

Creating “Purpose-Driven” Forces

Enhancing the Contributions of U.S. Army National Guard Special Forces

The U.S. Army National Guard (ARNG) contains two Special Forces Groups (SFGs), the 19th and the 20th, which constitute 29 percent of the Army’s Special Forces. Years of war have honed the capabilities of both the active component (AC) and ARNG Special Forces. Nevertheless, according to AC and ARNG officials, using the National Guard is not always as easy as it might be. The ARNG mobilization process is arduous, and the time and resources available to prepare ARNG units for mobilization are scarce. Further, command and control of ARNG units is challenging, given that units are spread over 18 states.

The U.S. Army Special Operations Command (USASOC) asked RAND Arroyo Center to help find options for enhancing the contributions of ARNG Special Forces and making them a “purpose-driven” force, that is, organized and employed to take advantage of their strong suits (e.g., skills from civilian careers, language capabilities, depth of work experience). To explore these issues, researchers conducted an online survey and in-person interviews with ARNG Special Forces personnel and others, and analyzed data on deployment, training, qualifications, and related topics.

Findings

Although many valuable civilian skills are present within the ARNG, they do not exist in the densities needed to build specific units around them. USASOC had hoped to find civilian police skills, analytical skills, and language skills that could serve as the basis for unique ARNG unit contributions within Special Forces. While the ARNG does possess a rich pool of individuals with such skills, there are not sufficient numbers to establish focused units. Individuals with particular skills might be potential volunteers for mobilization, although, under current authorities, they cannot be involuntarily mobilized because of their civilian skills.

Language experience in the ARNG Special Forces is wide, but of limited depth. Although language ability has traditionally been an important attribute of Special Forces, the demands of multiple deployments into primarily two countries have taken their toll on language skills in both the AC and ARNG SFGs.

There is an emerging consensus about “niche” roles that ARNG Special Forces could play. There exists a gen-

Key findings:

- Although many valuable civilian skills are present within the U.S. Army National Guard (ARNG) Special Forces, they do not exist in the densities needed to build specific units around them.
- There is an emerging consensus about “niche” roles that ARNG Special Forces could play, including theater security cooperation activities, unconventional warfare, and foreign internal defense.
- Deployments are increasingly important, not only to accomplish the mission, but also to build and maintain competence within ARNG Special Forces and to win the confidence of the Army’s active component.
- There are many options for enhancing the contributions of ARNG Special Forces, including using regular Army advisors at Special Forces company level, increasing Special Forces Qualification Course quotas and support, and seeking authority to access ARNG Special Forces for non-named operations.

eral belief that there are tasks and circumstances especially suitable for the ARNG, especially at Operational Detachments Alpha and Bravo (ODA and ODB) levels, and in combat support/combat service support (CS/CSS). Many ARNG Special Forces interviewees emphasized their experience in negotiation, accommodation, persuasion, and other social skills. These skills may give ARNG personnel an edge over their AC counterparts in such areas as theater security cooperation, unconventional warfare, and foreign internal defense.

Deployment is increasingly important for ARNG Special Forces. Deployment experience is critical for members of ARNG Special Forces in the current environment. Deployments are important not only to accomplish the mission, but to build and maintain competence within ARNG Special Forces and to win the confidence of the AC.

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Recommendations to Make the ARNG Special Forces Purpose-Driven

USASOC has many options for enhancing the contributions of ARNG Special Forces and making them a “purpose-driven” force. Researchers categorized recommendations according to cost (high or low) and the authority required to implement the recommendation (unilateral or multilateral). The results, shown in the figure, suggest a four-step process.

First, USASOC should begin with low-cost, unilaterally implemented tasks, such as employing ARNG Special Forces for theater security cooperation, joint combined exchange training, foreign internal defense, and unconventional warfare. ARNG Special Forces, especially at the ODA, ODB, and Task Force levels, might also be deployed to ease the operational tempo for the AC units. To tap individuals’ skills, USASOC could operate a website to solicit volunteers based upon their civilian skills.

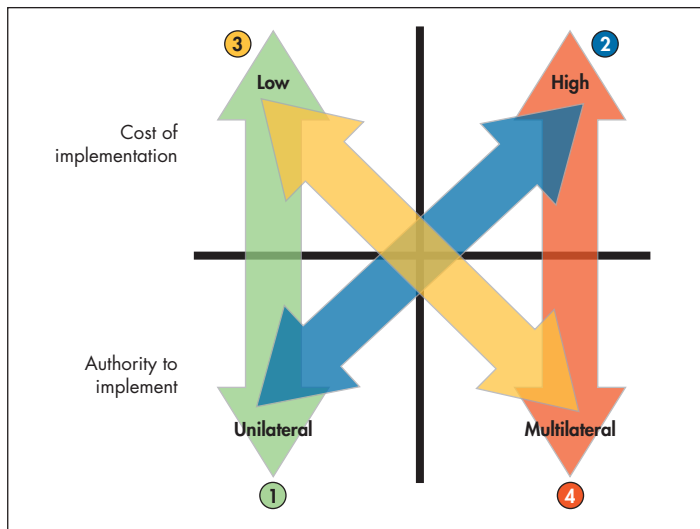
Second, USASOC should return to the practice of assigning Regular Army advisors at Special Forces company level. Virtually everyone the research team encountered had a positive view of this practice and saw it as a very effective way to transmit recent operational experience and tactics, techniques, and procedures into the ARNG.

The third type of recommendation requires multilateral agreement and coordination. Relatively inexpensive actions in this category include working to increase the number of

ARNG Special Forces by, for example, taking steps to get more ARNG soldiers enrolled in the Special Forces Qualification Course (SFQC). Another option is for USASOC to share its mobilization plans (the “Playbook”) with the ARNG earlier so that ARNG units have better insight into when they will be mobilized, where they are likely to be deployed, and what missions they are likely to perform. Also important is to revitalize directed training alignment relationships between the AC and ARNG Special Forces. Directed training alignment pairs an ARNG Special Forces unit with an AC Special Forces unit. Ideally, the units train together or at least share a common training plan, focusing on the same skills, tasks, conditions, and standards. Also ideally, the ARNG Special Forces unit’s mobilization site is co-located with the AC Special Forces unit so that they can easily conduct post-mobilization training and deploy together.

The final recommendations are more costly and require increased collaboration and coordination between USASOC and other entities. One option is for USASOC to seek authority to access ARNG Special Forces involuntarily for non-named operations. Currently, ARNG units can be involuntarily mobilized only for named operations (e.g., Operation Desert Storm). Many of the contingency operations USASOC anticipates are not named operations, so the AC does not have easy access to ARNG forces. Moreover, most Guardsmen need involuntary mobilization because only when involuntarily mobilized do they and their families qualify for maximum benefits (e.g., access to DoD health care). The Department of Defense is currently engaged in broader efforts that would make it easier to access ARNG units for such operations. A second option, which draws upon directed training alignment relationships, would be to create ARNG mobilization sites at aligned AC home stations. A final recommendation in this category is to create units in the ARNG that are proportionate to those in the AC. Such units would improve the interchangeability of forces.

Four-Step Process for Implementing the Study’s Recommendations



Conclusion

A range of opportunities exist to enhance the contributions of ARNG Special Forces and to make them more purpose-driven. The challenge is to create policies and practices that give Guardsmen the lead time and predictability they need to prepare for deployment and that focus their deployments on missions, operations, tasks, and activities in which they enjoy a comparative advantage.

This research brief describes work done by RAND Arroyo Center and documented in *National Guard Special Forces: Enhancing the Contributions of Reserve Component Army Special Operations Forces*, by John E. Peters, Brian Shannon, and Matthew E. Boyer, TR-1199-A, 2012 (available at http://www.rand.org/pubs/technical_reports/TR1199.html). The RAND Corporation is a nonprofit research institution that helps improve policy and decisionmaking through research and analysis. RAND’s publications do not necessarily reflect the opinions of its research clients and sponsors. RAND® is a registered trademark.



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