

Golden Arrows: Leveraging Strategic Leadership Potential of Special Operations Leaders

by

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Abstract

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Golden Arrows: Leveraging Strategic Leadership Potential of Special Operations Leaders

The past 25 years have been commonly characterized as some of the most dynamic times modern civilization has experienced. The development of low cost, high technology that allows near instantaneous world-wide communications has given rise to unprecedented global awareness and economic growth. This awareness has altered the nature of conflict from one of nation-states and boundaries to that of ideology, ethnic tensions, polarizing dogmas, and shifting alliances.¹ Indeed, the tradition of military warfare between nation states as seen in the World Wars, the Korean War and the Cold War has become atypical. In its place localized intrastate and transnational conflict² increasingly dominates the current condition and this trend is expected to accelerate. These conflicts have been marked by non-traditionally mobilized combatants engaged in a host of irregular warfare operations, including guerilla warfare, social revolution and physical and virtual subversion and sabotage.

Protecting U.S. national security interests demands strategic leaders of our Joint Force who unmistakably realize the unique perspectives and interests of our interagency and international partners.³ This paper reflects the forecasts of the Joint Operating Environment (JOE) 2010⁴ and the Joint Force 2020 that are founded on a national security strategy that calls for a recalibration of capabilities to protect U.S. national interests in persistent regional conflicts characterized by unstable governments, social unrest and perceived inequalities.⁵ The strategic leaders of our Joint Force must possess a broad range of intellectual perspectives, military experiences and developmental opportunities that best prepare them to understand and interact internationally in this multi-disciplinary concept of global security outside the U.S.

The national security strategy of the U.S. recognizes the threat of irregular and hybrid forms of conflict and how they have eclipsed the likelihood of conventional nation state confrontations and socio-cultural conflicts.⁶ U.S.' defense policies outlined in *2012 Priorities for 21st Century Defense, Defense Strategic Guidance*, list "Countering Terrorism and Irregular Warfare" as the first priority mission of the U.S. military in support of national interests.⁷ President Obama characterizes the military strategy as a conceptual framework of a global layered defense that includes networked alliances, allies, key partners, and building partnership capacity.⁸ One of the principal ways of realizing this concept is by enabling or expanding our global network of partnerships.⁹

The success of the U.S. in Irregular Warfare, Counter-Terrorism¹⁰ and building networked alliances with capable partners is determined by leadership beginning at the strategic level. Success in confronting hybrid threats is of such importance that General Martin Dempsey, while serving as the Commander of Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC), specifically identified a requirement to develop leaders to not only accept but seek and embrace adaptability as an Army Leader Development imperative.¹¹ General Raymond Odierno, Chief of Staff of the U.S. Army (CSA), in his initial guidance for the Army, called for the adaptation of "leader development to meet our future security challenges in an increasingly uncertain and complex strategic environment."¹² General Odierno expounds upon the need to develop leaders who are adaptive, innovative and agile.¹³ General Dempsey and Odierno's comments challenged the leader development culture within the Army to align the developmental process with a national security strategy that calls for innovative solutions to strengthen and support our partnering interoperability and capacity.¹⁴ General Mattis echoes this need in the

Joint Operating Environment for 2010 (JOE), stating “the future Joint Force must have leaders who are able to form and lead effective coalitions”.¹⁵ The competencies and attributes identified by these three strategic leaders seem to indicate that the current development process must change in order to develop a strategic leader capable of excelling in this constantly evolving, culturally interdependent environment.

There exists a largely untapped talent pool of leaders who are institutionally developed in the foundation education and learning experiences necessary to operate in and influence the complex and ambiguous environment that the National Defense strategy characterizes as long-term irregular challenges.¹⁶ This community is famed for agility and innovation¹⁷ and is founded upon a historic requirement to adopt culturally cognizant methods to counter irregular adversaries.

The CSA’s call for innovation and adaptability should be met by taking advantage of the latent strategic leadership capacity resident in the Army Special Operations population. This recommendation has the potential to immediately achieve greater diversity in strategic leader perspectives and capabilities by simply including senior Army Special Operation Forces (SOF) officers, whose attributes and experiences are aligned with irregular and political warfare, in the strategic leadership functions of the U.S. Army.

On any given day culturally astute, linguistically educated Soldier-statesman special operators from the U.S. Special Operations Command (USSOCOM) are present in approximately 74 countries training, advising, and assisting partner nation operations. These decentralized, commander’s intent based operations¹⁸ accomplish the Army’s Operating Concept *prevent, shape and win*¹⁹ tasks in teams as small as two Soldiers

and as large as a Special Operations Task Force. The majority of special operations are *advise and assist* activities developed and executed to enable our partner nation's security forces capability to defend their own sovereign interests. "*By, with and through*" the actions of partner nations, the national security interests of the U.S. are advanced. These activities are characterized by long term organizational and individual relationships that result from persistent engagement over decades. The Soldiers who conduct these operations are systematically selected, educated, trained and developed to engage host nation security forces.

The leader attributes and competencies necessary for success in these ambiguous operations can be linked to the strategic leadership competencies exhibited by geographic combatant commanders (COCOMs). Special Operations develop uniquely capable senior leaders as a result of the refined selection process and the experiential learning from repeated tactical and operational level operations in support of Special Operations Task Force Commanders, Joint Task Force Commanders, and Geographic Combatant Commanders.

Given the attributes, experiences, and capabilities that Special Operations generates, it is surprising that they are not more frequently called upon for strategic leadership at the national security strategy levels.

For the past half century, the Army's strategic leaders reflect a traditional warfare focus of achieving victory by militarily defeating a near-peer land power adversary through combined arms maneuver and concentration of lethal fires. Despite a national security strategy that anticipates hybrid and irregular conflicts,²⁰ senior Army leaders with an Armor, Artillery and Infantry background continue to dominate the Army's most

critical and historical strategic leadership positions.²¹ The continued clarion call from the civilian leaders of our military and from the national security strategy strongly suggests that the innovation, creativity, and adaptability required to strategically influence allies and adversaries has not naturally resulted from nearly 10 years of continuous counterinsurgency operations. A new strategic leadership perspective may be required, something more aligned with the strategic thinking, leadership, and cultural perspective that Special Forces' officers spend a career developing.²² The time has come for Special Operations to be viewed as something more than a tactical capability with strategic impact. Instead, our national military strategy now affords us an opportunity to recognize that leaders within Special Operations offer exemplars of strategic leadership and statecraft that can be employed in support of diplomacy, foreign assistance or as an independent weapon.²³

Strategic Leadership

Before describing where the strategic leadership of the US Army must go, we must understand where it today. The Army Leader Development Strategy²⁴ is the Army's framework for developing its leaders at every level. It is based upon a belief that the best tactical leaders develop into the best operational leaders who, with sufficient experience and education, transform into the best strategic leaders who are "confident, competent, and versatile."²⁵ These leaders must "understand the context of the factors influencing the military situation," they must "act within that understanding"²⁶ while continually assessing and adapting based on enemy reactions and environment, quickly derive and advance strategic aims by consolidating tactical and operational opportunities, and effectively (and readily) transition from one form of an operation to another.²⁷

Graduates of the Army War College and other Senior Service Colleges are expected to be competent in matters concerning the strategic environment and act proficiently as advisors to strategic leaders. Whether as advisors or as future Strategic leaders, they are expected to be adaptable, innovative and intellectually agile officers capable of thriving in the volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous environment often encountered at the strategic level.²⁸

Strategic Leader Competencies

The U.S. Army War College *Primer on Strategic Leadership* characterizes strategic leaders as needing to achieve mastery in three competencies.²⁹ Technical competency is defined as an understanding of organizational systems, an ability to integrate Joint, Interagency, Intergovernmental and Multi-national (JIIM) principles and a graduated awareness of political, social and informational dynamics.³⁰ Conceptual competency is described as the collection of experiences that result in problem management, visioning, and frame of reference development.³¹ Finally, interpersonal competency describes a sophisticated capability in negotiations, interpersonal communications, and consensus building.³²

A potentially missing competency that relates to the future operating environment and to a strategic leaders ability to function effectively within an off-shore balancing³³ construct is cultural competency. The likelihood of future coalition operations demands a leader with skills in negotiations, interpersonal communications, facilitation and collaboration. Two recent strategic leaders, General John Abizaid³⁴ and Admiral Eric Olson³⁵ embodied these competencies, with each possessing advanced linguistic capabilities, cross-cultural proficiency, and a profound understanding of divergent perspectives.

Strategic Leader Development and Experience

The U.S. Army is founded upon a culture of leadership and a commitment to accomplish the mission regardless of the difficulty, sacrifice or cost. Not surprisingly, the Army places a high priority on developing leaders and selecting and promoting those who demonstrate the highest degree of mastery. The *Army Leader Development Strategy*³⁶ outlines the Army's strategy to develop the tactical and operational leadership required to complete the nation's land power based missions. The three fundamental pillars³⁷ of the Army leader development model are institutional education, operational assignments and self-development initiatives that occur in a cyclical sequence. Essentially a development cycle occurs for tactical competency, another for operational competency, and a final cycle for strategy and policy competency. Evolution from one cycle to another is based upon mastery of the previous cycle and demonstrated potential for competency at the next level of leadership.

The Army's educational model is a comprehensive concept of adult lifelong learning that begins upon entry into the service. Essentially the Army has developed and implemented a process that integrates education and training in a progressive regimen that ensures all officers share an educational foundation and the training to competently perform their duties and functions for the upcoming 3-6 years of their professional career.

The Army's education model for senior leader development is composed of four elements: formal education, on-the-job training, self-development and mentoring.³⁸ The importance and prioritization of these four components changes over the officer's career. According to a survey of General Officers,³⁹ on-the-job training is the most valued learning experience in an officer's career. Early in an officer's career formal

education and training opportunities are highly valued with mentorship and self-development gaining importance as they increase in rank. As the officer matures and their responsibility increase, they increasingly recognize the importance of self-awareness, mentor-protégé relationships and self development.⁴⁰ Seminars and short term forums replace the classrooms associated with formal education.⁴¹ What is missing is comprehensive cultural education and language. This omission limits the potential for success in coalition warfare at the operational and strategic level.

The Army's first significant assessment of an officer's potential to perform as strategic leaders occurs following the successful completion of Brigade Command in Centralized Selection List (CSL) command and key billet positions at the Colonel level.⁴² This select group of officers comprises the talent pool from which the Army's strategic leaders are eventually drawn. The practice of limiting opportunity for command of select Brigades further refines the human capital to a portion of the line officer population. Therefore, only those officers whose military branch is the infantry, artillery and armor have a reasonable statistical probability to become the strategic leaders for the Army.

The promotion board for Brigadier Generals (and Major Generals) is unlike any previous one.⁴³ A four star General acts as the President of a board consisting entirely of General Officers. For the first time in the officers' career, his/her historical performance files are complemented by personal knowledge of the officer by board members. The first round of assessment of potential GOs is a simple YES/NO assessment in terms of the officers' capability to perform as a General Officer.⁴⁴ In the second round, files are voted on using numeric values and then comparatively analyzed to establish an order of merit. Based upon the requirements of the Army a number of

officers are selected and recommended for promotion to the CSA and Secretary of the Army.

Once an officer joins the General Officer ranks by becoming a Brigadier, he theoretically leaves behind his previous specialty branch and becomes a generalist.⁴⁵ The new Brigadier General transcends his previous specialty and becomes a senior leader and steward of the Army profession. A premier developmental assignment for a Brigadier is to serve as an Assistant Division Commander.⁴⁶ There the Brigadier General is given the opportunity to observe and be observed by senior General Officers while developing the crucial protégé-mentor relationships necessary for continued development.

The means for developing General Officers includes mentoring, short duration training programs,⁴⁷ education opportunities and job rotation. Job rotation is the most important developmental tool for Brigadier Generals and Major Generals. Army Brigadiers serve on average 16.5 months in each job and on average serve in 2.1 jobs before advancing or retiring.⁴⁸ Major Generals serve a little longer in each job but have fewer developmental opportunities in grade. This practice serves to quickly broaden the perspective of General Officers. It also provides 2-3 opportunities for further assessment of potential to serve as strategic leaders.

Those officers who continue to demonstrate increased potential are promoted and moved on to “*developing*”⁴⁹ positions with increasing levels of complexity and ambiguity. Others are retained in positions or moved to different types of jobs that involve special administrative, managerial or technical skills.⁵⁰ These jobs are accurately described as “*using*” jobs.⁵¹ *Using* jobs are performed by officers who have perhaps

reached their potential for promotion but remain significant contributors. Each rank has *developing* and *using* jobs.

Quarterly the four star General Officers of the Army meet as a body. The meeting is typically chaired by the CSA. An informal portion of this meeting always includes a talent review and assignment recommendations of the entire cohort of subordinate (1-3 star) General Officers. It is in this meeting that future Division Commanders and Center⁵² Commanders are identified and comparatively assessed by the strategic leaders of the Army. This meeting encourages candid discussions and perspective sharing on the competencies, talents and skills of the entire pool of General Officers. Due to the absence of programmatic promotion boards for 3 and 4 star Generals, it is understood that the future three and four star strategic leaders of the Army are also identified.

Army Regulation 350-1, *Army Training and Leader Development*, provides policy guidance for the development of Army leaders.⁵³ A comparative analysis of the Army Leader Development Strategy and the biographies of the past 25 years of Chiefs of Staff of the Army (CSA) reveal noteworthy commonalities. First, nearly every CSA has followed a developmental path that coincides with the traditional officer developmental strategy.⁵⁴ This historical adherence to a development protocol indicates a consistent management philosophy within the Army. Second, the majority of CSAs have served as an aide-de-camp, executive assistant/officer or special assistant to a strategic leader at some time in their professional careers. Finally, every CSA since 1987, with one exception, was an Infantry, Armor or Artillery officer prior to becoming a General Officer.

Other observed experiences that are not directed but nearly universal are experiences as instructors or teachers or faculty in a military training or education organization. Another commonality of past strategic leaders is overseas experiences. Assignments in Germany and Korea in the eighties and nineties provided these officers the opportunity to continue their professional experience while also exposing the officers to new cultural perspectives and challenges. Furthermore, command experience in culturally diverse locations potentially develops additional leader competencies.

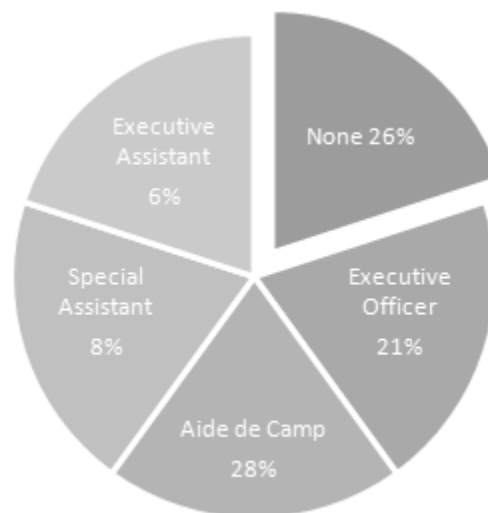


Figure 1. Approximate Percentages of General Officers with Executive Assistance Positions⁵⁵

As shown in Figure 1, a total of 73% of the CSAs and VCSAs in the last 25 years⁵⁶ served as aide-de-camps (28%), executive/special assistants (14%), or executive officers (21%) to strategic leaders. Officers selected to become aides, or military assistants presumably displayed at an early age some exceptional measure of potential. These handpicked officers gain early exposure to the perspectives and leadership competencies of our Army's most select officers. Those afforded this early opportunity for accelerated professional leadership and perspective growth

demonstrates a higher probability for future contribution as senior leaders at the strategic level.

Service in the Pentagon is another critical experience that nearly every strategic leader in the Army performs prior to ascending to strategic leadership roles. Assignment to the Army's "corporate" headquarters develops the officers' understanding of how the Army works. Service within the Pentagon enables officers to perceive and participate in the leadership, policy, and management aspects of the Army, how it is resourced, and how it integrates with nation's other agencies, services and departments. This service also provides younger officers the opportunity to observe, learn and develop protégé-mentor relationships with General Officers and senior executive service leaders.

Today the Army's strategic leaders can be found performing as the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the Chief of Staff of the Army, the Vice Chief, three Army Commands,⁵⁷ U.S. Forces Korea and three GCC,⁵⁸ and as the commander of the National Security Agency and Cyber Command. These positions are all filled by 4 star General Officers and represent the top one percent of their year group. These officers should represent the finest strategic leader attributes observable in the nation's largest military population.

Trend analysis of the past 25 years does provide some insight into who is selected to become the Army's strategic leaders. Four of the last seven Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff have been Army officers. Of the four, only General Hugh Shelton, was an experienced Special Operations Officer. In the 1990s, General Shelton successfully commanded the 82nd Airborne Division, a two star conventional infantry division, the 18th Airborne Corps, a three star conventional Corps Command, and the

four star U.S. Special Operations Command. The totality of his experience and exposure resulted in his selection as the 14th Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff in 1997. Secretary of Defense, William A. Cohen related that he selected Shelton to become the Chairman based upon Shelton's warfighting experiences, global perspective and diplomatic dexterity.⁵⁹ This unique combination of experiences set him apart from other conventional strategic leaders of that time.

Officers whose previous branch was Armor or Artillery have predominantly served as Chiefs of Staff of the Army (CSA). Conversely, officers whose previous branch was Infantry are most often selected as Vice Chief of Staff of the Army (VCSA). When observed together, as shown in Figure 2, the Armor, Artillery and Infantry comprise over 90% of the enterprise level leadership of the Army. The singular exception is General Peter Schoomaker, a Special Operations officer, who served as Chief of Staff of the Army from 2003 to 2007. However, his selection by Secretary of Defense, Donald Rumsfeld is notable because he was not on any list prepared by the Army's senior leadership nor was even on active duty at the time of his selection. Instead, Rumsfeld recalled General Schoomaker, from retiree status to active duty and to serve as the CSA because he was looking for a strategic leader with a reputation for innovation and intellectual agility to lead and guide the Army.⁶⁰

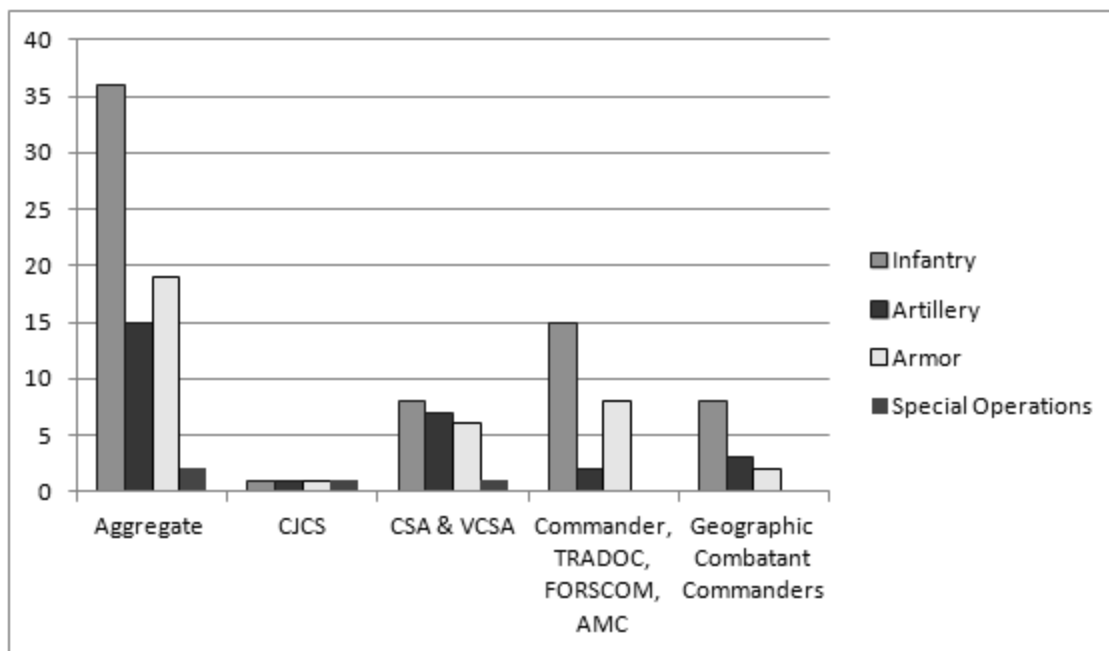


Figure 2. Historical Analysis of Originating Branch of General Officer

The Army's Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) is responsible for training Army forces, and developing Army doctrine. Officers with Armor branch backgrounds account for 5 of the 9 Commanders in the past 25 years. The Army's Forces Command (FORSCOM) provides trained and ready Army forces to Geographic Combatant Commanders. The previous 7 of 8 FORSCOM Commanders have Infantry backgrounds. The Army Materiel Command (AMC) is responsible for providing materiel such as ammunition, weapons and supplies. AMC has been most often commanded by officers with an Infantry background.⁶¹ Special Operations officers have never commanded any of these strategically important commands. These statistics are surprising given the previous 11 years of irregular warfare and particular expertise Special Operations officers have in that discipline.

Currently six GCCs⁶² exist and are included in this analysis because of their strategic impact on the achievement of U.S. national security objectives. The cumulative

numbers filled by Army four-star General Officers yield results similar to those described previously. The Infantry accounts for roughly half of all combatant commanders with Armor and Artillery branches combined making up the other half. No Army Special Operations officer has ever commanded a Geographic Combatant Command. This is particularly counter-intuitive and difficult to understand given the regional orientation, linguistic capability and politico-military experiences Special Operations officers amass over the course of their professional and personal career.

It is evident that the senior leaders selected for service at the strategic levels of the Army originate from a defined segment of *the maneuver, fires and effects* category of the Army. Three branches (Infantry, Artillery and Armor) provide over 90% of the Army's strategic leaders. An easy and convenient explanation for this result is that the leaders developed within these three branches are the ones most likely to have developed the competencies necessary to successfully function at the strategic leadership level. Another explanation might be that officers from these branches are best suited for strategic leadership as a result of the criticality of their function in fighting and winning our nations wars.⁶³

This trend would be reasonable if the nature of current and future conflict was identified as more likely involving high intensity mechanized warfare. If however, the nature of the threat and the character of conflict have evolved into persistent regional conflicts⁶⁴ characterized by irregular forces and complex social and political dynamics, then the U.S. Army must adapt and develop a new inventory of strategic leaders whose education and experiences allow them to effectively lead globally integrated operations.⁶⁵ The technical, conceptual and cultural competencies of SOF senior

leaders represent a unique combination of strategic leadership competencies and potential for contributing to strategic success demands consideration.

SOF Leader Attributes

One of the most unique characteristics of Army Special Operations Forces is the way they are selected to become the adaptive, warrior-diplomats required to fulfill irregular and unconventional missions around the world. Specifically, would be Special Operators from the conventional Army are tested and assessed for their mental perseverance, interpersonal influence skills and individual responsibility in ambiguous conditions.⁶⁶ The result is a select community of Soldiers whose adaptability, maturity and influence skills allow them to be extraordinarily successful in uncertain and constantly changing conditions.⁶⁷ The similarities between this elite community and the Army's strategic leaders whose attributes include technical, conceptual and interpersonal competencies in volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous situations are remarkable.

This outcome is not accidental. From their early origins as Jedburghs,⁶⁸ organizing the French Resistance behind Nazi lines,⁶⁹ U.S. special warfare practitioners have understood their value as a "national grand-strategic asset" that serves as a "tool of statecraft" in "support of diplomacy."⁷⁰ Since World War II, Special Operations Forces have contributed to the pursuit of U.S. national objectives by advising and assisting allies and partners. Another important result of 60 years of operational employment in decentralized operations is the mastery of mission command.⁷¹ Essentially, the assessment and selection process combined with culturally informed education and training of operators, has created an organization whose leaders are comfortable with ambiguity and capable of flourishing in complex and contentious situations.

The professional military education of an Army SOF officer is aligned with the Army Leader Training and Development Strategy model described in AR 350-1 and the Army Leader Development Strategy.⁷² Additionally, most Army SOF officers are formally educated in a foreign language that is based upon an assigned geographic region. This language instruction includes cultural training and regional studies. Furthermore, repetitive assignments and operational deployments in the same region produce the Army's foremost regionally aligned force.

Developing SOF Senior Leaders - Operational Assignments

Operational employment of Army SOF officers results in a broad range of international experiences that span the range of pre-conflict activities through large scale joint and combined operations. It is common for Army SOF company grade officers to act as senior military advisers to US Ambassadors. Similarly, Army SOF field grade officers develop and implement multi-national operations by synchronizing GCC strategy objectives with US diplomatic mission's strategic or regional priorities.⁷³ Operation Enduring Freedom – Caribbean and Central America⁷⁴ is one recent example that illustrates the complexity of collaborative multi-national operations loosely coordinated and influenced by small teams of special operators.

Army SOF General Officer's career development trends deviate slightly from their conventional counterparts. General Officers with a conventional background have proportionately higher occurrences of assignments at Headquarters, Department of the Army. SOF General Officers' assignments largely remain within the Special Operations community. The impact of this trend is twofold. First, SOF General Officers are not exposed to the enterprise level strategic leaders of the Army. Second, SOF General Officers are not developed as broadly within the senior levels of the Army. It is possible

that the lack of opportunity to obtain the experiential knowledge at the enterprise level of our national security organizations serves to limit the selection and development of SOF senior leaders into the most significant strategic leadership positions within the U.S. Army and DoD.⁷⁵ Notably, this oversight may have contributed to preventing the nation's most experienced, culturally savvy and geopolitically adept combat arms officers from being selected to serve as Joint Task Force (JTF) Commanders, GCC Commanders and even service chiefs.

As a result of Joint nature of USSOCOM, the management of special operations senior leaders has been achieved through a complex sequence of coordination that capture the input of the special operations component commander, the Commander of the USSOCOM, and the Chief of Staff of the Army. For example, when an Army General Officer is the commander of USSOCOM, the selection and development process for subordinate SOF General Officers has been beneficial to Army officers due to that General's presence at the quarterly Army 4 star meetings. Conversely, when the Commander of USSOCOM represents another service, the presence of a General Officer with SOF background at the Army 4 star meetings is precluded. It has been 6 years and roughly 25 meetings since SOF General Officers were present at the most important talent management meeting in the Army. The unfortunate and no doubt inadvertent result of this absence is that a generation of special operations senior leaders with decades of experience in irregular and hybrid warfare may have been overlooked for strategic leadership opportunities.

To reinforce the point that senior leader emphasis and development matters, the U.S. Navy (USN) has recognized the attributes of Navy SEAL flag officers and

aggressively developed and promoted them. In part, this recognition is derived from the fact that U.S. Navy Special Warfare Admirals have commanded USSOCOM for the past six years, thus allowing direct interaction with the USN senior strategic leader, the Chief of Naval Operations. This process has been extremely effective senior level development as evidenced how this resulted in the selection of two 4 star admirals and four 3 star Admirals serving broadly in strategic leadership roles in Washington and the GCCs.⁷⁶ The fact that we find this many strategic leaders being selected from a population of less than 6,000 total SEAL operators reflects the value the US Navy places upon the attributes, experiences and competencies of special operations senior leaders.

Recommendations

There was a time when organizational isolation was perceived as an advantageous status for Army Special Operations Forces. Following the debacle that was Desert One, the failed Iranian hostage rescue attempt, the establishment of a distinct special operations community enabled intense focus on such combat operations as Unconventional Warfare and Counter-Terrorism. Since the battle handoff in Afghanistan in early 2002 however, Special Operations have been an integral supporting effort to general purpose main effort forces in combat and stability operations. Beyond the massive efforts in Afghanistan and Iraq, Army SOF has also persistently conducted extraordinarily successful foreign internal defense activities in every geographic region of the world. SOF achieved mission success in these far reaching and strategically important regions by co-opting and collaborating with stakeholders in the inter-agency, the country teams and host nation security forces to conduct a broad range of security assistance campaigns.⁷⁷

A deliberate alignment of identification, education and development practices of future senior Army SOF strategic leaders with their conventional Army counterparts is essential in the optimal pursuit of national security objectives and interests. The foundation for this alignment can be summed up in one word; opportunity. The value of this opportunity is that the collective competency of our senior leaders for service at that strategic leadership levels will be enhanced as a result of greater professional diversity. It would seem an important and shared responsibility of the Commander of US Special Operations Command and the Chief of Staff of the Army⁷⁸ to ensure that Army Special Operations senior leaders are identified, developed and given the opportunity to become strategic leaders in an era of persistent irregular conflict.

The talent management process seeks to align human talent with organizational needs. Both the Army and Special Operations Command manage talent with different authorities and resources. The US Army has the Title 10 USC § 3013 authority to organize, train and equip, resource and allocate its personnel.⁷⁹ USSOCOM has the Title 10 USC §167 authority to “Monitor the promotions, assignments, retention, training, and professional military education of special operations forces officers”.⁸⁰ The Army has the Human Resources Command and the Senior Leader Division of General Officer Management Office (GOMO) as its talent management execution arm. USSOCOM’s Leader Development, Education and Management Office (LDEMO) is responsible for SOF talent management development and coordination. A talent management plan that is aligned and integrated more closely with the requirements of the future operating environment will increase the likelihood that our strategic leaders are best prepared for the national security and military strategy challenges of today and into the future.

Integration must occur in multiple domains that all reinforce the Army imperative to fight and win the Nation's Wars. The positive benefits for national security and organizational development abound. The Army gains a profoundly deeper talent pool and capitalizes on the existing irregular warfare competencies already resident within its ranks and the nation's security challenges are met by an operationally diverse group of strategic leaders. Attributes such as adaptability, interpersonal skills, and cultural capabilities combined with greater depth of education and experience in irregular conflict and political warfare at the sub-national level and ensures greater depth and breadth of strategic leadership potential.

The Army and USSOCOM must improve their ability to align high potential officers with leader development and education opportunities outside the traditional SOF footprint. Specifically, high potential officers that represent a diverse cultural and operational background should be the first considered for positions that offer the potential for relevant strategic perspectives related to national security strategy. A formal coordination process should occur between the Army and USSOCOM to comprehensively organize year group based order of merit lists and allocate opportunities accordingly. More Army SOF officers should receive their field grade and possibly senior level equivalent education outside the U.S. For example, foreign education opportunities could be linked to Army military officer exchange programs.

Army SOF Brigadier and Major Generals must regularly be given the opportunity to develop and contribute as Assistant Division Commanders and later as Division Commanders. The probability of US involvement in irregular conflict remains likely in the next ten years and Army SOF General Officers whose experiences include combat in

Iraq and Afghanistan, as well as counter narcotics campaigns, counter-guerilla operations, and foreign internal defense activities, are primed and ready to lead. Assignments as Assistant Division Commanders or Division Commanders would provide the Division a wealth of expertise in Security Force Assistance⁸¹ and provide the senior leader an opportunity to develop his strategic leadership competencies under the mentorship of a Division Commander. Finally, the protégé-mentor relationships developed by Division Commanders with their Corps Commanders and unified combatant commanders are crucial steps in network establishment, mentoring opportunities, and recognition of potential to serve at the highest strategic levels of leadership.

The Commander of US Special Operations Command (CDRUSSOCOM) and the Chief of Staff of the Army to ensure the current taxonomy for SOF senior leader jobs is well understood. This shared understanding reinforces the CSA's ability to develop future strategic leaders and allows both CDRUSSOCOM and CSA to optimally allocate and employ the senior officer talent available.

Strategic leaders whose background includes significant special operations experience are better prepared to contribute to the national strategic end-state in unilateral, alliance or coalition based scenarios. The volatile and uncertain conditions that currently exist will in all likelihood persist. The greater the diversity present in our strategic leaders, the greater our potential to understand competing perspectives, build partnerships based upon clear communications, and realize national interests through shared experiences and common interests. Senior Army SOF leaders already have the experiential background and interpersonal competencies necessary to contribute at the

strategic level. The Chief of Staff of the Army and the Commander of USSOCOM must actively pursue measures to include Army Special Operations senior leaders in the developmental model for the nation's strategic leaders.

Endnotes

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⁴ GEN James N. Mattis, *Joint Operating Environment 2010*, United States Joint Forces Command, Suffolk, Virginia, 18 February 2010, 4.

⁵ Obama, 4.

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⁹ ADM Michael G. Mullen, *National Military Strategy* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Defense, 8 February 2011), 4.

¹⁰ Obama, *Sustaining U.S. Global Leadership: Priorities for 21st Century Defense*, 8.

¹¹ GEN Martin E. Dempsey, Mission command, *Army*, 61(1), (2011), 43-44.

¹² GEN Raymond T. Odierno, "Marching Orders, America's Force of Decisive Action", briefing slides U.S. Department of the Army, Washington DC, January, 2012.

¹³ GEN Raymond T. Odierno, Prevent, Shape Win, The Army Posture Statement for 2012, (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Defense, February 2012), 6.

¹⁴ Obama, 2012, 6.

¹⁵ Mattis, JOE 2010, 69.

¹⁶ Robert M. Gates, *National Defense Strategy* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Defense, February 2008), 4.

¹⁷ Linda Robinson, *Masters of Chaos: the secret history of the Special Forces*, (New York, NY: Public Affairs, 2004), 366.

¹⁸ These missions reflect the current doctrine outlined in ADP 6-0, Mission Command.

¹⁹ Odierno, The Army Posture Statement for 2012, 5.

²⁰ Mattis, 4.

²¹ Chief and Vice Chief of Staff of the Army, Training and Doctrine Command, Forces Command, Army Materiel Command, US Forces Korea, International Security Force Afghanistan, Select Geographic Combatant Commands.

²² For example, Colin S. Gray emphasizes this in *Another Bloody Century: Future Warfare* (London: Phoenix, 2006, p. 252): “one may have noticed that although there is an abundance of literature on the unconventional derring-do of SOF, discussion of their strategic value is all but nonexistent. That is the story much in need of telling, particularly since SOF assuredly will figure with increasing prominence in the strategic history of future warfare.”

²³ Colin S. Gray, *Explorations in Strategy* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1996),149.

²⁴ U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, *A Leader Development Strategy for a 21st Century Army*, (Fort Leavenworth, KS: U.S. Department of Defense, November 2009), 3.

²⁵ U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, *A Leader Development Strategy for a 21st Century Army*, 3.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ GEN Martin E. Dempsey, Leader development. *Army*, 61(2), 2011, 25-28. Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com/docview/848137431?accountid=4444>.

²⁹ Gerras, 34.

³⁰ Ibid., 31.

³¹ Ibid., 30.

³² Ibid., 33.

³³ Off shore balancing is an international relations concept of using allies or partner nations to achieve sovereign goals or objectives.

³⁴ GEN John Abizaid was the Commander of the U.S. Central Command. Early in his career he was an Olmsted scholar at the University of Jordan and earned a masters degree in Middle Eastern studies at Harvard University. Additionally, General Abizaid learned Arabic and maintained fluency throughout his career.

³⁵ ADM Eric Olson was the Commander of the U.S. Special Operations Command. Early in his career he was a U.N. Observer in Israel and learned Arabic from the Defense Language Institute in Monterey California. In addition to being a U.S. Navy SEAL, Admiral Olson was a Political-Military Affairs sub-specialist for Africa and the Middle East.

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⁴³ MG Anthony Cucolo, Commanding General of the United States Army War College, interview by author on 19 November, 2012.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Thomas E. Ricks, *The generals: American military command from World War II to today*, Penguin Press, NY: 2012, 9.

⁴⁶ MG Anthony Cucolo, Commanding General of the United States Army War College, interview by author on 19 November, 2012.

⁴⁷ Army Regulation 350-1, 81.

⁴⁸ Margaret Harell, Harry J. Thie, Peter Schirmer, Kevin Brancato, *Aligning the Stars, Improvements to General and Flag Officer management*, RAND Corporation, National Defense Research Institute, Santa Monica, 2004, 9.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 26.

⁵⁰ John M. McHugh, *Memorandum for President and Board Members – FY12 Brigadier General, Army Competitive Category, Promotion Selection Board*, Secretary of the Army, Washington, March 16, 2012, 4.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² U.S. Army TRADOC Centers of Excellence (i.e. Maneuver Center of Excellence, Fires Center of Excellence, Special Warfare Center of Excellence).

⁵³ Army Regulation 350-1, i.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 76.

⁵⁵ Statistics supporting table reflect review of Army Strategic Leader Biographies from 1987 to 2012. Biographies provided by Department of the Army General Officer Management Office.

⁵⁶ The Nichols Goldwater Military Re-Organization act of 1986 and the Nunn-Cohen amendment a year later among other changes created a Special Operations command and its resultant Special Operations community. All statistics in this study originate from this time period.

⁵⁷ U.S. Training and Doctrine Command, U.S. Forces Command, U.S. Army Materiel Command.

⁵⁸ U.S. Northern Command, U.S. Africa Command, VCSA GEN Austin nominated to Command U.S. Central Command.

⁵⁹ U.S. Department of Defense News Release, Statement by Secretary of Defense William S. Cohen Regarding the Nomination of General Henry H. Shelton as the Next Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff July 17, 1997.

⁶⁰ Donald Rumsfeld, *Known and Unknown, a Memoir*, (New York, NY: Penguin Group, 2011), 653.

⁶¹ Infantry officer backgrounds represent the largest demographic at 33%. One Ordnance General Officer, one Transportation General Officer and two Quartermaster Officers have commanded AMC.

⁶² United States Northern Command, United States Southern Command, United States European Command, United States Central Command, United States Africa Command, United States Pacific Command.

⁶³ Odierno, *The Army Posture Statement for 2012*, 3.

⁶⁴ GEN Martin E. Dempsey, TRADOC 525-3-1, *The Army Operating Concept, 2016-2028*, (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Defense, February 2010), 10.

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⁶⁹ Douglas Waller, *Wild Bill Donovan, The Spymaster who created the OSS and modern espionage*, (New York, Free Press 2011), 247.

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⁷³ Condoleeza Rice, United States Department of State, United States Agency for International Development, Strategic Plan, *Transformational Diplomacy*, Fiscal Years 2007-2012, Washington DC: U.S. Department of State, 7 May 2007, 5.

⁷⁴ LTC Satterfield, Shawn, *OEF-CCA: Irregular Applications for USSOF efforts*, Special Warfare Magazine, October-December 2012, 11.

⁷⁵ The last SOF General Officers to serve on the Department of the Army G staff were LTG Philip Kensinger in 2002 and LTG Robert Wagner in 2005. No Army authorization for a Special Operations General exists, instead the Commander of USSOCOM is a joint command that is authorized a four star commander. General Bryan D. Brown was the last Army SOF four star General Officer. He served as the Commander of USSOCOM from 2002 until 2006.

⁷⁶ Admirals Eric Olson and William McRaven served as Commander of USSOCOM, Vice Admirals Robert Harward is currently serving as the Deputy Commander of CENTCOM, Joseph Kernan is the Deputy Commander of SOUTHCOM and Joseph Maguire is serving as the Deputy Director of the National Counter Terrorism Center.

⁷⁷ LTC Robert M. Kirila, *Ahead of the Guns-SOF in Central America*, Special Warfare Magazine, October-December 2012, Special Warfare Magazine, 19.

⁷⁸ GEN Bryan D. Brown, U.S. Army, Commander, U.S. Central Command, telephone interview by author on 10 December, 2012.

⁷⁹ 10 U.S.C. § 3013: U.S. Code - Section 3013: Secretary of the Army, Para 2.b.

⁸⁰ 10 U.S.C. § 167: U.S. Code – Section 167: U.S. Unified Combatant Command for Special Operations Forces, Para 2.e (j).

⁸¹ U.S. Department of Defense Directive 5100.01, *Functions of the Department of Defense and Its Major Components*, (December 2010) Enclosure 5 c (8) Serve as a source of SFA expertise to joint task forces or Combatant Command headquarters.

