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Smart Defense: Significant Return Opportunity on U.S. SOF Investment

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Abstract

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Economic austerity and concerns over the United States' declared shift in focus to the Pacific have served as catalysts in prompting NATO European members to develop better capabilities and reduce military dependency on the United States through prioritization, specialization, and implementation of multinational solutions. This Smart Defense concept is intended to enable NATO to build effective capabilities in order to meet its declared aspirations in the 2010 Strategic Concept, entitled "Active Engagement, Modern Defence." It affords the United States a cost-effective opportunity to leverage its SOF to maintain relations with European partners, build their capabilities, and support NATO expeditionary operations. This paper examines Smart Defense and some of its challenges. It also reviews U.S. SOF strategic engagement in Europe, identifies opportunities this concept affords the United States, and provides recommendations for using SOF to move beyond NATO's Smart Defense strategy to a "Smart Security" strategy.

Smart Defense: Significant Return Opportunity on U.S. SOF Investment

The Most Successful Alliance in Human History[1]

Providing security and stability in Europe since 1949, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) has served as one of the world's most successful multinational organizations. It now faces serious questions about its relevance and value to the trans-Atlantic alliance. When the Alliance expanded to include members from the former Eastern Bloc, more nations acquired a voice in determining what constitutes the most dangerous threat(s) and what capabilities should be developed to counter them. To remain a viable security partner for the United States, the other 27 Alliance members must define a comprehensive strategy that addresses these and other challenges. Camille Grand, the Director of *Fondation pour la Recherche Stratique*, a French think tank specializing in security matters, proposes that, "Smart Defense promotes new ideas and management, facilitates better coordination within NATO, and provides strategic responses to capability shortfalls. It will require significant political will and cooperation among allied countries, but it is critical in combating the current challenges of the defense sector."[2]

Agreed on at the 2010 Lisbon Summit, the "Active Engagement, Modern Defence" strategic concept identified three NATO core tasks: collective defense, crisis management, and cooperative security. At the May 2012 Chicago Summit, the participants determined what future NATO forces should look like to best accomplish these tasks. Labeled "NATO Forces 2020", the forces are expected to be "modern, tightly connected forces equipped, trained, exercised, and commanded so that they can operate together and with partners in any environment."[3] Smart Defense serves as the

game plan to develop “NATO Forces 2020” in austere times. As defined by NATO’s official website,

> In these times of austerity, each euro, dollar or pound sterling counts. Smart Defence is a new way of thinking about generating the modern defence capabilities the Alliance needs for the coming decade and beyond. It is a renewed culture of cooperation that encourages Allies to cooperate in developing, acquiring and maintaining military capabilities to undertake the Alliance’s essential core tasks agreed in the new NATO strategic concept. That means pooling and sharing capabilities, setting priorities and coordinating efforts better.[4]

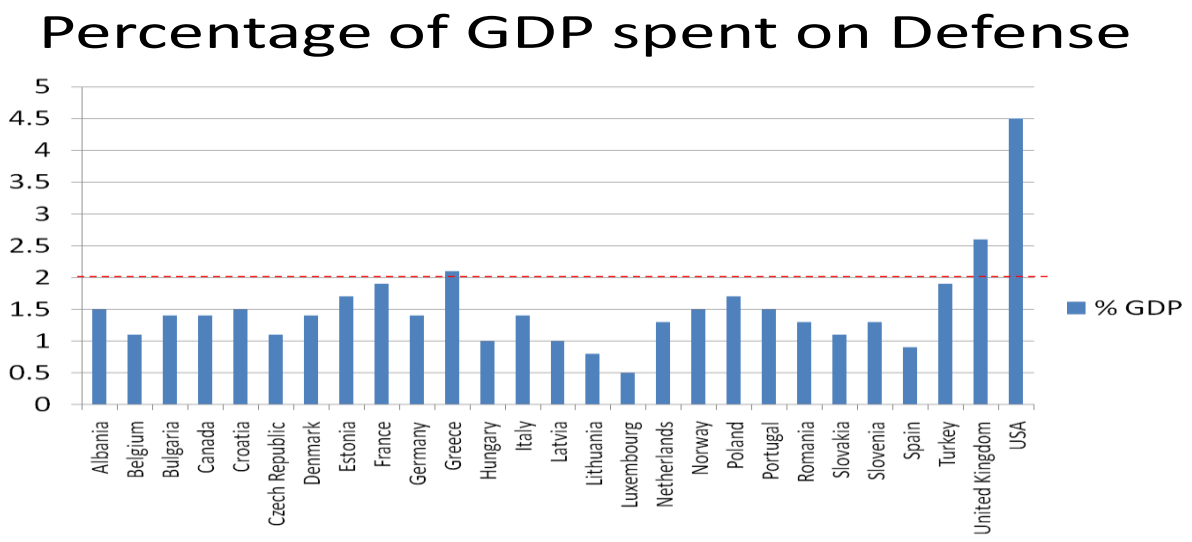
Smart Defense affords an opportunity for the United States European Command (USEUCOM) to make maximum use of the unique capabilities of U.S. Special Operations Forces (SOF) to maintain close relationships, strengthen partner capabilities, and support NATO training exercises and operational deployments when required. A modest investment in U.S. SOF would result in the increase of NATO SOF capabilities and improve regional security, not just the collective defense capabilities, of the NATO European nations.[5] Advancing beyond Smart Defense, a “Smart Security” concept would encourage the development of increased capabilities and common interoperability of NATO SOF to seamlessly form a combined unit comprised of multiple contributing nations with the capability to conduct expeditionary operations to counter threats globally prior to those threats gaining a foothold in Europe.

NATO’s Current Security Challenges

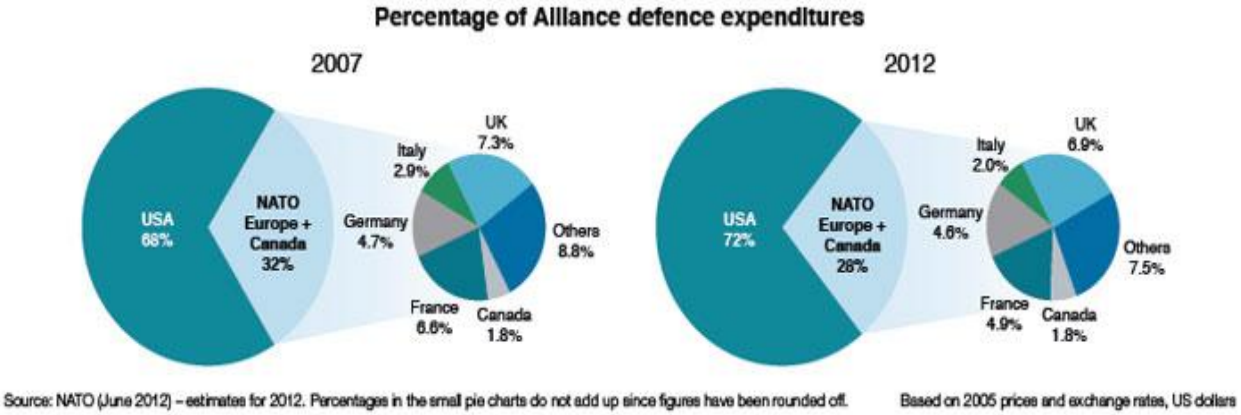
For 50 years NATO focused on countering threats from the Soviet Union. With the fall of the Berlin Wall and the end of the Cold War in 1989, NATO has struggled to achieve consensus on what constitutes the most dangerous threat. In May 1997, NATO and Russian representatives signed the NATO Russia Founding Act with a goal “of overcoming the vestiges of earlier confrontation and competition and of strengthening

mutual trust and cooperation."[6] Yet many NATO European military forces are still configured to counter the former Soviet threat even while the risks from terrorism and violent extremism have risen. Philipp Rotmann, a fellow at the Global Public Policy Institute in Berlin, notes that, "For many NATO armies, the shift from homeland defense and a conventional doctrine built around tank battles to expeditionary warfare, stabilization and institution-building remains far from complete two decades after the end of the Cold War. That is despite the fact that conventional threats have all but disappeared, and many forces have long been subject to strong budgetary pressures to change."[7]

At the 2002 Prague Summit, NATO members agreed to an informal target of 2% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) for defense spending; the entire Alliance has never achieved this goal. New NATO members struggled with transitioning their militaries from conscription-based to all volunteer forces while simultaneously transforming their defense structures from an Eastern Bloc model. At the same time they were expected to support ongoing NATO operations and register economic growth.[8] Following the 2008 economic crisis, many NATO members have been further challenged to meet the 2% goal. In 2011, only Greece, the United Kingdom, and the United States met this goal as shown in the following table.[9]



In January 2012, the United States announced a policy rebalance from Europe to the Asia-Pacific Region. While this shift can serve as a notice that NATO must make significant changes to remain a relevant and agile security partner, the United States does not intend to abandon its European allies. The 2012 U.S. National Security Strategy states that "it would be destructive to both the American national strategy and global security if the United States used the emergence of new challenges and the shortcomings of the international system as a reason to walk away from [NATO]."[10] In addition to providing 20 - 25% of the NATO civil, military, and Security Investment Program budgets annually, the United States contributes a significant amount to fund NATO operations.[11] New members were expected to pay a portion of operational costs which would reduce contributions from the older members. However, the opposite has actually transpired. In 2012 the total contributions of 22 member nations equated to 7.5% of total expenditures as depicted in the following table.[12]

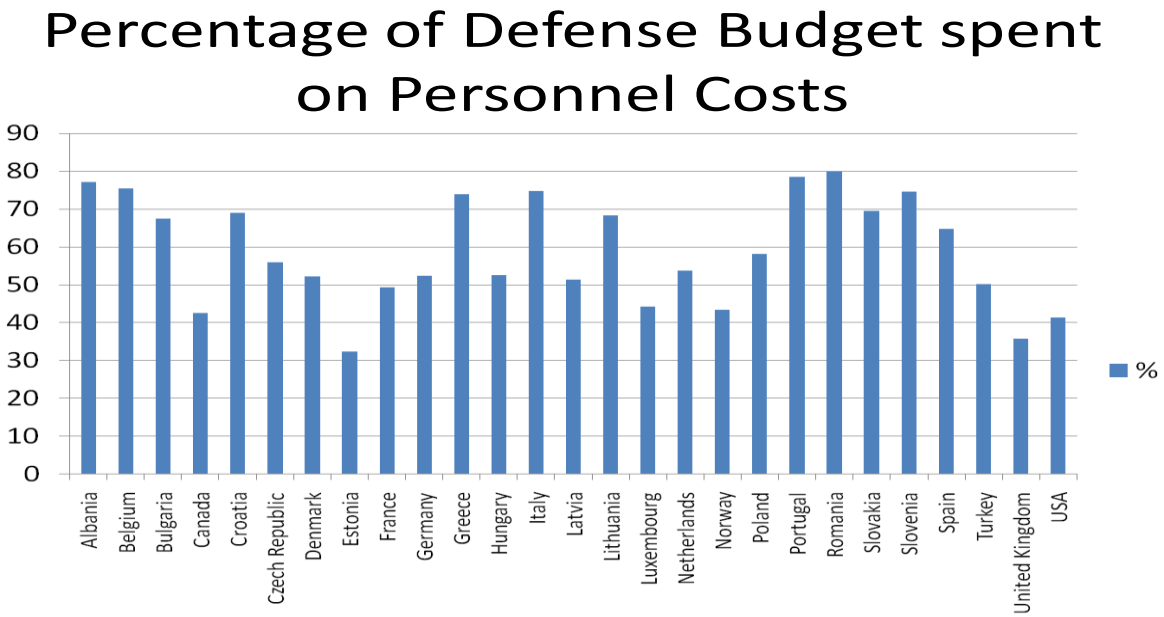


While it is most likely that the United States will continue meet its NATO budgetary commitments, there is no guarantee that it will fund future NATO operations at the current level. In his June 2011 farewell speech, former U.S. Secretary of Defense Robert Gates stated,

> The blunt reality is that there will be dwindling appetite and patience in the U.S. Congress – and in the American body politic writ large – to expend increasingly precious funds on behalf of nations that are apparently unwilling to devote the necessary resources or make the necessary changes to be serious and capable partners in their own defense... Indeed, if current trends in the decline of European defense capabilities are not halted and reversed, future U.S. political leaders– those for whom the Cold War was *not* the formative experience that it was for me – may not consider the return on America's investment in NATO worth the cost.[13]

Another critical area where Alliance members fail to meet goals is in equipment modernization. According to Alexandra Gheciu, Associate Director of the Centre for International Policy Studies at the University of Ottawa, European Allies are "plagued by the problem of old military equipment ill-suited for today's actual or potential security challenges. The defense challenges facing European states are not new; their armed forces are mostly characterised by low levels of deployable troops, and there is a tendency to allocate too much of their (dwindling) resources to personnel costs and too

little to equipment procurement, research and development."[14] According to the Secretary General's Annual Report for 2012, "Allies have agreed that at least 20% of defence expenditures should be devoted to major equipment spending, a crucial indicator for the pace of modernisation. …in 2012 only five Allies spent more than 20% of their defence budgets on major equipment expenditure; among the 22 Allies that spent under 20% in critical investment in future capabilities, nine Allies spent less than ten per cent."[15] In contrast in 2011, nineteen NATO nations devoted over 50% of their total defense expenditures to personnel costs; Albania, Belgium, Portugal, and Romania dedicated over 75% of their total defense expenditures to personnel costs.[16]



Reduced defense budgets with skewed priorities equate to smaller and less capable forces directly resulting in the expanding operational capabilities gap between the United States and the European allies and among the European allies. NATO European nation contributions to combat operations in the Balkans, Afghanistan, and most recently Libya, revealed a dependence on the United States to provide critical

resources and enablers. In February 2012, Secretary General Rasmussen cautioned that, “If Europe becomes unable to make an appropriate contribution to global security, then the United States might look elsewhere for reliable defence partners.”[17] Former U.S. Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta pointed out NATO’s dependency on the United States,

> …nowhere were the gaps more obvious than in the critical enabling capabilities: refueling tankers, provision of intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance platforms such as Global Hawk and Predator drones. Without these capabilities, -- without these capabilities – the Libya operation would have had a very difficult time getting off the ground or been sustained.[18]

Further compounding Europe’s security challenges, the current U.S. Army’s Capstone Concept states that “Army forces will be based predominantly in the U.S.” and rotate overseas to conduct engagement events as required.[19] The United States will reduce the number of combat forces permanently stationed in Europe from 40,000 to approximately 30,000. Two combat brigades stationed in Germany will inactivate by 2014, leaving just two maneuver brigades in Europe. With fewer American forces in Europe, fewer exercises and training events will be conducted. As an unintended consequence, relationships between the United States and other NATO partners could weaken. The U.S. commitment to rotate a Brigade Combat Team to the NATO Response Force (NRF) will do little to develop critical enduring strategic relationships as a different U.S. brigade will rotate to the NRF every year.

NATO’s Smart Defense Strategy Defined

Creating effective Alliance security forces to counter current and emerging threats in financially constrained times requires a new approach. During the February 2011 Munich Security Conference, Secretary General Rasmussen first presented the

concept of Smart Defense. In Prague ten months later he stated, “By joining together to acquire capabilities, nations will be able to afford what they cannot do alone. It is about greater resource efficiency and doing better with what we have… The key to Smart Defense is greater prioritisation, specialisation and, most importantly, multinational cooperation.”[20] Via these three pillars, NATO seeks to achieve greater capabilities through Smart Defense that individual nations could not attain independently.[21]

Member nations have been encouraged to prioritize their defense sector expenditures in areas that NATO has deemed important. Rather than investing in legacy organizations structured to counter the Soviet threat from the Cold War era, Alliance members must develop security mechanisms to counter current and future threats. NATO’s prioritized threat list includes cyber defense, terrorism, and piracy.[22] Because traditional military forces are unable to counter these threats, interagency and international interoperability and coordination will be required to effectively respond.

Secretary General Rasmussen has encouraged European member nations to specialize in specific capabilities rather than attempting to maintain full spectrum military capabilities.[23] He has urged nations to leverage NATO to advise and to serve as an “honest broker to ensure a degree of coherence in any cuts which nations may consider, and to minimize their impact on the overall effectiveness of the Alliance.”[24] NATO expects that member nations will develop specialized capabilities to support the entire Alliance. An example of this specialization is the Czech Republic’s Chemical, Biological, Radiological, and Nuclear defense capabilities.

In addition to prioritization and specialization, the third pillar of Smart Defense is cooperation through multinational solutions also known as pooling and sharing, the

European Union term. Few nations on their own can afford expensive capabilities that also require funding for maintenance, operations, and upgrades throughout equipment life cycles. As underscored by Secretary General Rasmussen, “Today, no European Ally on its own is able to develop the full range of responses to meet all security challenges. Recently, France and the UK, despite their competitive relations over the centuries, made a fundamental shift towards closer cooperation to develop and share critical defense capabilities.”[25] Another example is the strategic airlift capability of three C-17 aircraft based in Hungary and supported by ten NATO nations as well as Sweden and Finland. The nations collectively share the costs of operating, maintaining, and supporting the planes and their crews.[26]

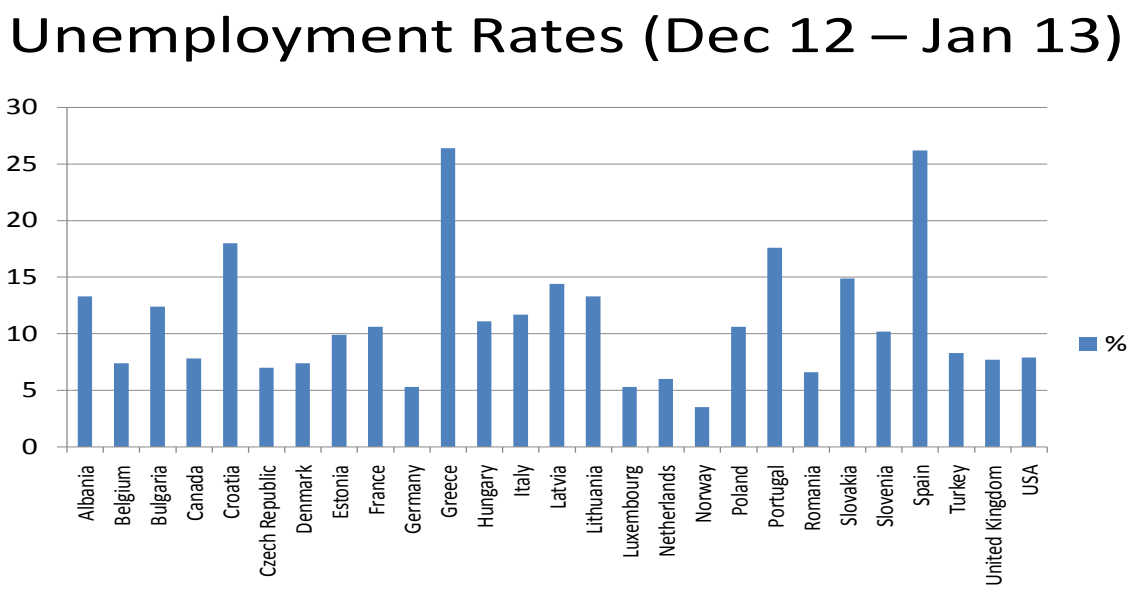
Closely related to Smart Defense is the Connected Forces Initiative (CFI) which is intended to “ensure that Allies can communicate effectively, practice together, and validate and certify their ability to do so.”[27] NATO has learned how to operate together and has collected many lessons about interoperability from recent operations in Afghanistan and Libya. However, the risk is very high that this knowledge and connectivity will be lost when NATO no longer provides forces for the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan. At the February 2012 Munich Security Conference, Secretary General Rasmussen introduced CFI when he stated, “Our current operations have been a real-time, real-world driving force for improving our ability to work together – and, when necessary, to fight together. Not just among the twenty-eight Allies, but also with our partners around the world -- five in our Libya operation, seven in Kosovo, and twenty-two in Afghanistan. This is an invaluable experience we cannot afford to lose.”[28] CFI comprises three pillars: expanded education

and training; increased exercises; and better use of technology.[29] All of the pillars for CFI require coordination and cooperation with the member nations for success and are concepts readily captured under Smart Defense. Consequently, CFI will be treated as a component of Smart Defense.

Challenges Threatening the Success of Smart Defense

Smart Defense faces many challenges. The most critical challenge concerns the lack of political will to fully implement it. Individual national agendas, at times, serve as obstacles to implementing NATO programs. During austere times, defense budgets are vulnerable to cutbacks since they compete with social programs. In his November 2012 Prague NATO Parliamentary Assembly speech, Secretary General Rasmussen cautioned politicians that, “any decisions taken to improve our economy must not lead us into a different sort of crisis – a security crisis. To protect our people effectively, governments must continue to invest in real security. We need to have the right forces and capabilities to deter and defend against any threat to keep our nations safe.”[30]

European politicians fear that their countries will lose jobs and revenue if armament factories or related defense industry facilities are closed or moved to other nations as a result of fewer or smaller orders. NATO member nation unemployment rate average between December 2012 and January 2013 was 11.4 percent. Four nations recorded unemployment rates greater than fifteen percent for this period as shown in the following table.[31]



Redundant and unnecessary capabilities cost money, but conversely they also generate jobs which are critical. In 2011, the European Union estimated that approximately 735,000 jobs were tied directly to the defense industry in Europe.[32] Thus eliminating unnecessary capabilities could potentially contribute to higher unemployment rates, albeit in a small segment of the European economy. At the NATO Industry Day in Riga, Secretary General Rasmussen declared that, "Without security there can be no prosperity," and while this may result in a reduction in the number of defense contracts, "there is only one alternative – and that is no contract at all."[33] Smart Defense could actually benefit defense industries through cooperation and consolidation that frees up critical resources available for acquisition and procurement.[34]

In addition to the economic challenges, a second major challenge to Smart Defense is the distrust among the Alliance members. Kai Schonfeld, a German naval officer, observed that, "Germany's hesitance and procrastination in security and defence questions, such as the controversy about the deployment of Tornado airplanes with

reconnaissance equipment in Afghanistan 2007 or the German rejection of the military intervention in Libya 2011, entailed a certain degree of distrust among the members of NATO."[35] Few nations are comfortable openly coordinating and relying on others to serve as an integral part of their security structure. General Martin Dempsey, the U.S. Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, noted during a NATO Chiefs of Defense meeting, "Smart Defense will require a level of transparency and trust never seen before in the history of the Alliance and if we become truly interdependent, then nations will no longer be able to opt-out of NATO operations" – this could potentially break the Alliance.[36]

Germany chose not to participate in Operation Unified Protector and would not authorize its AWACS planes (a NATO-pooled asset) to fly in support of the operation. To avert a crisis, NATO coordinated an exchange of AWACS aircraft supporting ISAF with those from Germany to support missions over Libya. Germany's refusal could potentially establish a disturbing precedent. Security analyst and writer Joshua Foust argues that Smart Defense "will require more consensus than is currently necessary, and if highly specialized countries disagree with the larger consensus, it might only take one or two countries to hobble any chances of success by withholding their equipment and personnel."[37] To assuage concerns over availability of pooled resources, Camille Grand, suggests that, "Clear rules establishing the availability at all times of capabilities procured jointly need to be set and endorsed by all [NATO] participants."[38]

A third challenge to implementing Smart Defense is achieving consensus on what capabilities the Alliance should develop. Three distinct camps within NATO have evolved. The first favors orienting capabilities towards strengthening forces and developing capabilities for a potential implementation of Article 5 (an attack on one ally

is viewed as an attack on all). The second believes that NATO should focus on creating forces capable of conducting expeditionary or out of area operations. The third camp wants to establish better relationships with Russia and is hesitant to develop capabilities that could be perceived as a threat by the old adversary. Pal Jonson, a foreign policy advisor in the Swedish Parliament, determined that

> These different agendas and the debate that they have generated are the symptoms of the strategic diversification that began after the end of the cold war and the demise of the Soviet Union and has become accentuated with the Alliance over the last decade. As NATO has taken on additional members, as well as more challenging missions, it has been exposed to greater differences among its members in terms of threat perceptions, strategic priorities and foreign policy approaches.[39]

A fourth challenge to the successful implementation of Smart Defense is the natural resistance to change. The comfort zone of doing what has worked in the past ignores the current era of financial austerity and the changing nature of the security threats. No European NATO nation has suffered an event on the scale of the United States 9/11 attacks although there have been ample terrorist incidents in Europe to include the 2005 7/7 attacks in London and the 2004 Madrid train bombings. However, these threats have done little to fuse a new strategic consensus in NATO.[40] Additionally since the United States has always covered the operational capabilities gap, there exists no impetus for change.

Smart Defense Opportunities for U.S. SOF

Smart Defense affords opportunities and potential benefits for the United States. Prioritization will help the United States focus its engagement efforts on those NATO capabilities that are the most important and necessary. Specialization will allow the United States to tailor events and training opportunities to specific capabilities that

support the Alliance as a whole but would reside within a critical partner's inventory. Multinational solutions will allow multiple nations to be engaged collectively and contribute to efficient use of limited U.S. SOF assets. U.S. SOF can leverage CFI to retain the knowledge gained and to maintain the interoperability developed from ISAF and other NATO operations. Increased NATO security capabilities will narrow the operational capabilities gap and allow the United States to again play a supporting role as it did during the Libyan operations.

U.S. SOF are uniquely designed to support Smart Defense. SOF are organized, trained, and equipped to increase allied and partner capacity through an indirect approach. During the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan, reporting focused on the combat operations conducted by SOF, but very little coverage was devoted to the partnerships SOF developed with indigenous forces and allied nation militaries that made many of the missions both possible and successful. U.S News & World Report journalist Linda Robinson notes that, "Special Operations Forces forge relationships that can last for decades with a diverse collection of groups: training, advising, and operating alongside other countries' militaries, police forces, tribes, militias, and other informal groups."[41]

Due to substantial costs, all 26 NATO nations that have armed forces are reviewing their ability to maintain large conventional forces, with many nations looking to drawdown those formations. However, those same 26 nations in many instances have decided to increase SOF size and capability.[42] This intended SOF growth will increase Alliance capabilities as well as facilitate cooperation and partnerships. Franklin Kramer, former U.S. Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs offers that, "Focusing NATO nations' resources on SOF would generate a valuable increase in

capabilities that would be affordable even within austere budgets."[43] The United States Special Operations Command (USSOCOM) accounted for approximately $10.5 billion or just 1.6 percent of the entire 2012 U.S. Department of Defense budget.[44]

Recent NATO operations have been greatly enhanced through the participation of non-NATO partners. Former U.S. Secretary of Defense Panetta declared that, "we should look for innovative ways to enhance and expand our partnerships with those countries outside NATO that are exceptionally capable militarily, and those that strive to be more capable. A look at the composition of NATO's ongoing operations – in Libya, Afghanistan, off the coast of Somalia – makes it clear that non-NATO partners will be increasingly central to NATO's future activities, particularly as we all strive to more broadly share the burden of defending our common interests."[45] Since SOF routinely conduct engagements throughout the world, SOF directly contributes to building a global security network. Former U.S. Assistant Secretary Kramer highlights that, "While conventional forces of member states often remain at home in the absence of major conflict, SOF are constantly deployed worldwide, generally in support of indigenous regional partners."[46] The recent French SOF operations in Mali readily support this statement.

The United States can also use SOF to address some of the challenges facing Smart Defense. Since 26 of the Alliance members have SOF, U.S. SOF interact with the majority of the Alliance when they routinely train with these forces. This interaction builds relationships and trust. The SOF-to-SOF connection can reduce some of the distrust among the Allies. Since the majority of NATO members have SOF, no one nation could withhold its SOF and thwart the execution of a NATO operation. The return

on investment will be greater for SOF since it is most likely that future conflicts will model that seen in Mali where SOF and light forces were employed rather than heavy, armored units. Lastly, member nations would be well served to invest in SOF as they are designed to effectively counter a variety of threats.

Current U.S. SOF Strategic Engagement in Europe

Capitalizing on experiences and lessons learned from operations conducted by the Office of Strategic Services (OSS), the U.S. Army organized, trained, and equipped its post-World War II Special Operations Forces in Europe to infiltrate by land, sea or air, deep into enemy-occupied territory and organize the resistance/guerrilla potential to conduct Special Forces operations, with an emphasis on guerrilla warfare. Secondary missions included deep-penetration raids, intelligence missions, and counterinsurgency operations.[47] While equipment and techniques have changed throughout the years, the primary mission of SOF has not.

Supporting U.S. engagement efforts in Europe, and indirectly Smart Defense, are three distinct but nested elements of U.S. SOF commands. Established in 1955, U.S. Special Operations Command Europe (SOCEUR) supports USEUCOM with SOF activities and exchanges; the NATO Special Operations Headquarters (NSHQ) was recently established to ensure NATO nations developed operational standards and were interoperable with other SOF and conventional forces; and USSOCOM has developed an expanding network of liaison officers connecting the various national SOF commands across the globe.

Since 2001, U.S. SOF have been engaged in combat operations in Afghanistan and Iraq which taxed the ability of the United States to provide enough SOF to support

both theaters. When the Alliance invoked Article 5 shortly after the 9/11 attacks, European NATO forces began deploying to Afghanistan. To better prepare these forces and to ensure the forces were interoperable, the United States encouraged the European NATO nations to increase their SOF capabilities and capacity. A programmed growth in U.S. SOF and the redeployment of SOF from Iraq beginning in 2011 have resulted in the capacity to conduct more engagement events.

In 2012, SOCEUR-controlled forces conducted 227 engagement events and seven multinational exercises to build partner capacity with European allies.[48] Three SOF units stationed in Europe and eight others based in the United States conducted these engagement events. Because of the scope of these engagement events and other operational requirements levied on the European-based U.S. SOF, the majority of these engagement events were conducted by United States-based SOF.

In 2006, the Alliance mandated the establishment of a NATO Special Operations Coordination Center (NSCC). The SOCEUR Commander, as the framework nation designated representative, began building the NSCC to better coordinate the activities of NATO SOF.[49] Originally formed around a nucleus of American personnel based in Stuttgart, Norwegian and German personnel quickly established the NSCC. It grew from 18 to over 220 personnel from 26 NATO nations and 3 NATO-partner nations.[50] Detailing some of the challenges and creative approaches used in forming the NSCC, Lieutenant General Frank Kisner, NSHQ Commander, explained that,

> Because this 'MOU [Memorandum Of Understanding]-based organization' was formed at no increase to the NATO Peacetime Establishment Command Structure, the United States had to build capability from existing personnel. While slowly growing Allied presence in the new Coordination Center, the SOCEUR Commander exploited the resident

capability in his existing U.S. headquarters to draw upon both SOF and Conventional Force expertise as the NSCC was formed.[51]

The SOCEUR Commander initially served as the SOCEUR Commander and the NSCC Director. To better synchronize with Allied Command Operations, NSCC collocated its headquarters with Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe. NATO's North Atlantic Council voted to further transform the NSCC and in November 2010, the NSCC expanded in authorities and personnel and was reflagged as the NATO Special Operations Headquarters with a charter to be "the Alliance SOF proponent for NATO SOF policy, standards, doctrine, training, education and assessments, which maintains and develops a robust operational command, control, communications, computers, and intelligence (C4I) capability equipped with organic SOF enablers to ensure interoperability and enhance employment of NATO Special Operations."[52]

Supporting the Smart Defense components of multinational solutions and CFI, NSHQ trains and educates NATO SOF through courses, ranging from operational planning to intelligence network analysis. The NSHQ schoolhouse has educated over 3,300 personnel.[53] NSHQ served as the primary author for the NATO Military Committee's second revision of MC-437, NATO Policy for SOF, and Allied Joint Publication 3.5, Doctrine for Special Operations. In an effort to help transform NATO SOF to better address current and future threats, both of these documents highlight Military Assistance as the primary NATO SOF task.[54] NSHQ maintains a network operation center to manage the Battlefield Information Collection and Exploitation System (BICES) that connects NATO SOF headquarters and deployed forces via a secure computer network. Since 2008, NSHQ has provided personnel to direct a multi-

national fusion cell that trained intelligence analysts and provided targeting support to NATO SOF task forces serving in Afghanistan.

The third pillar of U.S. SOF support to European NATO nations is USSOCOM-provided liaisons to the Theater Special Operations Commands (TSOCs). USSOCOM established its first Special Operations Liaison Officers (SOLOs) in 2006 with positions in the national SOF headquarters of the United Kingdom, Australia, and Jordan. As a result of the close working relationships developed among the European SOF units, establishing liaison positions in NATO member SOF headquarters proved both logical and readily accepted. There are currently a total of thirteen SOLOs positioned with partner nation SOF.[55] Seven of these SOLOs are stationed in Europe and have established relationships with the national SOF headquarters. An eighth SOLO position will be established in Europe in late 2013.[56] These SOLOs provide connectivity and serve as nodes in USSOCOM's global network, but through nurtured relationships, their linkages expand beyond the confines of the national SOF headquarters to the operational units.

Recommendations to Evolve Smart Defense to Smart Security

Additional Europe-stationed SOF would facilitate more training events and exercises. To help offset the loss in training opportunities and exercise participation from the two inactivating European-based U.S. combat brigades, an entire Special Forces Group should be permanently stationed in Europe. Although not a new idea, this concept merits consideration based on the transportation expenses incurred and transit time spent when conducting the preponderance of annual European engagement events with United States-based SOF. However, the greatest advantage to basing a

Special Forces Group in Europe will be realized not in the increased number of engagement events, but rather in the relationships that can be built with NATO's European members; a goal that rotational U.S. forces can never achieve. Lieutenant General Mark Hertling, former United States Army Europe Commander, highlighted the benefits of forward-stationed forces in a speech delivered in Oslo, "The trust we've built with our allies is directly related to over half a century of permanent presence in Europe."[57] Lastly, stationing a greater number of U.S. SOF in Europe will enable these forces to deploy concurrently with their NATO SOF partners to operational areas that will most likely be located in areas closer to Europe than to North America.

Another area of opportunities for better supporting Smart Defense is aligning all of the SOF curriculum being taught in Europe under the oversight of one entity. Currently the NSHQ SOF Campus in Belgium, the NATO School in Oberammergau, Germany, and the International Special Training Centre (ISTC) in Pfullendorf, Germany all teach SOF courses. There exists no system or coordination entity to prevent the separate institutes from teaching redundant courses or permitting the omission of critical courses from their course catalogs. Since USSOCOM's Joint Special Operations University interacts with each of these institutes, it may be the best entity to perform the oversight function.

NSHQ has plans to both strengthen the capabilities of NATO SOF and support Smart Defense through the implementation of various programs to retain the connectivity and interoperability forged in ISAF. As outlined in an NSHQ memorandum to SACEUR,

> Future exercises should capitalize on lessons from Afghanistan, and SOF should be tasked to further expand the existent collaborative network to

> reflect the reality of applying the comprehensive approach as seen in Afghanistan in order to develop lines of cooperation across the nation's Ministry of Defense, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and Ministry of Interior forces, as well as with international agencies.[58]

Specific NSHQ projects that directly support CFI include the following: development of the Special Operations Component Command (SOCC) – Core that provides an additional deployable SOCC capability to SACEUR and serves as a "test bed" for Alliance experimentation; continued development and expansion of the BICES network; the development of a SOF Air Warfare Center; improving medical interoperability through the NATO SOF Medicine Development Initiative; and a pilot six-week course titled "Catalyst for Change – SOF Adaptability to 21st Century Operations" to establish a professional military education curriculum focused on developing future NATO SOF leaders.[59]

USSOCOM can assist Smart Defense by expanding the SOLO network. This will strengthen relationships with partner nation SOF and maintain interoperability. Additionally, Admiral McRaven, USSOCOM Commander, stated recently that,

> USSOCOM intends to increase USSOF capacity to the GCC [Geographic Combatant Commander]'s Theater Special Operations Commands (TSOC) with additional resources, capabilities, and force structure. Ultimately, this effort will provide the GCC with an agile joint force headquarters capable of employing the full range of SOF capabilities when called upon. The enhanced TSOCs will be better organized to conduct full-spectrum special operations, ranging from building partner capacity to irregular warfare and counterterrorism.[60]

As a result of its supporting relationship with both SOCEUR and NSHQ, USSOCOM serves as the connective tissue between the two respective SOF Headquarters in ensuring that European SOF receive complementary, vice redundant, training and assistance.

Due to the relative low cost of training and maintaining SOF, even the smallest European nation should be able to contribute SOF personnel for NATO operations. Experiences gained from the creation and implementation of a combined Special Operations Task Group in ISAF have validated the “plug and play” ability of small SOF units being integrated into a larger SOF organization provided by a “framework” nation. For example, the United States serves as the framework nation for Combined Special Operations Task Group-10 in ISAF. Under American leadership, Romanians, Hungarians, Slovakian, and Estonian SOF units have operated in Regional Command East training and combat advising Afghan Special Police Units. The option to contribute small, capable SOF units has encouraged all European NATO nations having SOF to participate even at a small capacity.

U.S. SOF should also focus on increasing the number of nations capable of performing at a level required of a SOCC. Currently only seven nations are capable of providing this advanced level of command and control with an additional nation anticipated to have the capability by 2014.[61] Through more intensive academic programs and training exercises, more nations could develop this capability and seamlessly integrate smaller SOF units from other nations into a larger operation. This option encourages more equitable burden sharing from all nations and all NATO nations should have some capability to contribute to NATO-led operations.

Conclusion

The successful implementation of Smart Defense will ultimately depend on the will of European member nations to achieve consensus and increase the capabilities of the Alliance rather than simply protecting or furthering the interests of their own nation.

European NATO partners are still vital to U.S. interests as denoted in the latest National Security Strategy, “This architecture, despite its flaws, averted world war, enabled economic growth, and advanced human rights, while facilitating effective burden sharing among the U.S., our allies, and partners.”[62] However to remain an effective alliance, NATO must increase capabilities, prioritize critical resources, and reduce dependencies.

The European NATO nations cannot afford to lose, through a reluctance to assume a greater share of collective burdens, the U.S. partnership and resultant financial and operational capability contributions. Conversely, it is unlikely that the American public will be willing to tolerate, in terms of time, money, and lives, unilateral expeditionary operations. As highlighted by Admiral McRaven,

> The U.S. cannot address the challenges of tomorrow alone. It will require a global partnership of like-minded entities that can come together to address mutual security concerns. These relationships cannot be built through sporadic or episodic encounters. It will require an increased capacity of U.S., allies, and partner forces to assist fledgling nations in building institutions needed to provide immediate security to their populations. SOF must encourage the growth of long-standing institutions capable of providing freedom of action by their sovereign governments.[63]

The United States has both a role and an opportunity in Smart Defense that can be fufilled through the cost-effective use of SOF. Former Secretary Kramer postulates that, “Smart Defense requires prioritization and cooperation, and investing in capacity and interoperability among NATO’s Special Operations Forces will have outsized returns.”[64] U.S. SOF can make maximum use of an indirect approach to improve the capabilities of strategic partners that in turn will increase the security of Europe and beyond. Linda Robinson proposes that employment of U.S. SOF “offers the prospect of lasting benefits with a smaller footprint and lower cost than the hugely expensive wars of the last decade. The indirect approach is not without its pitfalls, and the special

operations community will need to reconfigure itself to execute it more skillfully. But it holds great potential for advancing security objectives, especially in a time of fiscal austerity."[65] An increased U.S. SOF presence and activity in Europe will support the implementation of Smart Defense and can only benefit the security interests of the United States and the Alliance as a whole.

Endnotes

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