excellent achievements of your Norwegian Special Forces Task Force, operating in Kabul and the surrounding provinces, were brought to my attention. Since the moment they became operational, and OPCON to COMISAF in March 2007, they have conducted themselves in an exemplary manner, gaining huge respect and deservedly earning the strong praise of COMISAF and senior commanders for their successful operational achievements."⁴

The Norwegian Special Forces have been strongly supported in the last 15 years by the Norwegian Government. They have developed unique capabilities to conduct the

full spectrum of special operations including complex counterterrorist and counterinsurgency (COIN) missions.⁵ NORSOFF must maintain these capabilities and develop new capabilities that will be crucial in expected future operations. This SRP recommends how Norway should further increase and develop its Special Forces capabilities and concepts in order to achieve maximum strategic and operational effects in future complex and unpredictable COIN operations.

Norway and the International Environment and Systems

The global environment and the world we are operating in today can be described as volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous (VUCA). Obviously, it is hard to predict future challenges and conflicts. However, with the myriad of nation-state and non-state actors that operate within the international arena, it is not likely that the world will be less demanding and complex in the future.⁶ Based on this assumption, the military units that contribute to out-of-area operations must have the right capabilities and flexible mindset to operate in such a difficult environment. The Norwegian Defense Forces are a strategic tool contributing to the total Norwegian Grand Security Strategy. In close concert with other national authorities and agencies, the military forces alone, or together with Allies, secure Norwegian sovereignty and safeguard Norwegian rights and interests. Through participation in multinational operations and cooperation in international defense, the Norwegian Defense Forces contribute to peace, stability, the enforcement of international law and respect for human rights. In addition, it seeks to prevent the use of force by state and non-state actors against Norway and members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO).⁷

Norway recognizes the United Nations Organization as the world's leading legitimate security and stability international organization. Norway believes that currently the UN is the only global organization that is able to use the entire spectrum of means and ways to resolve conflicts. This includes humanitarian, diplomatic, economic, informational, and military means and ways, used in accordance with UN Security Council's directives. Therefore, Norway believes that a UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) and a valid UN mandate should sanction an intervention or campaign before the Norwegian Military Forces will participate in such activities. Norway agrees and accepts that UNSCRs and UN mandates give international legitimacy for using military means.⁸ Further, the NATO alliance is a cornerstone of Norway's security and defense policy. The fundamental NATO principle of providing collective defense to its member nations when attacked is a crucial assurance of receiving support if needed. Norway also regards NATO as an important tool for maintaining Trans Atlantic Security Cooperation in order to ensure stability in the world in general and in the Northern Region specifically.⁹

Although Norway is not a member nation-state of the European Union (EU), Norway cooperates and coordinates closely with the European Defense Agency, even providing military forces in specific situations.¹⁰ Finally, Norway continues to emphasize its bilateral defense and security cooperation with selected nations in order to strengthen its military capabilities and to enhance mutual cooperation. Especially important cooperative partners for Norway are the Nordic countries, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, and the United States of America.¹¹¹²

Current and Future Conflicts and Wars

In *On War*, Carl von Clausewitz explains that the crucial aim in war is to destroy the enemy forces so the enemy can no longer carry out the fight. By disarming a country, we will moreover destroy the enemy country's leadership and national will. Then he will do our will.¹³ I believe this applies more to total wars or major wars, such as World War I and II and to the situations that developed during the Cold War period. Recent trends indicate more limited wars or smaller scale contingencies (SSC). The United States has fought as many as 170 SSCs and no total wars during the last decade.¹⁴ Participating in SSCs has also become a major objective for Norway. Norwegian military forces have taken part in a great number of peace and stability operations the recent years. These operations have been led by the United Nations, by NATO, or by the United States. So why are these limited wars fought? The interests of nation-states now extend beyond direct military threats to their sovereignty. Especially since the Cold War ended, we have seen considerable tension between different cultures and ethnical groups all over the world. These conflicts have often resulted in limited wars between non-state players and nation-states, such as the Balkan War in Former Yugoslavia, Operation Iraqi Freedom, Operation Enduring Freedom, and NATO ISAF Operation in Afghanistan.¹⁵ These conflicts clearly indicate that ethnical, religious, and cultural differences are often driving factors for wars. Another reason for such conflicts is demonstrated by the actions and operations that took place after the terrorist attacks on 9/11 in New York City and the Pentagon. The United States, NATO, and many other countries then in general agreed on the terms for waging Global War on Terror. Whether this confirms with the traditional perception of war, may be strongly debated. This issue will not be further discussed in this paper. Nonetheless, this issue

reveals that nation-states and international organizations find it legitimate to “declare war” in response to devastating terrorist attacks or similar actions.

Why COIN Operations?

Insurgencies and subversive activities against a nation-state government are not new phenomena. History shows that in our complex and fragmented world there have always been groups that disagree with the policies and actions of established governments. The exact reasons for insurgency in a country or region may be difficult to discuss. However, the most common causes for insurgency are normally related to different religions or to issues of a cultural, political, economic, or ethnical character. Significantly, “insurgencies are wars waged within societies, in contrast to conventional wars, which are wars between societies”.¹⁶ The wars that the French fought against the local insurgency in Algeria and Indo-China illustrate that this type of war or conflict are extremely complicated due to the fact that the insurgents’ objective is the population and their will and interests.¹⁷ Underestimating the local population and the insurgency itself is a dangerous mistake that can lead to a failure of the whole operation. Therefore, in counterinsurgency operations it is very important to carefully assess the insurgency’ objectives and motivation. We must know why they are fighting or resisting the existing government. Based on a sound assessment of an existing insurgency, military leaders-in close coordination with host nations and IOs and NGOs-must agree on a common strategy to shape their military operations in a constructive and perhaps unconventional way, consistent with diplomatic and economic objectives.¹⁸ We should be aware that the local population will judge how we contribute to their personal goals. Indeed, we may not satisfy their goals simply by militarily defeating an insurgency group or a despot’s

army. Further, we should negotiate and speak to the powerful leaders in a conflict. As the United High Special Representative to Afghanistan, Ambassador Kai Eide declares some months ago: "If we want important results and improvements, we need to speak with those people that are important in Afghanistan". He stressed that it is now time to start a dialogue with Taliban and other insurgency groups.¹⁹

I have learned from several deployments to Afghanistan that military units taking part in COIN Operations must be agile and flexible. They must easily adapt to the complex environment they are operating in. Often many military units at one moment conduct defensive stabilization and nation building operations; then in the next moment the same unit is tasked to execute offensive security missions.²⁰ Based on these huge variations across the spectrum of conflict, COIN operations are probably the most difficult mission a military conducts. History and recent lessons learned from ongoing operations in Iraq and Afghanistan show that the military must be prepared and trained to conduct COIN operations. Due to the complexity, variations of missions, and precision needed in COIN operations, the Norwegian Special Forces must develop greater capabilities to be an effective force contributor in future scenarios.

The Development of Norwegian Special Forces

The Norwegian Special Forces were initially established during World War II when small specialized units were formed and given comprehensive sabotage and intelligence training in the United Kingdom. The primary tasks for the Special Forces units during WWII were essentially to conduct small-scale operations against critical infrastructure of strategic importance in a Nazi-occupied Norway. These Special Forces units conducted a number of successful important operations. The raid and destruction

of the heavy water plant at Rjukan was their most effective and important operation. After WWII the Special Forces units were deactivated. Approximately 15 years later, East and West Cold War tensions and increased external threats to Norway and NATO territory led to a reestablishment of Special Forces units in Norway. The military leadership thus established two relatively small specialized units: Marinejegerlaget in the Navy and Haerens Fallskjermjegerskole in the Army. Both units' main tasks were to conduct long-range reconnaissance missions related to the threat of an invasion from the Soviet Union and its allies. The two Special Forces units gradually increased their core capabilities and sizes during the Cold War period. Simultaneously, in response to increasing offshore oil and gas production and increased development of oil installations in the North Sea, an anti-terrorism unit Forsvarets spesialkommando (FSK) was established in 1981 as an integrated part of the Army unit Haerens Jegerskole.²¹ This new unit was established in order to ensure that Norway had a reliable capacity to counter terrorist actions directed at the vulnerable off-shore installations. So the Special Forces training and tasks until the mid-nineties were focused almost exclusively on domestic security. After 1995, the Special Forces began to assume both domestic and international responsibilities. During the Balkan conflict, the politicians decided to deploy Special Forces Task Groups from both Special Forces units in multinational out-of-area operations as an important force multiplier. This led to a further strengthening of the units' core capabilities, increased organizational structures, and preparations to conduct the whole spectrum of SOF tasks. Given these notable developments the Norwegian Special Forces structure is currently a vital and relevant component of the Norwegian Defense Forces.

Current Special Forces Structure

Today, the Norwegian Special Forces consists of three tactical units. These are the Norwegian Army Special Operations Commando (NORASOC), the Norwegian Navy Special Operations Commando (NORNAVSOC), and the 137th Air Wing organized in the Air Force. NORASOC, the largest unit is organized as an Army Special Forces Regiment with a robust staff organization, multiple cross trained maneuver squadrons, a Combat Service Squadron, and a Combat Service Support Squadron. Its Training Wing is fully integrated into the regiment and is responsible for basic and advanced training of the operators.²² Furthermore, NORASOC is still responsible for ensuring and maintaining the domestic counter-terrorist capability. It focuses on the Maritime Counter Terror (MCT) program in support of the police and the Department of Justice.

NORNAVSOC's organizational structure also consists of Maneuver, Combat Service and Combat Service Support units. During several operations in Afghanistan, NORNAVSOC has deployed as a follow up force to NORASOC, and has proven to be an effective Special Forces Task Group.²³ The Air Special Forces is organized within the framework of the 137th Air Wing. The development of a specially trained helicopter unit will support the Army and Navy Special Forces in both domestic and out-of-area operations.²⁴

When the units are not deployed, the Special Forces units are under command of the respective ACOS of the three services that are responsible for resourcing and funding these units. When activated to conduct domestic operations, the Special Forces units are operationally commanded (OPCOM, equivalent to US COCOM) by either the Norwegian Chief of Defense or the Commander of the National Operational Headquarters (Forsvarets Operative Hovedkvarter/FOHK). When deployed in a

multinational operation, the command and control relationship arrangement normally is operational control (OPCON). Then the command arrangement is transferred from the national military authority through the chain of command to a Joint Force Commander responsible for operations within a given area of operations (AOO).²⁵

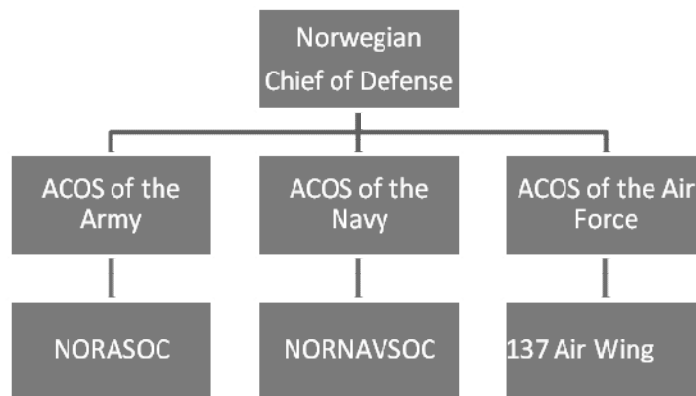


Figure 1: Peace Time Organization

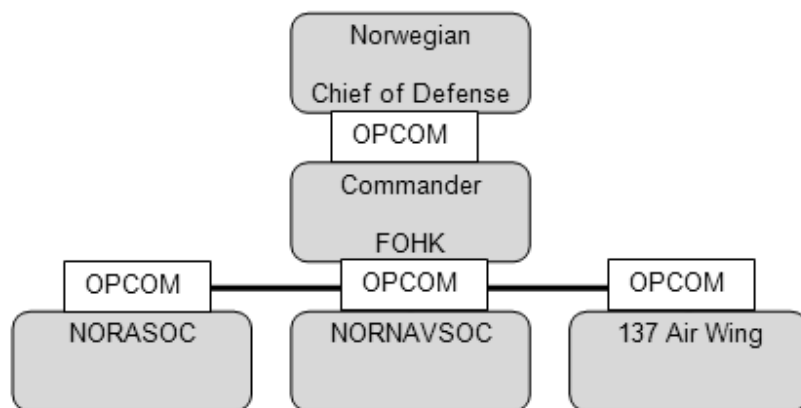


Figure 2: National Operation Command and Control

Special Forces Capabilities and Tasks

The Special Forces can contribute to the creation of major operational and strategic effects using resources that are relatively limited in time and space. Political or military considerations may dictate the use of undercover, covert or discreet methods.

Special Forces activities normally require acceptance of a degree of military or political risk that is not usual in conventional operations.²⁶ Norway has ratified NATO's Special Forces Doctrine that specifies the capabilities a unit must have in order to meet the standard as a Special Operation Force.²⁷ These criteria and principles are fully implemented and refined in the Norwegian Armed Forces Joint Operational Doctrine. The doctrine specifies that Special Operations are carried out by specially selected personnel who have special equipment and thorough training in advanced tactics and techniques.²⁸ Secondly, the Special Forces are a strategic resource to be employed selectively to achieve strategic or operational effects.²⁹ The principle of selective use of the Norwegian Special Forces cannot be stressed enough. As the Commander of the U.S. Special Operations Command (SOCCOM), Admiral Eric T Olsson stressed during a visit to NORASOC; "Special Forces operators cannot be mass-produced, it is crucial to our commitment that we maintain the high standard of our personnel".³⁰ This seems especially critical for Norway with its limited military force structure with declining numbers of soldiers.

Assigned Norwegian Special Forces undertake five main types of missions; Special Reconnaissance and Surveillance, Offensive Operations, Military Assistance, Special Air Operations, and finally Counter-Terror Operations.³¹

- Special Reconnaissance (SR) and Surveillance missions are conducted to gather information of high significance, which is then used in the planning and decision making process.³²



Figure 3: NORASOC Conducting SR in Afghanistan

- Offensive Operations (OO) include raids, live fire attacks, and sabotage actions. Such operations can also support fire-control by illumination targets for stand-off weapons delivered from land, sea, or aerial platforms.³³



Figure 4: NORASOC Team Prepared for Offensive Action

- Military Assistance (MA) includes collaboration with allies or other friendly forces by exercising, setting up, supporting, and possible leading resistance or guerilla forces. Furthermore, MA missions contribute to wide range of stabilization operations, including activities to support communication between the parties involved in a conflict.³⁴



Figure 5: Weapon Training of Afghan Police Forces

- Special Air Operations are operations conducted by specially equipped and trained air units either operating independently or jointly with Special Forces or conventional Forces.³⁵
- Counter-Terror (CT) Operations are offensive measures to reduce the vulnerability to terrorist attacks of national or allied interests, their forces, personnel and property. This includes measures and operations, including hostage rescues, involving agencies other than the Armed Forces.³⁶



Figure 6: FSK/NORASOC CT Team Boarding an Object at North Sea

In summary, the Norwegian Special Forces are prepared to carry out the full spectrum of Special Operations reflected in the national doctrine as is well described in the NATO Special Operation Forces doctrine. Therefore, they should remain capable to effectively contribute to COIN Operations that really demand units with comprehensive military capabilities and a considerable flexibility.

Experiences and Learning from Previous Crisis Response Operations

Since 1995 the Norwegian Special Forces have conducted a series of special operations in out of area Crisis Response Operations (CRO). Until 2002, they participated in the NATO missions in Bosnia & Herzegovina, Kosovo and Macedonia. Since 2001, they deployed to Operation Enduring Freedom and the NATO ISAF mission in Afghanistan.³⁷ From 1995 to 2008 the Norwegian Special Forces have gained great experiences and learned many critical lessons. The initial force contribution in the Balkans consisted of a small contingent that conducted limited special operations missions, mainly SR missions. Then the units gradually built up more sophisticated and appropriate capabilities based on lessons learned from these operations. Today, the Norwegian Special Forces has the capacity to sustain operations over time. So the robust Special Forces Task Force currently deployed to Afghanistan is capable of conducting the full-spectrum NATO Special Operations Missions.³⁸ Assessments indicate that Norwegian Special Forces have succeeded in their conduct of full-spectrum operations. The Special Forces units have taken one step at a time and have been granted the opportunity and resources from military strategic leaders and politicians to gradually improve, develop, and integrate new capabilities. For the past

seven years in Afghanistan, the Special Forces have increased their capabilities to achieve positive effects in COIN operations.

Some thought that after the initial months of successfully fighting the Taliban, the desired end state for the Afghan military operations would be reached. This assessment proved to be very wrong; the West has once again greatly underestimated the role of the local population and their different culture. During the Norwegian Special Forces deployment in 2005 we recognized that insurgent activity was growing and that the local population was uncommitted and too frightened to cooperate and collaborate with coalition forces. Luckily, this negative development was taken seriously by the military commanders, so the operation shifted focus from mainly offensive operations into COIN operations, including nation-building as a major task. Gaining human terrain and promoting the Government of Afghanistan finally became the focus of the campaign. This conceptual shift taught the Norwegian Special Forces that the operation was indeed more than traditional Special Reconnaissance and Offensive Operations. The Military Assistance task became more critical as we increased support and training of the Afghan Security Forces. We also met with formal and informal leaders; we provided force protection for the national election and assisted the local population with medical support.³⁹ All these ways enabled us to build trust within the local population and eventually create hope for a positive future. The lesson learned from these complex and demanding tasks were very useful for the Special Forces. It clearly points out that in order to create positive effects and achievements in campaigns, units need to be flexible and have the capability to rapidly shift their focus and conduct the full spectrum of tasks that is required in COIN Operations.⁴⁰ Even though the results of the Norwegian

Special Forces have proven to be good, it is vital to improve the already established capabilities and develop new capabilities and create concepts that will meet the future challenges to counter insurgencies in an unpredictable world.

Future COIN Tasks for NORSOFF – Recommendations

Despite the fact that the Norwegian Special Forces received very positive feedback from their previous operations, several capabilities should be continuously developed in order to meet the challenges Norway will face in future operations. Norway should further develop its Special Forces capabilities and concepts in order to gain maximum strategic and operational effects in future complex COIN Operations.

Lack of Norwegian and NATO COIN Doctrine

After being constantly involved in COIN operations since 2001, the United States Department of Defense has just recently developed a Joint COIN doctrine. The doctrine is based on a great number of lessons learned and the challenges US forces have faced during recent operations, especially in Afghanistan and Iraq. The United Kingdom has also created a comprehensive national COIN doctrine based on their operational experiences with various insurgencies. Military units need a doctrine that provides guidance for preparing and conducting COIN operations.⁴¹ Not only will this doctrine point out how to deal with complex problems, but it also advises how the participating force should be equipped and trained before deploying to a theatre. With a relatively small defense force, Norway has not yet developed a COIN operation doctrine. Further, NATO has not issued a COIN doctrine document. So, the Norwegian Special Forces have no baseline documents that specify criteria for capabilities and offer principles for conducting COIN operations. From a Special Forces perspective, this lack of doctrine

implies that the generic principles of Special Operations reflected in the Norwegian Armed Forces Joint Operational Doctrine and the NATO Special Operation Forces Doctrine should serve as are the guiding operational document when conducting difficult and risky COIN operations, even though other ways and means often should be projected. Obviously, these documents do not give necessary and exact direction and guidance about how in principle to conduct effective and desired COIN operations. Thus, it is time to develop a Norwegian national COIN doctrine based on recent experiences of the Norwegian Special Forces and conventional units. Norwegian national doctrine should not be a blueprint or passive adoption of another nation's doctrine. Rather, Norwegian COIN doctrine should ensure Norwegian national interests, legitimacy, and a Norwegian COIN posture that is consistent with existing operational concepts, including appropriate force protection measures.

National Caveats

Achieving unity of command or at least unity of effort of military units in a multinational campaign is one of the most difficult and frustrating challenges a joint force commander faces today. But these important military principles must be maintained in order to execute effective operations. A commander's challenge is often related to national restrictions or caveats on employment of units after transfer of authority from national to multinational commander has taken place. National caveats dramatically limit the employment of units and often distract from the effects desired in an operation. In principle, every unit participating in a Multinational COIN Operation should have no caveats or at least the units should be permitted to conduct the full spectrum of operations. What has become clear from the ongoing NATO ISAF operation is that

many nations' units cannot conduct offensive operations and often units are restricted to operating within a relatively limited area of operations. In order to achieve positive effects in a multinational campaign, the Norwegian Special Forces should have no or eventually very few national caveats. If a potential task conflicts with Norwegian law, a national senior representative will notify the multinational commander and the task will not be conducted.

Intelligence Support and Capabilities

In order to conduct effective Special Operations, comprehensive intelligence support and robust integrated intelligence structure is a key factor to success.⁴² The need for timely, accurate and reliable information and validated intelligence is crucial to plan and execute SR, MA, or Offensive Operations against insurgency groups or key personnel. Furthermore, intelligence is a major means to reduce the risk for one own forces in these difficult and complex operations. Based on lessons learned from operations especially in Afghanistan, Norwegian Special Forces need to strengthen and further develop their intelligence organization.⁴³ Special emphasis should be focused on further development of their own HUMINT, SIGINT and IMINT capabilities, which are important for dealing with and fighting insurgents who use guerilla tactics and asymmetric means and ways to achieve their ends.

Norwegian military should increase cooperation with strategic intelligence agencies and further exploit strategic intelligence means. The interaction and joint tasking of tactical, operational, and strategic intelligence assets in a tactical operation will certainly provide a more complete picture of an adversary than each of these assets operating alone. Norway should work closely with their allies to develop and establish

bilateral and multilateral agreements on intelligence cooperation and in specific on sharing of information and intelligence.

Core Special Forces Tasks and Capabilities

The Norwegian Special Forces have developed all the capabilities that are required and cited in the NATO SOF doctrine, including counter-terrorist capacities.⁴⁴ In other words Norway may conduct the full spectrum of Special Operations missions when needed. In a COIN operation, it is obviously important to work closely with host nation's security forces, not only cooperation with military forces but also with security forces from other Ministries, such as the Ministry of Interior. Often the main objective is to help develop and train these units' capabilities so they eventually develop their own capacity to ensure national security. Logically, the next phase in a MA task might be to conduct combined operation with the security force and then gradually give the security forces more responsibilities. In 2007 the Norwegian Special Forces started such an important project with the Afghan Police in the Kabul area, and this task has probably provided more positive effects than SR and Offensive Operation missions executed during this operation.⁴⁵ Some critics have claimed that nation-building like this should not be organized and executed by the military. However, no other agencies or nations were willing or capable to conduct this mission. Trends from ongoing operations in Iraq and Afghanistan show that military units in future operations still must be capable of conducting nation-building tasks that are normally carried out by organizations such as the State Department or the Department of Justice. Thus the Norwegian Ministry of Defense should continue to support MA training and cooperation tasks with their Special

Forces, and tactical units must further prepare for such demanding and complicated assistance tasks.

Development of SR and Offensive Operations capabilities should be a continuous process that capitalizes on new and modern technology and techniques that become available to the global Special Force community. NORSOFF should pursue international cooperation with the allied Special Forces and Special Forces of the United States and the United Kingdom Special Forces in specific.



Figure 7: Graduation Ceremony Afghan Police Training 2007

Operations and Effects

Although Special Forces contributions in multinational COIN operations are important, they are only one of many means that a multinational force commander has to achieve desired effects. Therefore, sound and comprehensive cooperation with conventional forces, air assets, indigenous forces, and civilian agencies are crucial for constructive actions and progress in a campaign.⁴⁶ The Norwegian Special Forces must ensure the capability to sustain this enormous spectrum of cooperation, coordination and de-confliction in order to ensure maximum unity of effort. This means that large numbers of personnel in a Special Operation Task Force must be dedicated to liaison positions whose major role is to interact with the myriad of units and agencies operating

in the area of operation.⁴⁷ Furthermore, when measuring effects from their own operation, comprehensive cooperation with others is crucial to give a relatively thorough assessment of the operation. In addition, tools to measure these effects should be developed for planning and post-mission processes. Closely connected and important to implement in planning and execution of missions are information operations (IO) messages targeted to the local population.⁴⁸ This area's importance has often been underestimated, especially when conducting offensive operations where collateral damage may occur. In order for a task force commander to prepare and release a valid IO message consistent with the desired objectives for the campaign the unit must have integrated qualified IO personnel within its organization.

Cooperation with Media

The increased employment and prioritization of the Special Forces as a strategic military means has created a greater focus on our Special Forces and increased the information requirement for the public and the media. So, timely releases of appropriate information to the media are often a challenge. The units must ensure operational security (OPSEC), but on the other hand the Norwegian population also has a right to know how our government employs its Special Forces in conflicts. Currently, we are experiencing an increase in interest from the media related to our Special Forces, to include increased media presence in those areas where our Special Forces are operating.⁴⁹ Based on this recent attention and the continuous pressure from the media to receive information from the Norwegian military, it is necessary to create a national strategic media policy for Special Forces.⁵⁰ The Press and Information Office (PIO) at the Ministry of Defense (MOD) should be the single point of media contact; only these

sources should release information about Special Forces activity. PIO/MOD should most likely be responsible for overall coordination between the defense structure and the political structure. As situations dictate, PIO/MOD will consult with the Commander of the Permanent Joint HQ, COMs of the tactical Special Forces units, and eventually other key personnel to receive adequate advice and information. On a case-by-case basis, the Ministry of Defense and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs should coordinate political messages related to Special Operations. Finally, the PIO/MOD should be the responsible agency for all media coordination and the maintenance of professional contact with the media.

Future Norwegian Joint Special Operation Task Force

The current Norwegian Special Forces consists of units from Army, Navy, and Air Force. In the past ten years, Norway has radically prioritized and increased NORSOF capabilities. A force capability shortfall currently exists within NATO as well as in Coalition Operations in Special Operations Air assets for direct support to Special Operations.⁵¹ Norway has developed a capable helicopter squadron that is trained and equipped to support out-of-area Special Operations.⁵² However, the unit has not yet been deployed within the framework of a Joint Norwegian Special Operations Task Force. Based on the existing operational requirements in Afghanistan, it is crucial that the Air Force Special Forces also participate with their valuable capabilities. Employment of this unit will strengthen the overall Norwegian Special Forces' ability to conduct an even wider range of missions. Likewise, the helicopter squadron will receive extensive experience in complex out-of-area Special Operations.

The Norwegian Air Force F-16 squadrons are another asset that could be deployed and eventually assigned to the national Task Force. Special Forces Joint Terminal Air Controllers (JTAC) routinely operate with the F-16s; the equipment used by the two entities is 100% interoperable. Norwegian F-16s will give an increased capability and flexibility not just related to projection of fire in offensive operations but also in the Intelligence Surveillance and Reconnaissance (ISR) role that is required in COIN operations.

Conclusion

In the latest decade, Norwegian Special Forces have transformed from a strategic asset that previously focused on domestic counter-terrorist tasks and protection of the homeland security to becoming engaged in complex out-of-area operations. Norwegian politicians and the Ministry of Defense have increased the resourcing and prioritization of the Special Forces, which has led to an increased national Special Forces capability. The comprehensive lessons learned in particular from the last seven years participating in COIN operations in Afghanistan have proven very constructive for the development of the Norwegian Special Forces in general. In addition, the desired effects achieved during operations and the positive feedback given by prominent foreign military leaders affirm that NORSOFF contribution has been valid and important. Norwegian political leaders have stated in policy papers that their Special Forces will continue to be one of the major Norwegian force contributor in future multinational operations. In the short- and mid-term perspective, Norway will continue to conduct operations in support of the Afghan government through the ISAF mission.

Further, it is important for the Norwegian Special Forces to maintain and improve their current capabilities and to further develop valuable new capabilities and concepts that will be crucial to gain maximum strategic and operational effects in future complex COIN operations. The following recommendations should be prioritized and implemented to strengthen NORSOFF to make significant contributions to future international operations:

- It is now time to develop a Norwegian national COIN doctrine based on experiences of Norwegian Special Forces and conventional units in out-of-area operations over the past decade.
- In order to achieve positive strategic or operational effects and unity of effort in multinational operations, the Norwegian government should place no caveats (or only legally restricted caveats) on the roles of NORSOFF in these operations.
- NORSOFF intelligence organization should increase and further develop with special emphasize on development of HUMINT, SIGINT and IMINT capabilities. Increased cooperation with national and other nation's strategic intelligence agencies and exploitation of strategic intelligence assets in tactical Special Operations should be prioritized.
- The Norwegian Ministry of Defense should continue to support the entire range of MA missions with their Special Forces. At the tactical level, NORSOFF must prepare for such demanding and complicated assistance tasks across the broad spectrum of security forces.

- International cooperation with other allied Special Forces must be enhanced in order to develop new capabilities and techniques within the SR and Offensive Operations domain.
- To be prepared to measure effects of operations, further development of computer tools and programs for planning and post-mission processes should be prioritized. In addition, the Special Forces Task Forces must have the capacity to employ professional personnel to effectively cooperate and coordinate with other military units and the large number of interagency operating in their AOO.
- Based on continuous attention and pressure from the media to receive information from the Norwegian military and Special Operations, it is necessary to create a national strategic media policy for Special Forces that ensures a constructive and professional interaction between the military and the media.
- In future operations, Norwegian helicopter and F-16 fighter assets should be deployed and integrated in the framework of a Norwegian Joint Special Operation Task Force.

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